



MONASH University

**“Could've, Should've, But Didn't:
An Exploration of Uchronic Fiction and
A Critical Study of Australia's Failure to Implement
Dr I.N. Steinberg's Kimberley Plan”**

David C. Muller
BA, MA

A thesis submitted for the degree of PhD at
Monash University in 2016
School of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics
Faculty of Arts

Copyright notice

© David C Muller (2016).

I certify that I have made all reasonable efforts to secure copyright permissions for third-party content included in this thesis and have not knowingly added copyright content to my work without the owner's permission.

Abstract

This thesis, as well as the creative narrative that accompanies this research, will define the genre of Uchronic fiction based on features inherent to the alternate history genre as they recur across several key texts. These texts are divided into three different categories based on specific story-related themes, such as what if the Nazis had won World War Two, or what if Israel lost the Six Day War in 1967. In the words of Australian scholar Sean Scalmer, alternate histories are “parasitic” on actual history.¹ As a result, this research will disambiguate an unanswered question from Australian history: why was the Kimberley Plan, a scheme that would have opened the East Kimberley region of Western Australia to large-scale, foreign Jewish settlement, rejected? The academic research will focus on the historical record as it pertains to the Kimberley Plan and will discuss the potential factors that doomed that scheme’s approval. This is important because actual history directly influences the content of the creative narrative which reverses the history of the Kimberley Plan, in particular its failure and rejection. The creative narrative is an alternate history narrative of Australia that will fit into the context of Uchronic fiction. It is important to note that at present there are a limited number of Uchronic novels about Australia. The creative narrative that accompanies this research will not only emblemize many of the recurrent features of Uchronic fiction this thesis seeks to define, but will also be a new and original, Uchronic novel specifically devoted to Australia.

The thematic framework includes several recurrent features inherent to the Uchronic genre. Though these features do not appear in every example of Uchronic fiction, they appear frequently enough to warrant itemization and discussion through the course of a genre study. This thematic framework will be applied to the creative narrative that accompanies this research as an example of Uchronic fiction. The recurrent features of Uchronic fiction are (but not limited to): the point of historic divergence; the elliptical or direct revelation of an alternate world history; the detective narrative format; and the rectification of history. This genre study will, for example, explain the difference between the elliptical revelation of an alternate world history in contrast to the direct revelation, and will discuss the image of women and the political agenda on the part of the author in writing Uchronic fiction.

¹ Stuart Macintyre and Sean Scalmer, eds., *What If? Australian History as it Might Have Been* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006), 2.6

Another feature of Uchronic fiction is the reconfigured image of Indigenous peoples that is sometimes, but not always, uplifted when compared to their current status. This feature of Uchronic fiction is important due to the fact that the creative narrative that accompanies this research includes a reconfigured and uplifted image of the Doolboong people, an Aboriginal group located in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia that would have likely been impacted by the Kimberley Plan had it succeeded.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signature:

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature.

Print Name: David C. Muller

Date: June 15, 2016

Acknowledgements

סנטימנטליות היא לא הצד החזק שלי

First things first: I want to pay my respects to the peoples of the Kulin nations and to ancestors past and present on whose country I lived while completing my PhD journey. I also want to pay my respects to the the three local communities in my area of research, the Doolboong, Gajerong, and Miriwong peoples in and around Kununurra and Wyndham in Western Australia. I want also to pay my respects to Aboriginal Australia in acknowledgement of their history of Australia, a history that is yet to be fully written. I also wish to especially thank Frank Chulung and his nephew, Donald “Duck” Chulung, for their time and generosity and, most importantly, for their insight regarding the oral history of the Doolbung people in Kununurra.

There are many more people to thank: Tom Heenan, John Bradley and John Hawke for their supervision; Andrew Tomkins and Patrick Hayman of the Monash Geosciences faculty, as well as Joel Vergunst for his line-by-line assistance with the geological sequences in Part Three. I must also thank Vincent Bennett, Trevor Worland, Ambrosio Souza, Sachin Varadarajan, Nathaniel Spencer-White, Bren Carruthers and Toby Lu for their participation and/or assistance in regards to the cricket sequences in Part Four.

I want to also thank Chris Worth, Peter Groves, Anna Poletti, Lynda Chapple and Rob Kelly for providing me with gainful employment whilst living and studying at the Monash campus in Clayton. A special warm and fuzzy thank you must go out to Sally Riley and to Louella D’Costa—the two unsung heroes of the Arts faculty at Monash in Clayton—two people who truly deserve pay raises and bigger offices.

Two other people from Monash University who deserve high praise and thanks are Zane Ma Rhea of the Education faculty—thank you for your advice and guidance over the past decade—and Stephanie Jury of the Arts faculty, an early “test-reader” for the initial mess that was Part Three. I would also be remiss if I did not thank the good people at Monash Residential: it was your job to accommodate me during the time I lived on campus in Jackomos Hall and if there’s one thing you did, it was accommodate my every last belligerent whim, and I thank you for what was a tumultuous and no doubt arduous—at least for you—four years.

Finally, I must at last thank Helene Taft Teichmann, the Jewish lobbyist in Melbourne who first implanted the very notion of the Kimberley Plan into my head years ago whilst en route to an Aboriginal school in South Australia. We parted ways in 2008; at that time, Helene encouraged me to focus on my writing, and so I did.

תודה רבה אוסטרליה ועוד נתראה בקרוב!

**“Could've, Should've, But Didn't:
An Exploration of Uchronic Fiction and
A Critical Study of Australia's Failure to Implement
Dr I.N. Steinberg's Kimberley Plan”**

TABLE OF CONTENTS (academic)

Copyright Notice	<i>ii</i>
Abstract	<i>iii</i>
Declaration	<i>v</i>
Main Supervisor Signature	<i>vi</i>
Acknowledgements	<i>viii</i>
Table of Contents (academic)	<i>x</i>
Table of Contents (creative, including <i>Appendices</i>)	<i>xiii</i>
 Introduction	 pages 1-15
Alternate Histories	2
Uchronic Fiction	3
Thematic Approach to Genre Study	4
Credibility and Plausibility in Uchronic Fiction	5
The Point of Historic Divergence	6
Other Features of Uchronic Fiction	7
The Detective Narrative Format in Uchronic Fiction	8
The Reconfigured Image of Indigenous Peoples in Uchronic Fiction	8
The Image of Women in Uchronic Fiction	10
Alternate Australia – Alternate Histories of Australia	11
The Kimberley Plan	11
The Kimberley Plan and the Creative Narrative	12
The Image of Indigenous Australians in the Creative Narrative	13
Thesis Objectives	14
 AXIS EXALTED	 pages 16-33
The Point of Historic Divergence	16
The Elliptical Revelation of an Alternate World History	18
The Direct Revelation of an Alternate World History	21
The Detective Narrative Format	22
The Rectification of History	24
The Political Agenda	25
The Image of Women	30

ISRAEL ENDANGERED	pages 34-77
<i>If Israel Lost the War</i> by Richard Z Chesnoff, Edward Klein and Robert Littell	34
The Point of Historic Divergence in <i>If Israel Lost the War</i>	35
The Elliptical Revelation of an Alternate World History in <i>If Israel Lost the War</i>	35
The Direct Revelation of an Alternate World History in <i>If Israel Lost the War</i>	36
The Political Agenda in <i>If Israel Lost the War</i>	37
The Image of Women in <i>If Israel Lost the War</i>	40
Glimpses into Our World in <i>If Israel Lost the War</i>	41
<i>The Plot Against America</i> by Philip Roth	41
The Point of Historic Divergence in <i>The Plot Against America</i>	43
The Rectification of History in <i>The Plot Against America</i>	46
The Political Agenda in <i>The Plot Against America</i>	48
The Image of Women in <i>The Plot Against America</i>	51
<i>The Yiddish Policemen's Union</i> by Michael Chabon	54
The Point of Historic Divergence in <i>The Yiddish Policemen's Union</i>	55
The Elliptical Revelation of an Alternate World History in <i>The Yiddish Policemen's Union</i>	56
The Direct Revelation of an Alternate World History in <i>The Yiddish Policemen's Union</i>	60
The Elliptical Revelation versus the Info-Dump in <i>The Yiddish Policemen's Union</i>	62
The Reconfigured Image of Indigenous Peoples in <i>The Yiddish Policemen's Union</i>	64
The Detective Narrative Format in <i>The Yiddish Policemen's Union</i>	67
The Political Agenda in <i>The Yiddish Policemen's Union</i>	68
The Image of Women in <i>The Yiddish Policemen's Union</i>	73
 ALTERNATE AUSTRALIA	 pages 78-99
The Point of Historic Divergence in <i>The Bush Soldiers and N</i>	78
The Elliptical Revelation of an Alternate World History in <i>The Bush Soldiers and N</i>	79
The Direct Revelation of an Alternate World History in <i>The Bush Soldiers and N</i>	81
"Asian Invasion" in <i>The Bush Soldiers and N</i>	83
The Image of Indigenous People in <i>The Bush Soldiers and N</i>	85
The Image of Women in <i>The Bush Soldiers and N</i>	89
The Political Agenda in <i>The Bush Soldiers and N</i>	93
 THE CREATIVE NARRATIVE	 pages 100-131
The Point of Historic Divergence in the Creative Narrative	100
The Elliptical Revelation of an Alternate World History in the Creative Narrative	101
The Reconfigured Image of Indigenous People in the Creative Narrative	108
The Image of Women in the Creative Narrative	111
The Info-Dump and the Detective Narrative Format in the Creative Narrative	121
The Political Agenda in the Creative Narrative	122
Genre Study Conclusion	125
 <u>ADDENDUM:</u>	
The Kimberley Plan – Why was it rejected?	pages 132-144
The Australian Jewish Response to the Kimberley Plan	134
The Jews and the Australian Government	135

John Curtin – Fourteenth Prime Minister of Australia	138
Who was Frank Anstey?	140
The Role of Anti-Semitism in the Failure of the Kimberley Plan	142
The Doolboong – An Oral History	pages 144-161
The Doolboong Language	146
The Doolboong – Geography	147
Local Aboriginal History of the East Kimberley	149
The Doolboong – Native Title Testimony	150
The Doolboong – Names on the Public Record	151
Frank Chulung – Doolboong Elder	152
Current Status of the Doolboong	154
The Doolboong in the Creative Narrative	155
EXTENDED BIBLIOGRAPHY	pages 162-179
Aboriginal Australia	162
Alternate History Criticism and Scholarship	165
Alternate History Narratives	169
Australian Fiction and Literature	170
Australian Flora and Fauna	172
Australian History and Politics	172
Cricket	174
General Fiction and Literature	174
Israel and the Jews	176
Jewish Australia	177
Other	178

The Jew Lizard Suite:
A Uchronic Novel in Six Parts

TABLE OF CONTENTS (creative, including *Appendices*)

Part One: The Jew Lizard	pages 180-207
Western Australia 1935	180
New South Wales 1939	185
Victoria 1946	191
Western Australia 1951	201
Part Two: Across the Road	pages 208-267
Western Australia 1953	208
Western Australia 1955	227
Western Australia 1957	264
Endnotes:	pages 268-274
 <u>APPENDICES:</u>	
Part Three: Diamonds!	pages 275-350
Western Australia 1964	275
Western Australia 1965	331
The Apocrypha: A Prologue to Part Six	pages 335-345
South Australia 1995	335
Australian Capital Territory 2015	341
Part Four: Once Upon A Time, A Cricket Match	pages 346-438
Western Australia 1975	346
New South Wales 1975	353
Australian Capital Territory 1976	361
Australian Capital Territory 1977	365
New South Wales 1977	367
Australian Capital Territory 1977	370
Western Australia 1977	377
Western Australia 1978	380
Australian Capital Territory 1978	386
Western Australia 1978	391
Queensland 1978	405
Australian Capital Territory 1978	410
Western Australia 1980	429
Central Australia 1981	435

Part Five: God-Fearing Sabbath-Keepers	pages 439-482
Western Australia 1985	439
Western Australia 1986	468
Endnotes	pages 483-490
Summary of Revisions	pages 491-501

**“Could've, Should've, But Didn't:
An Exploration of Uchronic Fiction and
A Critical Study of Australia's Failure to Implement
Dr I.N. Steinberg's Kimberley Plan”**

Introduction

Years ago whilst en route to an Aboriginal school in South Australia, I was told about the Kimberley Plan, an ambitious proposal that, had it succeeded, would have opened the East Kimberley region to large-scale Jewish settlement during World War Two. Though I had heard the name Kimberley numerous times before, I had not related it to a region in Australia and had never heard of a plan for a Jewish colony there. I was also told the Kimberley Plan had been “shot down by the Australians.” Nevertheless, this footnote to Australian history became part of my general knowledge, though I admit I rarely thought about it in the subsequent years that followed.

That all changed in April of 2011. At that time, I was editing a novel entitled *Shalom Jack Prizner*. Though that book had nothing to do with Australia, an idea came to me; twenty minutes later I had an outline for a new novel called *Golden Land of Plenty*. This idea was not sparked independently. Another source of inspiration was a short story collection, *The Best Alternate History Stories of the Twentieth Century*, edited by Harry Turtledove and Martin Greenberg. This anthology comprised a series of alternate history stories based on various “what if” scenarios dealing with pivotal events in global and national histories, among them “What if the Nazis had won World War Two?” and “What if the South had won the American Civil War?”

Fast forward to March 2012: I am enrolled in a Creative Writing doctoral program at Monash University in Melbourne. The outline I drafted earlier for *Golden Land of Plenty*, an outline that had the Governor-General—of all people—opening the Kimberley to large-scale Jewish settlement as early as 1932, was quickly dismissed and with good reason. Writing an alternate history in which Australia becomes home to the world's largest Jewish population in the second half of the twentieth century would not be as simple as reformatting the history of

Zionism leading up to the creation of the State of Israel, overlayed with themes of Jewish immigration and assimilation into the United States, yet reconfigured for the remote Australian example. It was clear that an educated and detailed understanding of Australian politics, culture, sports, literature and history would be required if the aim of writing a plausible and convincing alternate history of Australia was to be achieved.

Alternate Histories

Writing for the now defunct online magazine, *Helix SF*, Steven H. Silver offers a succinct definition for alternate histories:

...alternate history requires three things: 1) the story must have a point of divergence from the history of our world prior to the time at which the author is writing, 2) a change that would alter history as it is known, and 3) an examination of the ramifications of that change.

Using this definition, the term “alternate history” is very broad and can include novels such as Harry Turtledove’s *WorldWar* series in which aliens attack the planet during the Second World War, forcing the Allies and the Axis to unite in an effort to repel the invasion. This is not plausible as an alternate history; an alien invasion is not a credible development, and though the history of the Second World War is altered in the above named tetralogy, there are strong elements of science fiction and fantasy in the *WorldWar* series that place those novels beyond the definition of Uchronic fiction this thesis seeks to advance. A Uchronic narrative is similar to alternate history novel; both are based on alternate histories but, as this thesis explains, they differ in that an alternate history presented in a novel defined as Uchronic must be credible and plausible, and not enhanced by elements of fantasy, the supernatural or science fiction.

As the literature review began, a series of trends in the alternate history genre began to emerge: in alternate history novels in which the Nazis win the Second World War, for example, Hitler is unseen and presumed to be dying, already dead or somehow incapacitated due to a chronic illness brought on by a disease such as syphilis and gonorrhoea.¹ In alternate history novels in which the South wins the American Civil War, the United States is not only divided in

¹ Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle*, (Camberwell: Penguin Books, 1962); and Robert Harris, *Fatherland* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992).

two, but also left in an acute economic collapse where it succumbs to overt racist destitution.² Though not numerous, some alternate histories of Australia include a reconfigured image of Indigenous peoples, which is another feature of the Uchronic genre to be discussed in this thesis.³

Previous scholarship into alternate history narratives is not extensive. Indeed there is a significant gap in knowledge regarding the alternate history genre; a collection of papers appearing in *Classic and Iconoclastic Alternate History Science Fiction*, edited by Edgar L. Chapman and Carl B. Yoke, identify this gap: “For while numerous alternate history tales have now been written... no comprehensive poetics of this genre or sub-genre has been developed.”⁴ There is also the issue of nomenclature: the term “what-if stories” suggests a more popular and fabular genre, while “speculative fiction” runs the risk of over-definition, to say nothing of the fact that speculative fiction remains a separate category distinct from alternate history. Even the phrase “alternate history” appears tenuous according to Katherine Singles:

...critical discourse on what exactly constitutes an alternate history remains superficial and fraught with fundamental disagreements. Tellingly, even the term ‘alternate history’ is not a matter of consensus among English-language studies: allohistory, alternative history, uchronia, parallel-time novel, ‘what if’ story, quasi-historical novel, counterfeit world and parahistory are some of the terms in practice.⁵

As Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, author of *Fallacies and Thresholds: Notes on the Early Evolution of Alternate History*, states: “These disjunctive genre definitions are further muddled by a plethora of sometimes interchangeable, sometimes incompatible... genre names...”⁶

Uchronic Fiction

A new term is needed in order to define the genre and “Uchronic” is an adaptation based on the French, Spanish, Italian, and German names for this genre: *uchronie*, a combination of the

² Ward More, *Bring the Jubilee* (London: Gollancz, 2001), and Harry Turtledove, *How Few Remain*, (New York: Del Rey/Ballantine, 1997).

³ Stuart Macintyre and Sean Scalmer, ed. *What If? Australia As It Might Have Been* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006), and G.V. Portus, *They Wanted to Rule the World* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1994).

⁴ Edgar L. Chapman and Carl Yoke, eds. *Classic and Iconoclastic Alternate History Science Fiction* (Lewistown, NY: Edward Mellen Press, 2003), 21.

⁵ Kathleen Singles, “‘What If?’ and Beyond: Counterfactual History in Literature,” *Cambridge Quarterly* 40, 2(2011): 180-188.

⁶ Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, “Fallacies and Thresholds: Notes on the Early Evolution of Alternate History,” *Historical Social Record* 34, 2 (2009): 99-117.

prefix *U* – as in *Utopia* – coupled with the Greek word for time: *chronos*.⁷ For the purposes of this thesis, Winthrop-Young's definition will be employed and, as such, "alternate history and uchronia will be used synonymously."⁸ In fact, the universal position of most scholars can be summarized as follows: "The counterfactual is a form of... alternate history... [as] both methods... are ultimately the same."⁹

As noted by Chapman and Yoke, the gap in knowledge regarding the alternate history genre concerns the absence of any "comprehensive poetics of th[e] genre or sub-genre."¹⁰ This thesis will address that specific gap in knowledge utilising a thematic genre study based on different categories of Uchronic fiction narratives, thereby establishing a set of poetics for Uchronic fiction.

Thematic Approach to Genre Study

The approach to this Uchronic genre study is thematic. In an attempt to distinguish the general characteristics of the alternate history genre and to build upon those themes, notable examples of Uchronic fiction will be examined according to a thematic framework that discusses various features of the genre as they recur across various Uchronic texts. As such, a cursory investigation of Uchronic fiction yields the knowledge that a particular premise, a different outcome to World War Two, is a popular theme in the genre. In the words of Gavriel David Rosenfeld, the author of *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism*: "Within the general field of alternate history, the Third Reich has been explored more often than any other historical theme."¹¹ This assertion is echoed in *Alternate Histories: Eleven Stories of the World as It Might Have Been*, edited by Charles G. Waugh and Martin H. Greenberg. In addition to books such as Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* and Robert Harris's *Fatherland*, several works have been written about the societal perceptions of the history, memory and legacy of Germany's Nazi past. Uchronic novels that imagine a world in which the Nazis triumph in the Second World War are an essential aspect of these discourses.

The recurrent features of Uchronic fiction include: the point of historic divergence; the elliptical or direct revelation of an alternate world history; the detective narrative format, a

⁷ "What is Alternate History?" Uchronia.net, accessed on March 15, 2012. www.uchronia.net/intro.html.

⁸ Winthrop-Young, "Fallacies and Thresholds: Notes on the Early Evolution of Alternate History," 99-117.

⁹ Brent Stypczynski, "No Roads Lead to Rome: Alternate History and Second Worlds," *Extrapolation* 46, 4 (2005).

¹⁰ Chapman and Yoke, *Classic and Iconoclastic Alternate History Science Fiction*, 21.

¹¹ Gavriel David Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 211.

reconfigured image of Indigenous peoples, as well as the rectification of history, also known as the self-correcting feature or the *deus ex machina*. Other features include the image of women and the political agenda potentially motivating the writing of Uchronic fiction. These features will be examined utilising a genre study divided into three categories:

- 1.) Axis Exalted – What if the Nazis had won World War Two?
- 2.) Israel Endangered – What if Israel was endangered and/or destroyed?
- 3.) Alternate Australia – What if novels of Australia.¹²

Each category will be explored through the discussion of three main texts: for example, in Israel Endangered, the three books discussed are *If Israel Had Lost the War* by Robert Littell, Richard Z Chesnoff and Edward Klein; Michael Chabon's *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*; and Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America*. The question posed by this research is to determine the major themes and conventions inherent and recurrent in the Uchronic genre and, in relation to the creative narrative that accompanies this research, to either adapt those themes and conventions or to discard them. While speculations about alternate history are sometimes derided as a useless “parlour game,”¹³ the creative narrative contains at least one point of historic divergence: John Curtin of the Australian Labor Party never becomes prime minister because Robert Menzies and the United Australia Party do not leave office in 1941. Robert Menzies, unlike John Curtin, agrees to implement the Kimberley Plan, a pivotal plot point of historic divergence woven into the narrative as part of the elliptical revelation of an alternate world history in Uchronic fiction.¹⁴

Credibility and Plausibility in Uchronic Fiction

A key feature of the Uchronic genre is the need for plausible credibility. To write a narrative that adheres to what this thesis will define as Uchronic, the story ought not to stretch the limits of plausibility. One would not want to draft an alternate history of the American Civil War by having characters going back in time through the use of a time machine in order to

¹² Two other categories: Elusive Appomattox—alternate histories premised on different outcomes of the American Civil War—and Islam Insh'Allah—Uchronic novels premised on Muslim-centric worlds—were explored in this research but not included here in this thesis.

¹³ E.H. Carr, *What Is History?* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1961), as cited in Andrew Roberts, ed., *What Might Have Been: Leading Historians on Twelve 'What Ifs' of History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2004).

¹⁴ The possibility that Robert Menzies would have said yes as opposed to John Curtin, who said no, is discussed in two books: Leon Gettler's *An Unpromised Land* (South Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre, 1993), 107-108; and Michael Blakeney's *Australia and the Jewish Refugees 1933-1948* (Sydney: Croom Helm Australia, 1985), 151. Also, and this is admittedly vague, there are some indications from Menzie's 1941 diary that suggest Menzies was impressed by Jewish fortitude in the Middle East, thereby lending some credence to the idea that Menzies would have been more likely to have approved the Kimberley Plan rather than reject it, as did John Curtin.

provide AK-47s to the Confederacy.¹⁵ Time travel is not plausible, not for now at least, and writing a what if story where characters can jump back and forth between our world and some alternate universe or “mirror-Earth” would likewise skirt the boundaries of credibility. In their introduction to *Classic and Iconoclastic Alternate History Science Fiction*, Chapman and Yoke are emphatic about this, suggesting “the alternate history tale... requires considerable erudition about historical events and the ability to extrapolate plausibility from historical realities.”¹⁶ This sentiment is echoed by Andrew Roberts in *What Might Have Been*, where he contends “the workings of cause and effect have to be credible.”¹⁷

The Point of Historic Divergence

A point of historic divergence is a specific requirement of the alternate history genre. Karen Hellekson, in her book *The Alternate History: Reconfiguring Historical Time*, has dissected this central feature of the genre. It is important to note that Hellekson, along with other scholars such as Silver, Roberts, Chapman, Yoke, Winthrop-Young, and McKnight, have consistently referred to the point of historic divergence as “the point of divergence,” omitting the word “historic.” The fact that previous scholarship has universally omitted the most central feature of the alternate history genre is somewhat surprising, considering these same scholars are not at all united in what to call the genre and on some occasions do not even agree amongst themselves.¹⁸ Every scholar, however, agrees that there must be a point of historic divergence in any alternate history narrative, which Hellekson splits into three different types of historic divergence points:

- 1) the nexus story, which includes time-travel-time-policing stories and battle stories; (2) the true alternate history, which may include alternate histories that posit different physical laws; and (3) parallel worlds story.¹⁹

This project, with its examination of historical records as they pertain to the Kimberley Plan, emphasises the role of actual history in the alternate history narrative; hence the term the point of *historic* divergence. The point of historic divergence is the moment in any Uchronic

¹⁵ This is the basic plot of Harry Turtledove's *The Guns of the South*, an alternate history novel not under review for this genre study.

¹⁶ Chapman and Yoke, *Classic and Iconoclastic Alternate History Science Fiction*, 3.

¹⁷ Roberts, *What Might Have Been*, 6.

¹⁸ Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, “Fallacies and Thresholds: Notes of the Early Evolution of Alternate History,” *Historical Social Research*, Vol. 34, no. 2 (2009): 102.

¹⁹ Karen Hellekson, “Towards a Taxonomy of the Alternate History Genre,” *Extrapolation* 41.3, 248 (2000).

narrative when actual history diverges into an alternate history. This point can take on different forms and can appear anywhere in a Uchronic novel, in the prologue, for instance, or deep in the middle of a narrative. Stemming from this, Uchronic narratives must, by definition, also interact with actual history by re-imagining and reconfiguring the historical sequence as it is known in a different way that is both credible and plausible. The outcome of a credible and plausible alternate history narrative is the depiction of a Uchronic world that is similar to our own but at pivotal points also different, yet not altogether better or worse than actual history. To achieve this, history, as it is known, must be engaged with. Indeed the counterfactual re-imagining of history is an essential part of this interaction, for in the words of British historian Niall Ferguson, “the business of imaging such counterfactuals is a vital part of the way in which we learn.”²⁰

Other Features of Uchronic Fiction

Beyond the point of historic divergence, there are several other features inherent to Uchronic fiction, including the detective narrative format, the reconfigured image of Indigenous peoples, the image of women, and the political agenda in writing Uchronic fiction. Though these features do not appear across all examples of Uchronic fiction—which is why these features are *recurrent* rather than fixed or solid—they are significant enough to merit discussion through the course of a genre study.

The rectification of history, also known as the *deus ex machina* and as the self-correcting feature, is another recurrent feature this genre study will examine. In Philip Roth’s *The Plot Against America*, a point of historic divergence—that Franklin Delano Roosevelt loses the 1940 United States presidential election to Charles Lindbergh, the famous aviator and Nazi sympathiser—is shown to have disastrous consequences: Hitler is appeased as anti-Jewish pogroms sweep across America. Philip Roth quickly sets things right in the concluding chapter when Lindbergh disappears and Roosevelt is returned to office after a special election. In short, history as it is known, resumes its known course, resolving the plot in such a way as to *correct* the evident mistake that was the election of Charles Lindbergh in the first place.

Another recurrent feature of the Uchronic genre is the occasional presence of a political agenda on the part of the Uchronic fiction writer. For this part of the framework, “agenda” is defined according to *The Oxford English Dictionary* as “the underlying intentions or motives of a particular person.” This definition is echoed by *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, which defines

²⁰ Niall Ferguson, ed., *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals* (New York, Basic Books, 1997), 2.

agenda as “a plan or goal that guides someone’s behaviour” (or, in this case, writing), that is often hidden or “kept secret.” Each Uchronic novel reviewed in this thesis will be examined to ascertain the possible existence of a political or, for that matter, personal agenda that perhaps motivated the writing of Uchronic fiction.

The Detective Narrative Format in Uchronic Fiction

The detective narrative format is another recurrent feature of Uchronic fiction that appears frequently across the genre. *The Yiddish Policeman’s Union*, for example, is an award-winning alternate history novel based on the premise: “What if the Jews of Europe had been relocated to Sitka, Alaska?” Taking the form of a murder mystery, Michael Chabon employs the detective narrative format to depict an alternate history, yet his literary adroitness is not immune to criticism, a point to be discussed further in the Israel Endangered category of the genre study.

The detective narrative format, in general, allows the writer and the reader of Uchronic fiction to explore a world that could have resulted had a particular historical event in the past occurred differently. The detective narrative format allows for a series of discoveries that, when put together, tell the story or resolve the central crime. In some crime novels, these incidents serve as a plot “MacGuffin”—“a plot device that has no specific meaning or purpose other than to [artificially] advance the story”²¹—and are of secondary importance to the plot. This is very much the case in some Uchronic narratives. As this thesis will exhibit, the detective narrative format is utilised as a technique not only in the case of *The Yiddish Policeman’s Union*, but also in Len Deighton’s *SS-GB*, Robert Harris’s *Fatherland* and, to a lesser extent, in John A. Scott’s *N*.

The Reconfigured Image of Indigenous Peoples in Uchronic Fiction

In Uchronic fiction, the image of Indigenous people is often reconfigured. In other instances, the portrayal of Indigenous peoples is, by most twenty-first century standards, disparaging and disrespectful. Though most of the novels reviewed in this genre study do not elevate the image of Indigenous people, there is in fact a precedent within Uchronic fiction concerning this aspect of the genre study framework. This is particularly relevant in two categories of Uchronic narratives outside the scope of this genre study: those premised on different outcomes to the American Civil War and Uchronic narratives based on Muslim-centric

²¹ “MacGuffin”, accessed on March 18, 2016. www.urbandictionary.com.

worlds. These types of “what if” scenarios customarily offer examples of reconfigured images of Indigenous peoples, the most compelling of which are *How Few Remain* by Harry Turtledove and Kim Stanley Robinson’s *The Years of Rice and Salt*.

In *How Few Remain*—a Uchronic novel that envisions an American South winning the American Civil War—Turtledove’s portrayal of Indigenous people, in this case Native Americans, stands out. Actual history suggests that Geronimo, the famous chief of the Bendonkohe Apache, was a fierce warrior who antagonized the United States and Mexico in attempt to thwart their advancement into and annexation of Apache land. In *How Few Remain*, the already legendary Geronimo is endowed with yet another attribute: he is a savvy diplomat prepared to play the Confederacy against the Union whilst having sanctuary granted to him and his people within the newly-purchased, formerly-Mexican state of Sonora.²² Respect, as well as a type of strategic alliance, is accorded to the Apache by the Confederacy and, though this dynamic is short-lived, this portrayal of Native Americans stands in contrast to actual history.

This is similar to Kim Stanley Robinson’s *The Years of Rice and Salt*, a Uchronic novel premised on a world dominated by Islam. Robinson begins each section of his Uchronic novel with a series of maps that, over time, indicate the existence of a Native American population largely unaffected and independent from extra-continental colonisation. The image of the Hodenosaunee is particularly reconfigured in *The Years of Rice and Salt*; they maintain diasporic communities across islands north of Britain and are portrayed as “capable... of resisting the Chinese to their west and the Firanjis [Muslim-explorers from a Muslim-repopulated Europe] to their east...”²³ The Hodenosaunee are also involved in nuclear physics (at one point they are present at “an international gathering of atomic physicists” in Iran),²⁴ and are able to flex political and military muscle far beyond the shores of North America. In a drastic reconfiguration, the Hodenosaunee are elevated to the status of a global power when they send a “fleet” across the Atlantic to stop a *coup d’état* in “Nsara,” the Uchronic name for Brittany in a politically unstable version of France.²⁵

This genre study will examine where and how various writers of Uchronic fiction have reconfigured the image of various groups of Indigenous peoples native to their Uchronic worlds. In Michael Chabon’s *The Yiddish Policeman’s Union*, for instance, the image of Indigenous

²² Harry Turtledove, *How Few Remain* (London: Ballantine/Del Rey, 1998), 183 and 348.

²³ Robinson, *The Years of Rice and Salt*, 629.

²⁴ *ibid*, 677.

²⁵ *ibid*, 704.

people, in this case Native American Tlingit people, is reconfigured but not necessarily elevated or uplifted, as will be shown in the Israel Endangered category of the genre study. Drawing on this example, the creative narrative that accompanies this research significantly alters the historical depiction of Aboriginal Australians in a way never seen previously in Australian literature. This feature of Uchronic fiction is an important aspect of the creative narrative, which includes a reconfigured image of the Doolboong people, an Aboriginal group located in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia. It is important to note that until recently the only known facts about the Doolboong people were that their language was dead and that they as a people were “finished.”²⁶ As this thesis will demonstrate, at least one of those two known facts appears to be untrue.

The Image of Women in Uchronic Fiction

The thematic framework for this genre study includes a discussion regarding the image of women in Uchronic fiction. As this research will indicate, there does not appear to be a specific archetype of woman character for the Uchronic genre. Instead, there is a wide variety of how women characters are depicted; some are trite or inconsequential to the plot while others are integral to the story. This research initially included two other categories, one of which focused on Uchronic novels premised on Muslim-centric worlds. The discussion of the image of women was thus relevant in particular regard to that category where, for instance, it was important to address the way authors of Uchronic narratives based on Muslim-centric worlds depict or, perhaps more aptly, *deal* with the perception held by many in the West that women in Muslim countries are subjugated or treated poorly by Muslim societies and cultures.²⁷

This aspect of the framework was also included to emphasize the diverse images of women depicted in Uchronic fiction and to indicate how these diverse images influenced the depiction of women characters in the creative narrative. Celia Corres-Patkin, for example, a character in Part Four of the creative narrative, is loosely modeled on some of the characterizations attributable to the Marcia Sawtell character from John Hooker's *The Bush Soldiers* but was, for the most part, written in response to the Mindi MacCallum Ricklesby character in Part Three of the creative narrative who is, in turn, written in a response to the

²⁶ *Ward And Others (On Behalf Of The Miriuwung And Gajerrong People) And Others V State Of Western Australia And Others*. 1999. Federal Court of Australia. Print. Page 519; “Bulls Bilinggin told Dr Shaw in 1974,” Bruce Shaw, *Countrymen: The Life Histories of Four Aboriginal Men* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1986).

²⁷ This category was entitled “Islam Insh’Allah” was cut from the dissertation due to university-regulated word-count restrictions.

Barbara Barga character from Len Deighton's *SS-GB*. By extension, Miriyam Freedel's depiction as a Jewish wife and mother in Parts Four, Five and Six of the creative narrative is, to some degree, modeled after one of the Jewish mothers—Bess Roth—depicted in Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America*. For that matter, Liesel Freedel's characterization in Part Two of the creative narrative is similar to Philip Roth's depiction of Selma Wishnow, the other Jewish mother from *The Plot Against America*.

Another important reason for this aspect of the thematic framework: of the nine novels reviewed for the genre study, all of them were written by men. As the research suggests, some writers of Uchronic fiction draft women characters better than others, though this may be a question of taste, opinion, conjecture or preference.

Alternate Australia – Alternate Histories of Australia

When reviewing the genre, it becomes clear that Uchronic fiction related to Australia is underexplored, especially when compared to the many examples revolving around premises of Axis Exalted. Though there are several novels—for example John Marsden's young adult *Tomorrow When the War Began* series—that are, in a sense, based on a what if premise (what if Australia was attacked, invaded, conquered and occupied by malevolent, crypto-Asiatic forces?), the vast majority of these novels fall more appropriately into the category of Invasion Literature rather than into the realms of Uchronic fiction. Novels that focus on the aftermath of foreign invasion and occupation of Australia overlap with Uchronic narratives premised on an alternate version of Australia, but are also beyond the scope of this research.

The Kimberley Plan

The creative narrative that accompanies this research is based on the premise “What if the Kimberley Plan had succeeded?” The Kimberley Plan was a proposal to establish a large-scale, foreign Jewish settlement in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia. This proposal was first gazetted in Perth in 1939. Over a relatively short period of time, Dr Isaac Nachman Steinberg, a Russian Jew sent from London by the Freeland League, the Jewish organisation tasked with procuring both the land as well as the public and political approval for the Kimberley Plan, was able to garner the support of many important “opinion-makers” in Australia, the Archdiocese of Perth and several trade unions among them. After a brief visit to Wyndham and what is today modern Kununurra, the two major population centres in East Kimberley, Steinberg

first approached Robert Menzies' United Australia Party federal government in 1940 with his proposal, but World War Two broke out and the powers-that-be in Canberra proved sympathetic yet unresponsive to the Kimberley Plan, citing the sudden outbreak of global hostilities as reason for their preoccupation. John Curtin, the Australian Labor prime minister who succeeded Robert Menzies in 1941, later rejected the Kimberley Plan on behalf of the Australian Government in a letter to Dr I.N. Steinberg dated 15 July 1944.²⁸

This brief sequence of historic events is documented in Leon Gettler's *An Unpromised Land*, published in 1993, and in *Australia – The Unpromised Land*, published in 1948 and written by Dr Isaac Nachman Steinberg four years after Prime Minister John Curtin rejected the Kimberley Plan. Beyond these two titles, several other books contain additional details about the Kimberley Plan, but what none of these texts address is why the Kimberley Plan failed to gain the support of the Australian government. It is known that Steinberg came to Australia and received widespread support from some surprising places, and it is known that John Curtin, on behalf of the Government of Australia, rejected the plan, but what is not known is what perhaps motivated John Curtin's rejection. Up until now, scholarly research into the Kimberley Plan has not adequately dealt with this question, yet it persists. There are many reasons why this question is worthwhile and, in relation to Uchronic fiction and the creative narrative that accompanies this research—which reverses the actual history of the Kimberley Plan with a credible and plausible point of historic divergence—it is useful to again quote Niall Ferguson: “to understand how it was, we need to understand how it *wasn't*.” (emphasis italicised)²⁹

The Kimberley Plan and the Creative Narrative

The genre study has yielded specific trends and conventions recurrent in the Uchronic genre: for example, the point of historic divergence and the need for plausible credibility. The creative narrative that accompanies this research will advance the genre of Uchronic fiction by credibly and plausibly interacting with Australian history as it pertains to the Kimberley Plan. In an effort to create new knowledge about the Kimberley Plan, the biographies and writings of some of the individuals that were involved will be examined in an effort to determine some of the reasons the Kimberley Plan failed to get John Curtin's support.

²⁸ Isaac N Steinberg, *Australia- The Unpromised Land, In Search of a Home* (London: Victor Gollancz), 166.

²⁹ Ferguson, *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals*, 87.

There are many reasons for this interest, first and foremost, a desire to establish a credible and plausible point of historic divergence for the creative narrative. Also, as actual history indicates, the Kimberley Plan was rejected; the answer was “no” but, in the creative narrative, the answer will be “yes” and actual history will thus be altered. The most profound implication of this is that in 2015, the East Kimberley region of northern Western Australia is highly urbanised and home to over ten million people, many of whom are Jewish and/or Aboriginal, the latter in keeping with the reconfigured image of Indigenous peoples, which is another recurrent feature of Uchronic fiction.

There are several additional questions that follow from this point, perhaps most prominent the role of anti-Semitism: was anti-Semitism the reason the Kimberley Plan failed? The phrase “anti-Semitism” is somewhat problematic: though *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines anti-Semitism as “hostility or prejudice against Jews,” in practice its meaning proves difficult to ascertain; in some cases, for example, “anti-Semitism” is used by pro-Israel supporters against anyone who speaks critically of the Jewish State or Jews in general even if that critic is Jewish or Israeli. This thesis will nevertheless include a discussion of the role anti-Semitism played, if any, in the rejection of the Kimberley Plan. Another aspect of the Kimberley Plan under review is the role of the Australian Jewish community at that time: what did the Jews of Australia say about the Kimberley Plan? Were the Jews of Australia in favour or against the Kimberley Plan? Did the leaders of the Jewish communities in Australia say anything in favour or against the Kimberley Plan and if so what did they say?

The Image of Indigenous Australians in the Creative Narrative

The creative narrative that accompanies this research will also include as a major theme the interaction between the Jewish settlers of the Kimberley and the local Aboriginal people in that area, particularly the Doolbung people. In Australia today, there is a perception that a long-standing relationship exists between the Australian Jewish community and Aboriginal people. True, there are several notable examples of Jewish-Aboriginal interaction across a wide spectrum of issues ranging from health and education to legal aid and activism. In the realm of Australian literature, two important books, Patrick White’s *Riders in the Chariot* and Xavier Herbert’s *Poor Fellow My Country*—both writers are not Jewish, nor are they Aboriginal—feature extensive, albeit fictional relationships between Aboriginal people and Jews. However, despite these perceptions, the depth of dialogue between the Australian Jewish community and the Aboriginal

people in reality is slim; in the words of the South African-born Colin Tatz, the record of Jewish community involvement in Aboriginal affairs is “anorexic.”³⁰

Despite this, there will be an interaction between the Jews of *shtetl* Europe that arrive in Western Australia to establish a Jewish colony and the local Aboriginal people already in the East Kimberley region. This Jewish-Aboriginal dynamic will be multi-faceted and complex and, like the creative narrative, will take place over an eighty-year period, and the image of Aboriginal people in the Kimberley will be reconfigured. It was widely believed, for example, that the Doolbung people—the Aboriginal group located near the Wyndham area of Western Australia—are “finished” and that the Doolbung language is dead.³¹ In the creative narrative, the Doolbung people will be many things—including wealthy and healthy—but certainly not extinct.³²

Thesis Objectives

Though previous scholarship into alternate history narratives has been conducted, to date a set of “poetics” that define the genre has not yet been developed.³³ This thesis, as well as the creative narrative that accompanies this research, seeks to address this gap while at the same time coining a new term for the genre: Uchronic fiction. This thesis is also meant to acquaint any newcomer to Uchronic fiction with the recurrent features of the genre in preparation for reading the creative narrative. This exploration of Uchronic fiction takes the form of a genre study followed by two addenda, a creative narrative and, finally, appendices.

As stated previously, the genre study is divided into three distinct categories, with the second category—Israel Endangered—focusing individually on three very different Uchronic novels based on different outcomes for Jewish people in the second half of the twentieth century into the twenty-first century. The third category, Alternate Australia, will focus on three novels, two of which—*The Bush Soldiers* by John Hooker and the 2014 novel *N* by John A. Scott—inhabit the same Uchronic world. The last novel to be discussed in that category is the creative narrative that accompanies this research, which is based on the success of the Kimberley Plan and therefore depicts an alternate history of Australia.

³⁰ Colin Tatz, “Jews and Aborigines”, in Geoffrey Brahm Levey and Philip Mendes, *Jews and Australian Politics* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Books, 2004) 161.

³¹ William B McGregor, *The Languages of the Kimberley, Western Australia* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon 2004), 74-75; as well as Francis Kofod, Interview with David Muller, (Kununurra, Western Australia, June 2014).

³² It is important to note that extensive research **was** undertaken to determine the current status of the Doolboong today.

³³ Chapman and Yoke, ed., *Classic and Iconoclastic Alternate History Science Fiction* 21.

The alternate history depicted in the creative narrative is of course a departure from actual history, and is discussed at length in the two addenda immediately following the genre study, the first of which—The Kimberley Plan – Why was it rejected?—looks at the failure of the Kimberley Plan to win approval by examining the biographies of various Australian government officials as well as the reactions, many of them published, of various Jewish community leaders in Melbourne and Sydney at the time the scheme was floated in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The purpose of this critical examination is to determine the potential role, or lack thereof, of anti-Semitism in the demise of that scheme. This critical examination is additionally important because the creative narrative reverses this rejection with a credible and plausible point of historic divergence from actual history.

The second addendum—The Doolboong—presents the actual and little known and largely undocumented oral history of the Doolboong people, which is important due to the fact that the creative narrative that accompanies this research reconfigures the image of the Doolboong in a manner inconsistent with their presumed yet erroneous “finished” and “extinct” status.³⁴ This reconfiguration is emblematic of the reconfigured image of Indigenous people, one of the recurrent features of Uchronic fiction prominent in some of the narratives under review in the genre study and, more importantly, in the creative narrative that follows this research.

The creative narrative that accompanies this research is premised on the success of the Kimberley Plan and, as a result, it presents an alternate version of Australia. Parts One and Two of the creative narrative are included in this dissertation. Part Three continues in appendices along with Part Four. Given that word count limitations prevent the inclusion of the entire novel in this thesis, the appendices give the examiner the option to continue reading the creative narrative beyond the bound copy of the dissertation.

³⁴ Ward **and** Others (*On Behalf Of The Miriuwung And Gajerrong People*) And Others V State Of Western Australia And Others. 1999. Federal Court of Australia. Print. Page 519 and page 546, Lines 17-19: “According to the evidence presented, Doolboong is extinct as a separate Aboriginal community,”; and “Bulls Bilinggin told Dr Shaw in 1974,” Bruce Shaw, *Countrymen: The Life Histories of Four Aboriginal Men* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1986).

AXIS EXALTED

This thesis will define the “poetics” of the genre of Uchronic fiction utilising a thematic framework that will identify recurrent features as they occur across several key Uchronic texts. These features will be examined using three different categories of Uchronic fiction based on various “what if” scenarios. To introduce key terms, and to provide a basic definition by way of example, this first category of the genre study—Axis Exalted—will function as an introduction to the recurrent features that are unique and inherent to the Uchronic genre.

As a number of critics have noted, there are numerous alternate history Uchronic novels based on the premise of Axis Exalted.³⁵ For the purposes of this genre study, three exemplary Uchronic novels based on this premise will be examined utilising the thematic framework: *The Man in the High Castle* by Philip K. Dick, *SS-GB* by Len Deighton, and *Fatherland* by Robert Harris.

These narratives were selected for specific reasons ranging from their status within the Uchronic genre to the fact that, in the case of Deighton’s *SS-GB*, they depict a Great Britain conquered and occupied by Nazi Germany. Another reason is timing: *The Man in the High Castle* by Philip K. Dick was published at the height of the Cold War in 1962, while *Fatherland* by Robert Harris was published in 1992 at the end of the Cold War just after the reunification of Germany in 1991. Published in 1978, *SS-GB* appears as an intermediate example and, as mentioned earlier, depicts a Great Britain under Nazi rule. Though Australia was a colony of Great Britain, no reference is made to or about Australia in *SS-GB*, yet given the cultural and colonial connections between Australia and Britain, it seemed appropriate to include a Uchronic narrative that depicts a Great Britain conquered and occupied by the Third Reich. These three examples have also influenced the development of the creative narrative that accompanies this research, in particular the image of women in Uchronic fiction.

The Point of Historic Divergence

Though not the first Uchronic novel to be based on a premise of Axis Exalted, *The Man in the High Castle* is probably the best-known narrative of its kind.³⁶ *The Man in the High Castle*

³⁵ Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 311.

³⁶ Amazon television, an online streaming source with original content, has recently adapted Philip K. Dick’s *The Man in the High Castle* as a television series.

is, in terms of structure and content, considered by many to be “[Philip K.] Dick’s most popular and one of his best”³⁷ novels:

[*The Man in the High Castle*] was a tremendous leap in the quality of Dick’s novels, comparable to the shift from *The Beautiful and the Damned* to *The Great Gatsby* in Fitzgerald’s career—except, in Dick’s case, he was writing in a genre in which the great majority of the works were at the level of *The Beautiful and the Damned* (or below it), so that in this case he helped to draw an entire genre up with him.³⁸

The Man in the High Castle takes place in an alternate history in which the Nazis and Imperial Japan win the Second World War. An ensemble piece, *The Man in the High Castle* involves multiple characters and takes place in multiple locations in a conquered and divided North America with most of the story taking place in Japanese-occupied San Francisco or in the Rocky Mountain States, a buffer zone between the German-occupied East Coast and the Japanese on the West Coast. This stands in contrast to Len Deighton’s *SS-GB* and Robert Harris’ *Fatherland*, which both revolve around a single, primary character with both novels taking place, for the most part, in a single location: *SS-GB* in London and *Fatherland* in Berlin.

The point of historic divergence in *The Man in the High Castle* is revealed on page sixty-seven: Giuseppe Zangara, referred to as “Joe Zangara”, assassinates US President-elect Franklin Delano Roosevelt in Miami in 1933. Actual history informs us that while there was an unsuccessful attempt on the life of Franklin Roosevelt in Miami in 1933, Roosevelt lived on to win three terms as US President. This historic fact is turned around in *The Man in the High Castle*: the assassination is successful and, as a result, the course of history from that point onward is different from actual history. In the words of Douglas A. Mackey, author of *Philip K. Dick*, all “alternate histories revolve around the basic premise that some event in the past did not occur as we know it did, and thus the present is changed”³⁹:

In most alternate histories, then, the change that makes the history different from ours is some violent shift in political leadership, or an altered result of a crucial battle.... Dick pays homage to both these traditions in [*The Man in the High Castle*].⁴⁰

³⁷ Chris Palmer, *Philip K. Dick: Exhilaration and Terror of the Postmodern* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), 109.

³⁸ Kim Stanley Robinson, *The Novels of Philip K. Dick* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Research Press, 1981), 39.

³⁹ Karen Hellekson, “Toward a Taxonomy of the Alternate History Genre,” *Extrapolation* 41.3, (Fall 2000): 248.

⁴⁰ Douglas A. Mackey, *Philip K. Dick* (Boston: Twayne’s United States authors series, 1988), 42.

“Crucial point[s] in history, such as a battle”, serve as the point of historic divergence in Len Deighton’s *SS-GB*, which begins with a cryptic prologue: a copy of Britain’s surrender order, complete with indecipherable signatures, dated February 18, 1941, nine months after a German invasion of southern England. This point of historic divergence paves the way for an alternate history depicting a Great Britain under Nazi rule. In Robert Harris’ *Fatherland*, the point of historic divergence is revealed on page eighty-four: the Nazis detonate a V-3 missile over New York in 1946, bringing “peace” to the world in the form of “a nuclear stalemate the diplomats called the Cold War” between the United States and a Third Reich in control of Europe from the edge of the English Channel to the Ural Mountains.⁴¹ Like *The Man in the High Castle*, the alternate history of the Second World War in both *SS-GB* and *Fatherland* stands in stark contradiction to actual history, yet these three novels depict alternate histories of Axis Exalted that are each chilling in their own unique and, some might say, horrific ways.

The Elliptical Revelation of an Alternate World History

The point of historic divergence leads into the next feature of the genre: the elliptical revelation of an alternate world history. In Uchronic fiction, the alternate history of the world is not the main story and most writers of Uchronic fiction will use one of two techniques to reveal the alternate world history as it exists in any Uchronic novel: either it is revealed to the reader elliptically or it is revealed directly in an info-dump where, in some cases, the alternate world history could, for all intents and purposes, be excised from the text with little or no impact on the overall narrative. In *The Man in the High Castle*, Dick opts to reveal the alternate world history elliptically in one of three ways: through dialogue, through the use of inner monologue attributed to individual characters, or by juxtaposing the alternate history of *The Man in the High Castle* with the alternate history of the book-within-a-book, *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*. Len Deighton likewise reveals the alternate world history inherent to *SS-GB* elliptically through dialogue, which is similar to Robert Harris’ *Fatherland*.

In Dick’s novel, the point of historic divergence is revealed to the reader elliptically as characters discuss the book-within-a-book, *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, which, in turn, allows these characters to take a glimpse into a world similar to yet different from actual history. In using an elliptical format, Dick reveals many aspects of this alternate world through dialogue between two minor characters: Wyndham-Matson, the boss of the protagonist, and Rita, a

⁴¹ Harris, *Fatherland*, 84.

veritable history buff who inserts historical information into a conversation about *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*. Wyndham-Matson, incidentally, is a man married to a different woman, making Rita his mistress. Rita is quite an informed and well-read mistress and, starting on page sixty-nine, she dutifully explains to Wyndham-Matson the alternate sequence of historical events that led to a Nazi triumph in the Second World War: the United States elected an isolationist government in 1940, Russia collapsed, and the Japanese attacked and destroyed the American Navy at Pearl Harbor in 1941. In 1942, the Luftwaffe destroyed both English radar stations and the Royal Air Force, while Rommel defeated British and Australian forces in Egypt in 1945, culminating in “Capitulation Day” when the remaining Allies surrendered to the Axis some time in 1947.

This information is, in and of itself, a comparison between the “alternate world” depicted in *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* versus the “real world” of *The Man in the High Castle*. *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* is an alternate history narrative that depicts an Allied triumph in World War Two, and the characters in *The Man in the High Castle* read *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* as an example of Uchronic fiction. This pivotal juxtaposition of “actual history” versus “alternate history” is the literary equivalent of what Niall Ferguson, in his book *Virtual History*, defines as the purpose of such speculations: “To understand how it actually was, we... need to understand how it actually wasn’t.”⁴² By the end of Dick’s novel, it has also been elliptically revealed that the Nazis drained the Mediterranean, enslaved black people and killed off the entire native population of Africa in less than a decade.⁴³ They have also developed a near-monopoly over the plastics industry⁴⁴ and use rockets to power commercial air travel and to colonise the planets of Mars and Venus.⁴⁵ Albert Speer, the famous Nazi architect, rebuilds America after the war in Dick’s novel, whereas in Harris’ *Fatherland*, which takes place in 1964, it is revealed elliptically that the triumphant new capital of Berlin, “the world’s largest city,”⁴⁶ was “designed by Reichsminister Albert Speer [and] completed in 1957.”⁴⁷

In a manner similar to Dick, Len Deighton also opts to reveal an alternate world history through dialogue in *SS-GB*. For example, it is revealed that Charles de Gaulle, the legendary

⁴² Ferguson, *Virtual History; Alternatives and Counterfactuals*, 87.

⁴³ Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle* (Camberwell: Penguin, 1962), 17.

⁴⁴ Dick, *The Man in the High Castle*, 25-26.

⁴⁵ *ibid*, 16.

⁴⁶ Harris, *Fatherland*, 18-19.

⁴⁷ *ibid*, 25, 83: It is revealed that the Berlin wall does not exist in this world and that the Soviets were defeated and Moscow occupied by Nazis in the “spring of ‘43.”

leader of France during and after the Second World War, was forgotten in Deighton's alternate version of history:

I wonder if anyone remembers that French army officer—de Gaulle—who escaped here to England when France fell? Did more or less the same thing, as I remember; promoted himself to General, and then declared that he was the voice of France. It never came to anything. As far as I know the Germans never bothered to include him on the Primary Arrest List.⁴⁸

Additional details regarding the world history inherent to *SS-GB* are later revealed through dialogue: the United States is neutral, Japan is an active world power, while the Soviets are aligned in some way with Nazi Germany and scheduled to have a parade—a joint Nazi-Soviet parade—through the streets of Whitehall. The reader also learns through dialogue that Winston Churchill was executed by firing squad in Berlin,⁴⁹ that the Queen and “two Princesses” are in New Zealand,⁵⁰ and that the Nazis establish a concentration camp on British soil at Wenlock Edge.⁵¹ It is also understood that while “the Queen and two princesses” have escaped to New Zealand, the Nazis have locked the King of England up in—of all places—the Tower of London.

In *Fatherland* by Robert Harris, an alternate history of technological development is presented when the primary character—*Kriminalpolizei* detective Xavier March, the protagonist-investigator—views “the Reich’s latest nuclear submarine in a newspaper photograph.”⁵² Other details of the alternate world history inherent to *Fatherland* include the United States boycotting the Olympic Games,⁵³ as well as the American-backing of Soviet guerillas fighting a “seemingly-endless struggle” in the Ural Mountains “for twenty years.”⁵⁴ Joseph Kennedy, rather than his son John Fitzgerald Kennedy, is the President of the United States in *Fatherland*, and prepared, as the plot reveals, to initiate a process of *détente* with the Third Reich.

⁴⁸ Deighton, *SS-GB*, 118.

⁴⁹ Len Deighton, *SS-GB* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), 114.

⁵⁰ Deighton, *SS-GB*, 130.

⁵¹ *ibid*, 246.

⁵² Harris, *Fatherland*, 40.

⁵³ *ibid*, 23: the US boycott of the Olympic Games is credible; it is revealed on page 198 that only Nazis win “every international sporting event except cricket, which only the English win.”

⁵⁴ Harris, *Fatherland*, 18.

The Direct Revelation of an Alternate World History

Some Uchronic novels utilise a direct revelation of an alternate world history, also known as the “info-dump”, where a large amount of factual information about the alternate world history is revealed directly to the reader by dumping it—for lack of a better term—into the narrative. This information is usually historical or cultural in terms of content and can take on many forms but, in short, its purpose is to inform the reader of the difference between our world and the alternative history depicted in any Uchronic novel. Examples of this feature will be discussed in other categories of the genre study but, in the case of *The Man in the High Castle*, *SS-GB* and *Fatherland*, the info-dump does not appear. Philip K. Dick, like Len Deighton, instead hides much of the alternate world history within the narrative, choosing to reveal it elliptically through dialogue or through inner monologue attributed to various characters, which is how Robert Harris sometimes reveals the alternate world history in *Fatherland*.

There is a nuanced question particular to this category: where is Adolf Hitler? Indeed, what happened to all those world leaders of the Second World War: Stalin, Churchill, Roosevelt, Mussolini and so on? The answers to these questions can be very interesting, while the question of *der Führer*—where is he and what is he doing—becomes relevant not just to *The Man in the High Castle*, but also to *SS-GB* and *Fatherland* as well as most Uchronic novels premised on Axis Exalted. In Dick’s novel, Hitler is described as “the Sick one” on page forty. Ill with advanced syphilis, Hitler is “in a sanatorium somewhere, living out his life of senile paresis” and, by the early 1960s, is never seen in public. Martin Bormann has taken over but, as is revealed elliptically, Bormann is also quite ill.⁵⁵ This aspect of the plot in *The Man in the High Castle* is presented elliptically as a backdrop to the events of the story. Though this genre study only looks at three examples of Axis Exalted, the removal of Hitler from power after a Nazi triumph in World War Two is a recurrent trend across this category, appearing again in Robert Harris’s *Fatherland* as well as in other examples of Uchronic narratives based on a premise of Axis Exalted.⁵⁶

In a manner similar to *The Man in the High Castle*, *Fatherland* also addresses this question. It is known with the introduction of the Charlotte MacGuire character that *Fatherland* takes place in April of 1964. As a journalist, Charlie MacGuire is in Berlin to cover Hitler’s seventy-fifth birthday, a point that is revealed elliptically within the first hundred pages of the

⁵⁵ Dick, *The Man in the High Castle*, 22.

⁵⁶ Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism*, 13.

book. This means Adolf Hitler is alive in the Uchronic world of *Fatherland* but not necessarily well. It is revealed that “it’s been months since [*der Führer* has] been seen—their way of building excitement.”⁵⁷ Though alive, Hitler is depicted as a reclusive septuagenarian far removed from the reins of despotic power. Nevertheless, *Fatherland* includes the upcoming visit to Berlin by American President Joseph Kennedy as a pivotal plot point. Though the United States is locked in a Cold War with the Nazis, President Joe Kennedy is travelling to Berlin to meet *der Führer* to begin a process of *détente*. Like *The Man in the High Castle* and *Fatherland*, Adolf Hitler is not a character in *SS-GB* but *der Führer* does appear to be alive, which is not ultimately the case in Dick’s novel where Hitler eventually dies, creating a power vacuum at the top of Nazi hierarchy in Berlin with major implications for global politics.

The Detective Narrative Format

Though *The Man in the High Castle*, *SS-GB* and *Fatherland* are similar to each other in terms of theme, the Deighton and Harris novels differ from Dick’s in that they both include a detective narrative at the centre of the plot. In the case of Deighton’s Uchronic novel, the reader knows from the brief plot description lifted from the dust jacket of the first edition or from the back cover of all subsequent paperback versions that *SS-GB* is a detective narrative revolving around a murder. The formula for a detective narrative is simple: a crime has been committed and law enforcement, a protagonist usually in the form of a detective or investigator, is brought in to solve the crime. What follows is a process of discovery and, in terms of the crime-solving motif central to the detective narrative, a process of elimination in which the list of suspects for the crime is whittled down, leading to the solution of the crime and plot resolution. Issues of motive and alibi are, along the way, introduced as elements central to the detective narrative format.

In the case of a Uchronic novel where the setting is an alternate history, an additional part of the process of discovery involves the revelation that, in the case of *SS-GB*, the story does not take place in London, but in Nazi-occupied London. The decision to write a detective narrative for *SS-GB* with an English protagonist-investigator as the primary character was critical according to the author:

⁵⁷ Harris, *Fatherland*, 328.

...I thought... the readers aren't going to buy a central character who's a highly placed collaborator, and I didn't want someone who was sweeping the floor at the German High Command and listening at the keyhole. The hero had to be English, I wanted him at the centre of affairs, but I just couldn't crack the problem of finding a sympathetic role for him. The one night in bed I suddenly had an idea. He could be a policeman, doing something like crowd control, nothing controversial... then I thought murder! He's going to be investigating a murder—no one is going to mind him co-operating with the enemy if he's doing such a socially okay job. It was the key to making [the] idea work, and without it *SS-GB* would probably never have been written.⁵⁸

As a detective narrative, *SS-GB* focuses on a protagonist-investigator—Douglas Archer, a Detective Superintendent working for Scotland Yard—tasked with investigating the mysterious murder of a well-dressed man. The mystery that drives *SS-GB* sticks to the detective narrative format with action and chase scenes, secret meetings in hidden passageways, truncated romance, quick love and *clichéd* sex in front of a roaring fire. Though the protagonist-investigator is a sort of low-level cog in the giant Nazi system occupying Britain, his murder investigation draws the attention of top Nazi officials and becomes increasingly convoluted, eventually leading to a resistance movement, a secret nuclear weapons program and an act of domestic terrorism as the body of Karl Marx is exhumed from its London tomb. The plot is further complicated when the protagonist-investigator is inducted into a scheme to free the King of England, now an invalid, from the Tower of London (with disastrous consequences for His Majesty), whilst delving deep into the world of Nazi party power politics.

Like *SS-GB*, the plot of *Fatherland* revolves around a murder: an important, high-ranking Nazi official is found dead in a Berlin river. The protagonist-investigator in *Fatherland*—the aforementioned Xavier March—is tasked with investigating the mysterious circumstances surrounding the murder. Xavier March follows leads and interrogates witnesses searching for clues, activating a process of discovery through which he will solve the murder mystery. In that respect, and in a manner similar to *SS-GB*, *Fatherland* is a detective narrative set in an alternate world of Axis Exalted, thereby adhering to this recurrent feature of Uchronic fiction.

In the alternate history of *Fatherland*, the Nazis win the Second World War and, as the winners of that war, they write the history that follows; this means the Holocaust remains hidden from public view or knowledge until a dead corpse turns up in the Havel in the first chapter. The protagonist-investigator soon discovers that the dead corpse found in the river is none other than

⁵⁸ Edward Milward-Oliver, *The Len Deighton Companion* (London: Grafton, 1987), 19: an interview with Len Deighton.

Josef Buhler, the German State Secretary for Nazi-occupied Poland, who attended the Wannsee Conference on 20 January 1942.⁵⁹ The “Final Solution to the Jewish Question” was discussed at the Wannsee Conference and Buhler, according to the minutes taken at that meeting, is on record stating the importance of solving “the Jewish Question... as quickly as possible.”⁶⁰

Uchronic novels premised on Axis Exalted depict an alternate world in which the Nazis win the Second World War, thus the “Jewish Question”, as it were, is answered with “the Final Solution”: the Jews of Europe have been decimated systematically and killed *en masse*. In the case of *Fatherland*, the World War Two-winning Nazis have omitted any traces of evidence of the Holocaust from public view, sweeping the mass extermination of European Jews under the rug by convincing the world that the Jews were “resettled” in remote parts of their now vast empire. The sudden murder of Josef Buhler thus threatens the impetus for good-will between the United States and Nazi Germany: if the alternate world of *Fatherland* were to discover that the triumphant Nazis had systematically—and successfully—exterminated the entire Jewish population of Europe during the Second World War, which they won, and then hidden this fact from the world until the investigation into the murder of a high-ranking Nazi uncovers it, the motivation for *détente* between the global superpowers would be doomed; even Joseph Kennedy, as President of the United States, would be disgusted at the revelation of an indisputable but hitherto unknown fact.

As stated previously, in the alternate history of *Fatherland*, the Nazis win the Second World War and, as the winners of that war, they write the history that follows; this reality is not lost on the Nazis and there is a statement from the Führer that is emblematic of this concept: “FOR ANY NATION, THE RIGHT HISTORY IS WORTH 100 DIVISIONS.”⁶¹ Written above the Reichsarchiv in triumphant, post-war Berlin, this quotation underscores the role of history in any Uchronic novel.

The Rectification of History

Another feature of Uchronic fiction is the rectification of history, also known as the *deus ex machina* or “self-correcting feature,” which can also include other “glimpses” into our world. As stated previously, *The Man in the High Castle* includes a book-within-a-book, *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, which becomes important as this novel careens towards narrative

⁵⁹ Deborah Dwork, Robert Jan van Pelt, *Holocaust: A History* (New York: Norton, 2002), 280.

⁶⁰ Christopher S. Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 410.

⁶¹ Harris, *Fatherland*, 238.

climax. Though not an accurate reflection of actual history, *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* provides the characters in *The Man in the High Castle* with a glimpse into a world where the Allies, and not the Axis, have won the Second World War. One of the main characters, Mr Tagomi, has a moment—a vision—where he sees a San Francisco more reflective of the San Francisco in our world, emphasizing the concept of a glimpse into actual history.⁶² The notion that characters in a Uchronic novel can take a look at a world more akin to actual history recurs throughout other examples of the genre, but in the case of *The Man in the High Castle*, this glimpse does not rectify or “correct” the sequence of history, nor does the alternate history revert to or rejoin actual history.

This feature is also not present in Len Deighton’s *SS-GB*, nor is it particularly prominent in Robert Harris’s *Fatherland*. Though the narrative climax of *Fatherland* is ambiguous, it does offer—at least theoretically—the potential that the admirable efforts of the protagonist-investigator will somehow disrupt the sequence of events in this alternate version of history that might possibly induce some rectification of history. For the most part, *Fatherland*, like *The Man in the High Castle* and *SS-GB*, does not include the self-correcting feature, nor is history rectified at any point in the novel, nor do any of the characters take a glimpse into our world; that is the reason why these features of Uchronic fiction are *recurrent* rather than fixed or solid.

The Political Agenda

As this thesis will demonstrate, some writers of Uchronic fiction either had or were suspected of having a political agenda whilst penning their Uchronic novels. In terms of Philip K. Dick’s *The Man in the High Castle*, the discussion as to whether or not the author had any political agenda is touched on by previous Dick scholarship. According to Gavriel David Rosenfeld, Dick “shared the interventionist belief that the United States had been correct in fighting Nazi Germany.”⁶³ Rosenfeld cites Dick’s desire to justify this “interventionist belief” by exhibiting the accentuated “severity” of the Nazis. Dick achieves this by juxtaposing the Japanese-controlled West Coast with “the uncouth barbarity of... the Nazis, whose fanatical

⁶² Dick, *The Man in the High Castle*, 222-223: “God, what is that? He stopped, gaped at hideous misshapen thing on skyline. Like nightmare of roller coaster suspended, blotting out view. Enormous construction of metal and cement in the air.

Mr Tagomi turned to a passer-by, a thin man in rumpled suit. ‘What is that?’ he demanded, pointing.

The man grinned. ‘Awful, ain’t it? That’s the Embarcadero Freeway. A lot of people think it stinks up the view.’

‘I never saw it before,’ Mr Tagomi said.

‘You’re lucky,’ the man said, and went on.

Mad dream, Mr Tagomi thought. Must wake up.”

⁶³ Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism*, 106.

excesses Dick outlines in fleeting, but nevertheless graphic terms.”⁶⁴ With a lifelong interest in the subject, Dick spent seven years researching Nazi Germany before writing *The Man in the High Castle* and, according to Rosenfeld, was “prompted” to preserve the “memory of Nazi barbarism.”

Many scholars of Dick’s work have also noted that *The Man in the High Castle* was influenced by another Uchronic novel, Ward Moore’s *Bring the Jubilee*, which is based on the “what if” premise of the American South winning the American Civil War.⁶⁵ In terms of Dick’s political agenda, Kim Stanley Robinson, author of *The Novels of Philip K. Dick*, believes “there is a political agenda” in *The Man in the High Castle*, but it’s “not overt, but... very strong nonetheless”:

1.) The fascists win World War Two. This book makes this statement as direct plot but also as symbolic allegory. Postwar society was still fascistic, and there could have been a different postwar world (illustrated in the book’s internal alternate history *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*) in which the Allies made a peaceful good world.

2.) Everyone makes history together, and what you think is a small action can have huge consequences; a very political statement.⁶⁶

Len Deighton denies any political agenda in the writing of *SS-GB*, insisting that his Uchronic novel, like all his books, is “apolitical,” a sentiment echoed by two scholars: Gavriel David Rosenfeld in *The World Hitler Made*, and Edward Milward-Oliver in *The Len Deighton Companion*. Rosenfeld mentions Deighton’s “fascination with Germany’s Nazi past,”⁶⁷ and, in an interview with Milward-Oliver, the author explained that “...*SS-GB* was the only time a whole book has been suggested to me” when asked by a friend “what I thought might have happened had Hitler actually invaded Britain”:

I said I’d seen quite a lot of the German planning, and outlined what probably would have happened. [It was] immediately suggested that the subject would make a marvellous novel—what... [can be] called an ‘Alternate World’ book. I’d never heard the expression before.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism*, 107.

⁶⁵ Sutin, *Divine Invasions: A Life of Philip K. Dick*, 113.

⁶⁶ Kim Stanley Robinson, *email correspondence* (November 1, 2014).

⁶⁷ Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism*, 66. Rosenfeld also mentions Deighton’s “iconoclastic proclivity... towards dispelling myths about the British past” allowed the author to “destroy clichés.”

⁶⁸ Milward-Oliver, *The Len Deighton Companion*, 19.

Yet the timing of *SS-GB*, combined with its humanising depiction of Nazi characters,⁶⁹ place the novel in a continuum regarding the development of alternate histories based on Axis Exalted, particularly in Britain. During the Second World War and after, British depictions of a Nazi triumph contained “black/white” “good/bad” imagery;⁷⁰ all that was British was seen as good and righteous, especially the resistance should Britain suffer defeat, while all that was German was seen as brutal and evil and, should the Third Reich triumph over the Empire, inherently tyrannical, if not downright satanic. The demonization of Nazis contrasted with the altruistically heroic British is part of the myth in the years immediately following the war and is reflected in the many British alternate history novels and stories of that era.⁷¹ By the time Philip K. Dick produced *The Man in the High Castle* in 1962, the concept of all Nazis being inherently and entirely evil had changed.⁷² Frequently, the conquering Nazis in alternate history narratives were depicted as bureaucratic, if not backbiting in terms of political manoeuvring, and not as the super-evil entity feared in the late 1930s and early 1940s.⁷³ The idea that those working for the Axis Powers couldn't be all bad takes shape in the three novels reviewed in this category: in the case of *SS-GB*, protagonist-investigator Douglas Archer does not appear corrupt or evil, but that does not mean his ethical and moral foundations are firm or secure. As the protagonist in a scenario of Axis Exalted, it is safe to assume that the ethical and moral standards that exist in such a Uchronic world are probably different from those self-evident in our world; after all, the protagonist is a local cop in league with the Nazis who now run Scotland Yard. As *SS-GB* progresses, and as its complex plot unfolds, the reader sees Archer play both the local British and their German occupiers against each other, thus exacerbating a tense rivalry between two Nazi bosses while establishing his characteristic ambivalence towards the Uchronic world he finds himself in.⁷⁴ The protagonist-investigator takes the Germans for granted and though he is a

⁶⁹ Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism*, 65-67: “*SS-GB* was most significant for its nuanced depiction of collaboration... *SS-GB* considerably humanized.... Deighton's... well-developed German characters.”

⁷⁰ *ibid*: “Beginning in the mid-1960s, the premise of a Nazi wartime victory ceased being depicted in black-and-white terms and instead became increasingly portrayed in a more nuanced fashion.”

⁷¹ *ibid*, 50: “British narratives now began to dissolve the once-clear divisions between heroic Britons and evil Germans by de-heroizing the former and de-demonizing the latter.”

⁷² *ibid*, 66: “Overall, the alternate histories that appeared between the mid-1960s and late 1970s painted an increasingly normalized portrait of Nazism.”

⁷³ *ibid*, 80, 184.

⁷⁴ Deighton, *SS-GB*, 15; and Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism*, 66: “A man described as ‘keeping his eyeshalf-closed’ to the Nazis’ brutal policies in occupied London, Archer is caught between his careerist desires to cooperate with his [Nazi] bosses and his yearning to preserve his own self-respect and the respect of his young son.”

Londoner by birth, he has adapted to the German presence dominating Britain and is, as the complex plot exhibits, morally and ethically ambivalent himself.⁷⁵

This, as a concept, is repeated in the other novels premised on Axis Exalted: Xavier March, the protagonist-investigator in *Fatherland*, as well as Mr Tagomi in *The Man in the High Castle*, are both ambivalent towards their worlds. In *SS-GB*, Deighton not only “moved to humanise the Germans,”⁷⁶ but also to dispel the myth of Britain’s “finest hour” by showing that fascism “could happen” in Britain.⁷⁷ *SS-GB* was released in 1978, many years after the Second World War when, it could be argued, the British Empire had transformed into something different to what existed before, during and immediately after that conflict. Coinciding with this change, *SS-GB* reflects “this sober, self-critical realization” of Britain’s “postwar decline from great power status” to “a more humble sense of national identity.”⁷⁸ *SS-GB* was also a commercial and critical success⁷⁹ and is considered by Anthony Burgess, a well-known English literary figure, to be one of Len Deighton’s best novels.⁸⁰ Though Deighton insists there was not a political agenda motivating *SS-GB*, other reviewers, like James Cameron in the *Guardian*, protested the “lack of moral outrage” towards the notion of a Nazi-occupied Britain wherein ordinary British folk collaborate with, as much as resist, their nefarious German overlords.⁸¹ Some reviewers, like Paul Abelman, questioned why Deighton would even pen such a novel; was his goal to reveal British collaboration under Nazi occupation an attempt “to... expand consciousness, generate beauty, or to reveal truth,” or was it an exhibition of “amoral pragmatism” on the part of the occupied British?⁸²

Though this may be speculative, Deighton probably wrote *SS-GB* with two ideas in mind: the first corresponds with the general realisation by 1978 that Britain’s Empire had declined and its power eclipsed in comparison with the “great power status” it enjoyed prior to the Second World War. Deighton, it has been said, was ready to “chip away” at the myth of Britain as the

⁷⁵ Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism*, 66: “For much of the novel, Archer’s ambiguous behavior is contrasted with Harry Woods’s steadfast opposition to the regime... Significantly, the motives of both detectives are highly complex and ambiguous.”

⁷⁶ *ibid*, 65-67: “*SS-GB* was most significant for its nuanced depiction of collaboration... *SS-GB* considerably humanized...Deighton’s...well-developed German characters.”

⁷⁷ *ibid*, 66: “In challenging any notion of British moral exceptionality, in short, Deighton chipped away at Britain’s myth of the “finest hour.”

⁷⁸ *ibid*, 67: “This sober, self-critical realization reflected in Britain’s postwar decline from great power status and the emergence of a more humble sense of national identity.”

⁷⁹ *ibid*, 69.

⁸⁰ Anthony Burgess, “Britain Under Hitler,” *Observer*, August 27, 1978, p. 22, as cited in Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism*, 69.

⁸¹ James Cameron, “Damn Nearly Happened Here,” *Guardian*, September 3, 1978, p. 22, as cited in Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism*, 69.

⁸² Paul Abelman, “Programmed,” *Spectator*, September 2, 1978, p. 22.

seat of global empire by depicting an alternate world in which fascism or, at the very least, an “amoral pragmatism” conquers and subjugates the British Empire. The other idea that likely motivated the writing of *SS-GB* could be far simpler: “to keep the paying customers happy.”⁸³

Robert Harris’s *Fatherland* was “strongly influenced by the end of the Cold War.”⁸⁴ Published in 1992, *Fatherland* was presumably written during the period following the collapse of the Berlin Wall thirty years after *The Man in the High Castle*. Europe, to say nothing of the world, underwent many changes during the late 1980s and early 1990s, and though *Fatherland* takes place in Berlin in 1964, the changes that were afoot in Europe at the time this Uchronic novel was written must be considered when discussing its narrative content. By depicting a world of Axis Exalted with a United States and Great Britain willing to collaborate with the Nazis, Harris, like Deighton, might also be seen to be commenting on the sense of post-war decline in Britain.⁸⁵ Gavriel David Rosenfeld, for instance, suggests the “critical gaze” of Harris’s *Fatherland* is better directed toward the domestic debate surrounding Britain’s economic integration into the European Union. With the sudden reunification of Germany in 1990, coupled with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in 1991, as well as the reintegration of the East German economy into the European Union, the once “great power status” of Britain was in a sense eroded or, at the very least, on the wane, allowing Harris to question and challenge myths about Britain and Germany through the lens of hindsight in a way similar to Len Deighton in *SS-GB*. In many ways, the de-demonization of Germans, alongside the de-heroisation of Britain and her allies—most notably the United States—was one way for Harris to underscore “the reality of Britain’s postwar decline” set against the backdrop of the end of the Cold War, a reunified Germany, and the ongoing debate regarding Britain’s political and economic integration into Europe.⁸⁶

Many German readers of *Fatherland*, it must be noted, were offended by the “comparison between Nazi Germany and the Federal Republic” leading some “to interpret *Fatherland*” as a polemic against Germany and the European Union.⁸⁷ Yet as a liberal journalist, Harris was in favour of British integration into the European Union and opposed to anti-EU sentiment in Britain⁸⁸:

⁸³ Paul Abelman, “Programmed,” *Spectator*, September 2, 1978, 22.

⁸⁴ Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism*, 80.

⁸⁵ *ibid*, 80.

⁸⁶ *ibid*, *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism*, 81.

⁸⁷ *ibid*, 81.

⁸⁸ *ibid*, *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism*, 423.

I wrote the book when communism was crumbling and I was struck by the parallels between Nazism and any totalitarian state.⁸⁹

I spent four years writing [a] novel about a fictional German superpower and, as I wrote, it started turning into fact... What the Nazis planned for Western Europe and what, in economic terms, has come to pass.⁹⁰

On page 195 of *Fatherland*, for example, it is revealed elliptically that German currency, the “Reichsmark”, is the common currency for Europe and is accepted everywhere including in Switzerland. That is perhaps why the alternate world history as it pertains to European political economy is, by and large, reflective of today’s reality right down to the similarity between the flag for Nazi-controlled Europe as depicted in this novel compared to the actual flag of the European Union; that is to say, the flags are the same in our world as in the Uchronic world depicted in *Fatherland*.⁹¹

The Image of Women

The women of Axis Exalted tend to be journalists, mistresses, housewives or ex-wives, which is similar to some of the women characters depicted in the creative narrative that accompanies this research. In Philip K. Dick’s *The Man in the High Castle*, women are depicted as emotionally unstable or they are self-deprecating, scared of their boyfriends and ultimately—if not utterly—contradictory. There are four main women in *The Man in the High Castle*: Juliana Fink, the ex-wife of protagonist Frank Frink, Caroline Abendsen, Rita, and Betty Kasouras. Juliana describes herself as “about to crack up”, a sentiment her boyfriend—Joe Cinnadella, a man she admits she is scared of—agrees with.⁹² She then slashes her boyfriend’s throat, leaving him to die while she runs off to meet the author of *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, the book-within-a-book.⁹³ At the house of Hawthorne Abendsen, Juliana meets Caroline, the author’s wife, who is pleasant but minor in terms of scope and impact on the plot. Another woman—a character Juliana or Caroline never meet—is Rita. As mentioned previously, Rita is well-read and informed. She is depicted as intelligent, but she is a mistress to a married man. The only

⁸⁹ “I’m Only Accused of Insensitivity to Germans,” *Baltimore Jewish Times*, June 26, 1992, page 61, as cited in Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism*, 423.

⁹⁰ Robert Harris, “Nightmare Landscape of Nazi Triumphant,” *Sunday Times*, May 10, 1992, Section 2, Page 1.

⁹¹ *ibid*, 198.

⁹² Dick, *The Man in the High Castle*, 137.

⁹³ Palmer, *Philip K. Dick: Exhilaration and Terror of the Postmodern*, 129: Others have described Juliana’s temperamental transformation as “a kind of slippage, and she fugues into derangement.”

other woman to appear in the narrative is Betty Kasouras, a Japanese housewife, yet overall these images are contradictory and conflicting: that of dutiful, frugal housewife as represented by Betty Kasouras and Caroline Abendsen, contrasted with that of a well-read mistress as represented by Rita, and a mentally unstable divorcee prone to acts of violence as represented by Juliana.

The main woman in *Fatherland* is Charlotte Maguire. “Charlie” makes her first appearance in a Berlin café the day after the murder,⁹⁴ though she is first mentioned as “a real little bitch” prior to this.⁹⁵ Similar to the yet-to-be-discussed Barbara Barga character in Len Deighton’s *SS-GB*, Charlie Maguire is a journalist and prior to her first appearance, the reader is told many things about her; aside from the aforementioned “real little bitch” line, the neighbourhood Charlotte Maguire lives in is seedy and the concierge of the building she lives in wastes no time telling the protagonist that Charlie “dresses like a tart” and that she drinks a lot: “[you] should see the bottles of liquor the hussy threw out.”⁹⁶ When the protagonist finally comes face-to-face with Charlie, she is described as “small” despite the fact that she is “clattering on... high heels.” She also has “whiskey on her breath” and smells of “perfume.”⁹⁷ A few pages later, the protagonist-investigator feels she has redeemed herself against his first impressions as he curses “himself for underrating her. She had the cunning of a professional criminal.”⁹⁸ In one moment, Charlie Maguire is small, drunk and fragrant and, in the next, she’s compared to a “professional criminal.” Eleven pages later, when the protagonist and Charlie flee from the SS, the protagonist lifts her into an air shaft, enabling her safe escape with the following sentiment: “She was so light, he could have wept.”⁹⁹

Although Charlotte Maguire is a professional journalist, her overall character depiction is coupled with physical descriptions that are misogynistic and at odds with the image of this character as a professional journalist who also happens to be a woman. She is not underdeveloped; much of Charlie’s back-story—flunking out of expensive private schools in Virginia, trying to be an actress in New York—is revealed through the course of conversation with the protagonist-investigator. The protagonist-investigator later remarks to himself that “she was unlike any other woman he had met,” presenting him—a German national—with a definitive

⁹⁴ Harris, *Fatherland*, 104.

⁹⁵ *ibid*, 99.

⁹⁶ *ibid*, 103.

⁹⁷ *ibid*, 105.

⁹⁸ *ibid*, 111.

⁹⁹ *ibid*, 122.

alternative to “the homebodies of the Party’s Women’s League, all ‘*Kinder, Kirche and Kuche*’—her husband’s supper always on the table, the uniform freshly pressed, five children asleep upstairs.”¹⁰⁰ In fact, the next sentence on that page further elevates Charlie’s image above that of Nazi women: “And while a good National Socialist girl abhorred cosmetics, nicotine, and alcohol, Charlie Maguire made liberal use of all three.”¹⁰¹ The novel ends on an ambiguous note: the protagonist-investigator, who is, by this point, separated from his female lead, checks that his gun—a Luger—is locked and loaded before he heads for the trees...¹⁰²

The main woman character in Len Deighton’s *SS-GB* is Barbara Barga. One of four women in *SS-GB*, Barbara Barga makes her first appearance on page twenty. On page 107, the reader is told Barbara Barga is a “poor dancer” “ready to fall in love”. Later, Barbara Barga calls herself “aggressive” right after describing her actions earlier that day as “dumb.”¹⁰³ Barbara Barga is divorced, which is convenient, as the connection between her and the protagonist-investigator of *SS-GB* turns romantic. The romance proves to be so strong that the protagonist-investigator proposes marriage to Barbara Barga after just a few scenes together. Barbara Barga is eventually killed and, to this, the protagonist-investigator offers little, if any, emotion; in fact, his response to her death is quite subdued, if not somewhat odd:

Harry released him. ‘She’s upstairs, Douglas. She’s dead; I’m sorry.’
Douglas felt giddy.¹⁰⁴

After Barbara Barga meets her demise in Chapter Thirty-Six, she is brought up again only once in a very brief dialogue sequence appearing late in the novel.¹⁰⁵ The depiction of Barbara Barga is contradictory, underdeveloped and attributed with insipid lines of dialogue: “Hey Superintendent, you’re a good dancer.”¹⁰⁶ She brags to the protagonist that her father owns the newspaper for which she writes. The implication here is that, as a woman, Barbara Barga—the newspaper journalist who describes herself as “aggressive” yet her actions as “dumb”—is unable to get a job on her own and must rely on nepotism for employment. Once she is

¹⁰⁰ Harris, *Fatherland*, 202.

¹⁰¹ *ibid*, 202.

¹⁰² *ibid*, 377.

¹⁰³ Deighton, *SS-GB*, 107.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid*, 322-324.

¹⁰⁵ It is revealed in the same dialogue sequence in Chapter Twenty-nine that Sylvia was killed along with Harry Woods, and it is revealed that Sylvia was also a mistress to Harry Woods, the protagonist-investigator’s police-partner, and that she “got herself killed trying to save him.”

¹⁰⁶ Deighton, *SS-GB*, 107.

murdered, however, it becomes arguable that this family connection, while good for earning a salary, was perhaps detrimental to her health and safety.¹⁰⁷

What this category of the genre study has indicated are some—but not all—of the recurrent features inherent to the Uchronic genre as they appear in Uchronic narratives premised on a theme of Axis Exalted. These novels were included in the genre study due to their impact on the development of the creative narrative: Barbara Barga, for instance, the woman depicted in Len Deighton's *SS-GB*, inspired and influenced the Mindi MacCallum Ricklesby character in Part Three; while Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* set the precedent for an ensemble of loosely-connected characters located in different parts of an alternate version of the United States, which has been adapted in particular in Part Five of the creative narrative. *Fatherland* by Robert Harris is notable both for its reliance on an ambiguously resolved detective narrative and for the elliptical revelation of an alternate world history, specifically through the use of newspaper headlines and photographs, which has been incorporated into Parts One, Three, Four and Six of the creative narrative that accompanies this research.

The next category of the genre study will focus on Uchronic narratives based on alternate histories for the Jewish people in the second half of the twentieth century and into the start of the twenty-first century.

¹⁰⁷ Like Barbara Barga, Mindi MacCallum Ricklesby, a character from Part Three of the creative narrative, is an extreme characterisation of story-contrived contradictions that are intentionally problematic, though different from Barbara Barga of *SS-GB* in terms of age, form and content.

ISRAEL ENDANGERED

In this part of the genre study, three works of Uchronic fiction based on the premise of Israel Endangered will be reviewed utilising the thematic framework discussed in the previous section: *If Israel Lost the War* by Richard Z Chesnoff, Edward Klein and Robert Littell, *The Plot Against America* by Philip Roth and *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* by Michael Chabon. The phrase "Israel" is a proper name that could refer to a first name, a surname, a Biblical character or, most notably, the name of a slender country located on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. "Israel" can also refer to the Jewish people as a singular entity. In this sense, the singular term "Israel" refers to both the Jewish people and, in the case of *If Israel Lost the War*, to the country of Israel. The Uchronic novels reviewed in this category will, in one way or another, depict a different outcome for Jewish people in the second half of the twentieth century and, in the case of *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, the twenty-first century, offering further exemplification of the features of the Uchronic genre.

These three Uchronic novels are very different from one another and each present different aspects of the Uchronic genre. Two of these novels—*The Plot Against America* and *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*—depict alternate outcomes for Jewish people in America; while the other novel in this category—*If Israel Lost the War*—was written expressly to highlight the nightmare scenario that would have resulted from an Israeli loss in the Six Day War of 1967, an event that, had it happened, would have potentially endangered, and on an existential scale, the modern Jewish State of Israel. The creative narrative that accompanies this research will similarly highlight and emphasize some, but not all, features of the Uchronic genre by paralleling, for example, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, which includes a reconfigured image of Indigenous people depicted through the context of a complex Jewish-Indigenous dynamic, as well as *If Israel Lost the War*, which tells a Uchronic story utilising multiple points of view.

***If Israel Lost the War* by Richard Z Chesnoff, Edward Klein and Robert Littell**

If Israel Lost the War is premised on one very basic alternate history scenario: what if Israel lost the Six Day War in 1967? In actual history, Israel defeated Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq in the Six Day War, but these three authors, in an attempt to display what was no

doubt envisioned as a sort of doomsday scenario, turn this historical fact around to depict an alternate history of an Israel defeated, vanquished and conquered by Arabs.

The Point of Historic Divergence in *If Israel Lost the War*

The central feature of Uchronic fiction, the point of historic divergence, is not absent from *If Israel Lost the War*. It appears at the end of the prologue, which is itself a mixture of expository prose and dialogue involving real-life people politically active at the time this Uchronic novel was written. The history, as it were, sticks to its proper sequence until the last line of the prologue: “Then, on the morning of June 5 [1967], the Arab Air Force struck.”

This simple, eleven-word sentence changes the Israeli Air Force with a pan-Arabian pre-emptive strike that decimates Israeli targets in a pre-dawn raid on 5 June 1967. Until this point of historic divergence, the reader can assume that nothing has changed in terms of the historical sequence as it is known in actual history. This reversal, it ought to be noted, is a departure from actual history, where it is the Israelis and not the “Arab Air Forces,” that implement a pre-dawn raid prior to the start of the Six Day War. The point of historic divergence reverses this, exchanging Israeli for Arab, allowing a Uchronic narrative to flow from that point onward. With the course of history altered, the various implications of an Arab win in the Six Day War are depicted with global repercussions.

If Israel Lost the War itemises in documentary and narrative form the various horrors that would have resulted from an Israeli defeat in 1967. The writers employ a series of shifting viewpoints in an effort to dramatise the story as it plays out on a variety of levels. The first chapter of the novel, for example, introduces more than twenty characters ranging from everyday people to names made famous by the historical record. Other characters depicted in the first chapter include Moshe Dayan, the legendary one-eyed Israeli defense minister, as well as David Ben Gurion, the beloved first prime minister of modern Israel. Some of these characters will never be seen or heard from again while other characters, such as Moshe Dayan, take on leading roles in the ensuing plot.

The Elliptical Revelation of an Alternate World History in *If Israel Lost the War*

If Israel Lost the War portrays a brutal and horrific occupation of Israel by conquering Arab forces. Depicted as cruel and violent, the Arabs put former Nazis in administrative

positions where they lord and rule over the defeated Jews while the world, as represented by the international community characterised in this novel, expresses outrage, sympathy and condemnation but effectively does nothing to help.¹⁰⁸

If Israel Lost the War is divided into two major sections: “JIHAD!” and “KADDISH.” “JIHAD!” is a day-by-day retelling of the Six Day War with the roles reversed. “KADDISH”—the Hebrew name for prayers typically associated with death and mourning—details the extensive geopolitical fallout that follows the Israeli defeat. Some of this fallout is revealed to the reader elliptically. For example, real-life figure W Averell Harriman, the “Ambassador-at-large and dean of American diplomats”, is seen watching *The CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite*: “Any lingering doubt that the conquest of Israel was complete faded today. From Cairo came word of the surrender of Israeli troops”¹⁰⁹ which, of course, directly reveals that Israel loses the Six Day War. The consumption of news is commonplace in Uchronic fiction and has been incorporated into the creative narrative, particularly in Parts One, Three, Four and Six.

The Direct Revelation of an Alternate World History in *If Israel Lost the War*

Though it could be argued that parts of *If Israel Lost the War* are a fictionalised version of an info-dump, there are key moments in the narrative where details regarding the alternate history of this Uchronic world are not revealed elliptically but are instead depicted directly; indeed these details are *the* point of *If Israel Lost the War*.

War, for example, erupts on Monday, 5 June 1967. By Wednesday, 7 June, the three authors include in the narrative a “Diplomatic Scorecard” that tells the reader how “the chancelleries of Europe” react to the increasingly-certain Israeli defeat which is itself a direct revelation of the alternate world history of the Uchronic world depicted in this particular novel. The outcome of the Arab invasion and occupation of Israel is dismal also for the Palestinians who “come away from the war empty-handed.”¹¹⁰ Meanwhile in New York, Golda Meir and Abba Eban, Israel’s ambassador to the United Nations, establish an Israeli government-in-exile while an American presidential campaign gets underway, all of which are revealed in direct, expository prose. This changes as the narrative shifts back to Israel in one of the more graphic scenes in the novel where the reader becomes an omniscient spectator to Moshe Dayan’s public execution at the hands of an Egyptian Governor-General in Tel Aviv’s Dizengoff Square.

¹⁰⁸ Richard Z Chesnoff, Edward Klein and Robert Littell, *If Israel Lost the War* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1969), 232.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid*, 174-175.

¹¹⁰ *ibid*, 170.

In *If Israel Lost the War*, a character known as Herman Kahn delivers a lecture “for a small group of invited guests.”¹¹¹ Through this lecture, Kahn reveals to the reader that West Germany, in the aftermath of America’s non-involvement in the defense of Israel, tells the US “to close down... missile bases” and that Bonn is “cozying up to Moscow,” thus dooming the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to collapse. Another result of America’s non-intervention in the defense of Israel is revealed in the last fifteen pages of the novel: an emboldened Soviet Union stations “jet fighters in southwestern China along the border of North Vietnam.”¹¹² The “Falling Dominoes” do not stop there: in light of the Arab triumph over Israel, the Arab world “tilts” toward Cairo; meanwhile in Los Angeles, Bobby Kennedy—who is not assassinated due to Sirhan Sirhan’s departure on a BOAC flight earlier in the narrative—goes on to win the 1968 Democratic nomination for US president.

The Political Agenda in *If Israel Lost the War*

The three authors of *If Israel Lost the War* are political writers with decades of experience and though this Uchronic novel was published nearly five decades ago, there is no room for ambiguity: this is a novel written with an agenda and a political one at that. It was the writers’ explicit intention to tell the story like a documentary, employing multiple points of view. As a result, the reader is privy to Israeli cabinet meetings, Arab summits, UN Security Council debates, as well as private, though fictionalised, conversations between the American President and First Lady.¹¹³ As evidenced by the novel’s content, this agenda is clear: Israel was justified in launching a pre-emptive air strike against the Arabs to gain air superiority that helped them win the Six Day War. Had it been the other way around, the Arabs would have conquered Israel only to install former Nazis as administrators, to rape Jewish women and to publicly execute various Israeli leaders, causing geopolitical fallout that would have seen the eventual collapse of NATO and an emboldened Soviet Union and China preparing to intervene against American

¹¹¹ Chesnoff, Klein and Littell, *If Israel Lost the War*, 202.

¹¹² *ibid*, 205-207.

¹¹³ In the second chapter, entitled “Tuesday, June Sixth”, the point of view changes as the narrative shifts to a “long, charcoal-black runway in El Arish in the Sinai peninsula.”¹¹³ Like the chapter that preceded it, the second chapter includes a wide array of characters ranging from “darkly handsome” Egyptian air force captains to more famous names, such as then-Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser and King Hussein, the King of Jordan in 1967, both of whom are secretly recorded by surveillance equipment hidden aboard the USS Liberty, a technical research ship that was inadvertently destroyed by the Israeli Air Force during the Six Day War (in *If Israel Lost the War*, this technical research ship is inadvertently destroyed by the Arabs and not the Israelis, as is the case in our history). Toward the end of the second chapter, the narrative shifts to the United Nations Security Council in Turtle Bay, New York, where a renowned cast of well-known and historically significant international diplomats—U Thant and Abba Eban among them—debate the situation before impotently requesting a cease-fire which, needless to say, both the Israelis and the Arabs ignore.

forces in Vietnam. Despite the fact that the Hebrew translation of *If Israel Lost the War* was a bestseller in Israel and that the book was widely debated and used for propaganda by various agencies of the Israeli government, it has been argued that the premise lacks both verisimilitude as well as plausibility.

Two Israeli critics, for example, dismiss the possibility of an Israeli defeat in 1967. Uri Avnery, writing a review for the 21 February 1969 issue of *Life* magazine, sums the book up succinctly: "All... told in gory detail, step by step. The authors obviously enjoyed themselves hugely, putting into the book all their friends, colleagues and acquaintances, dropping names left and right." Avnery dismisses the notion that the Arabs could have won the 1967 war, naming the "third fallacy" of the novel: the docile and impotent response of various Israeli *kibbutzim* that would have been "sheer nonsense." Avnery claims *If Israel Lost the War* "looks like clever pro-Israel propaganda, as it obviously was meant to be. But," he adds:

I believe... it does a grave disservice to Israel... This book... justifies Israeli hawks... And much worse: the book depicts Israelis as the worst kind of ghetto Jews, panicking in adversity and led by ridiculous leaders... [*If Israel Lost the War* is] a... glaring example of propaganda too clever for its own good that ultimately defeats its own purpose.

Varda Klein, another Israeli critic, echoes similar sentiments in her article "Propaganda War and Implausible Nightmare Scenarios" published in 1999 in *Round Table on Ten Years of the Israeli-Egyptian Peace*:

Such a devastating attack does not come out of the blue. The Israeli Air Force laid meticulous plans years before 1967, and its pilots regularly held rigorous exercises to prepare. The Arabs would have had to do the same, to achieve like results. (...) A detailed joint strategic planning by Egypt, Syria and Jordan would have been highly unlikely, given that these regimes were virtually as suspicious and hostile to each other as they were to Israel. It would have been extremely difficult to hide from Israel joint large scale exercises of the Arab air forces. A strategic rapprochement between Egypt and Jordan would have been impossible to hide, it would have greatly alarmed Israel, and the entire Middle East configuration would have been different long before June 1967; indeed, such a situation might have impelled Israel into a preemptive strike already in 1966.¹¹⁴

Reviews written by American critics, on the other hand, praise the verisimilitude and authenticity of the novel's content. Michael M. Bernet, in a 2 March 1969 *The New York Times*

¹¹⁴ Varda Klein, "Propaganda War and Implausible Nightmare Scenarios," *Round Table on Ten Years of the Israeli-Egyptian Peace*, ed. Naftali Berg, Tel Aviv, 1988.

review, stated that while the novel “suffers from superficiality of characterisation and super abundance of irrelevant ‘authenticating’ facts”: “What is so chilling is that this book, though called a ‘novel,’ is no fiction. Almost every other line is based on fact or direct deduction. Almost every official statement is a direct quotation from a pronouncement that has been made in reaction to a closely similar situation.” In terms of plausibility, Bernet is conclusive: “This is how it would have happened... as a document of what might have been, it has a shocking ring of authenticity.”

Joel Lieber, in an article entitled “Tel Aviv Occupied, Arabs Victorious” published in the 15 March 1969 issue of *The Saturday Review*, also claims the three authors “provide magnificent authenticity” but, as he points out, that does not mean *If Israel Lost the War* is not without a “hitch”:

If the story sounds intriguing, well, it is. Ingenious and clever, too. But this is also a galling, gimmicky book. The hitch is that you can’t suddenly change roles, showing the Israelis as inept as the Arabs, and the Arabs as sophisticated as the Israelis—and expect any credibility.

The political agenda on the part of the three writers is overt and, in the paraphrased words of Joel Lieber, “ghoulish”: “Israel is in danger of extinction” and that is perhaps why the three authors chose to include a graphic and sexually explicit scene depicted on pages 148 and 149. By this point in the novel, the Jordanian Army has taken over Jerusalem and the authors introduce a momentary, “one-off” character, “a shapely twenty year old” native-born Israeli woman, Naomi Vardi, who leaves her home in the Rehavia district of Jerusalem to tend to her parents located in another part of the city. Upon leaving her house, she is spotted by “seven Arab soldiers” who catch her and begin “stripping off her clothes” until she is “pinned stark naked to the streets by... six men.” This scene ends with Naomi Vardi opening her mouth to “let out a shrill scream that echoed through the empty streets...”

Naomi Vardi serves a purpose in the story, but once she is captured and raped by the Jordanian Army on the streets of an Arab-occupied Jerusalem, she is never seen or heard from again at any point in the novel. Her brief scene is horrific and no doubt included in an effort to dramatise a specific point of view that advances the political agenda: the rape of Naomi Vardi at the hands of victorious Arabs personifies the rape and pillage of Israel had the Arabs triumphed over the Jews in 1967.

The Image of Women in *If Israel Lost the War*

Though the scene described above involves the rape of a young Israeli woman that is graphic and incendiary, providing the most compelling embodiment of the authors' political agenda, Naomi Vardi is not the only woman depicted in *If Israel Lost the War*. Other women include Golda Meir who, at this point in modern Israeli history, had retired from politics. In typical Uchronic fashion, the authors reactivate Golda Meir and have her "spirited out of Israel on a lumbering Norge transport", "along with David Ben-Gurion and Abba Eban."¹¹⁵

Women in *If Israel Lost the War* are also depicted as wives, in particular Paula Ben-Gurion, wife of David Ben-Gurion, the revered first prime minister of modern Israel.¹¹⁶ Aside from Golda Meir and Paula Ben-Gurion, perhaps one of the best-known women depicted in *If Israel Lost the War* is American First Lady, Lady Bird Johnson, who is seen at "1:45 in the morning" lying "in bed, propped up on pillows" reading through classified CIA reports with her husband, US President Lyndon Johnson. These CIA reports, which Lady Bird takes a keen interest in, reveal ongoing developments that follow in the wake of Israel's defeat, "a decline in Arab unity" among them. Most importantly, Lady Bird's role in this Uchronic novel dramatises Lyndon Johnson's decision to resign from the presidency.¹¹⁷

Overall, the various images of women in *If Israel Lost the War* appear to be well-rounded and of various ages functioning in different capacities at a variety of levels.¹¹⁸ In the case of Naomi Vardi, who is raped by the Jordanian Army, the purpose of her momentary scene is to exhibit the extreme brutality that—so the authors would have us believe—would have occurred had the Arabs conquered Israel in 1967.

Glimpses into Our World in *If Israel Lost the War*

As mentioned previously, starting late in the novel in a chapter entitled "Falling Dominoes," the authors of *If Israel Lost the War* include a character named Herman Kahn who is

¹¹⁵ Golda Meir is sent to London—to Downing Street—to goad British Prime Minister Harold Wilson to intervene on Israel's behalf. With tears welling up in his eyes, the British Prime Minister—whose wife Sophie is also Jewish—decides "not to take sides", telling British forces "to avoid any involvement in the conflict." In the creative narrative that accompanies this research, Harold Wilson's government collapses and Lord Mountbatten, who is not assassinated in the creative narrative, is installed by Her Majesty as Caretaker PM.

¹¹⁶ Chesnoff, Klein and Littell, *If Israel Lost the War*, 155: David Ben Gurion is stuck in Paris with Charles de Gaulle while Paula, in a "tiny kitchen" in a "green wooden bungalow in the Negev settlement of Sde Boker", has "voluntarily taken charge of the feeding and caring of the Israeli government—or what was left of it."

¹¹⁷ *ibid*, 185-195, 200.

¹¹⁸ *ibid*, 227: The last woman to be mentioned in *If Israel Lost the War* is Indira Ghandi, the first and only woman prime minister of India. She is mentioned in passing, cautioning Nasser of Egypt against carving up Israeli territory. Indira Ghandi is described as one "of Nasser's closest colleagues in the non-aligned movement" and is mentioned alongside "Yugoslavia's Josip Broz Tito."

holding “the first class of his spring seminar... [at] the Hudson Institute,” a “think tank” discussing “Basic National Security Policies in the Decade Ahead/ Alternate World Futures: Issues and Themes” on 15 April 1968. Prior to this, Herman Kahn peruses “an advance copy of a book *The New York Times* had commissioned him to review, its title: *If Israel Won the War*.^{*}” As can be seen, *If Israel Won the War* is followed by an asterix that directs the reader to a footnote at the bottom of that page:

“Provocative,” Kahn was later to write, “but basically flawed because the credibility of the book [*If Israel Won the War*] rests on the implausible thesis that Israel could have duplicated the Arabs’ devastatingly effective surprise first blow in the air and followed it up with a massive ground assault—all at a time when the Arabs were already completely mobilized and poised for attack.”¹¹⁹

The introduction of a book that reverses the role of victor in the 1967 Six Day War enables the characters in this Uchronic narrative to take a glimpse into a world akin to our own. It is perhaps ironic that Herman Kahn’s review of *If Israel Won the War* echoes the reviews written by various critics of *If Israel Lost the War*, in particular Uri Avnery, Varda Klein and Joel Lieber, all of whom cite issues of credibility and plausibility in the basic Israeli-Arab role reversal in much the same way Kahn criticises the inverse scenario in his review of this book-within-a-book.¹²⁰

***The Plot Against America* by Philip Roth**

Philip Roth’s twenty-second novel, *The Plot Against America*, is a Uchronic novel based on the counterfactual question: what if Charles Lindbergh, the famous American aviator, rather than Franklin Delano Roosevelt, won the 1940 US Presidential election? For this Uchronic novel, Roth, the author, re-imagines his life as a young boy, placing a fictionalised version of himself at the centre of the story as the protagonist who doubles as a first-person narrator looking back on his childhood many years later, a point made explicitly clear by the novel’s opening line: “Fear presides over these memories, a perpetual fear.”¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Chesnoff, Klein and Littell, *If Israel Lost the War*, 202.

¹²⁰ Though *If Israel Lost the War* contains a point of historic divergence that causes an alternate sequence of history with far-reaching implications for the entire planet, and though the novel was written with a political agenda in mind, this particular Uchronic novel does not contain a detective narrative format of any sort. There is no mystery to be solved here, nor is there any self-correcting feature in this novel; history is never rectified at any point in this book.

¹²¹ Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America* (Sydney: Random House Australia, 2004), 1.

The central what if question is addressed by Roth the character in relation to the impact the Lindbergh presidency has on this “mythologised”¹²² version of Roth’s family.¹²³ This novel is not Philip Roth’s first attempt at an alternate history narrative, yet “*The Plot Against America* differs from his other attempts in that the alternate history impacts directly on his personal family autobiography.”¹²⁴ By placing Roth the character at the center of the story, Roth the author is able to dramatise what many reviewers of *The Plot Against America* regard as a “sinister, vivid, dreamlike, preposterous and, at the same time, creepily plausible”¹²⁵ Uchronic world that envisions a United States accommodating the rise of the Axis Powers, in particular Adolf Hitler’s Third Reich, whilst likewise turning slowly toward, rather than away from, fascism in the early 1940s. Unlike the first Uchronic novel to be examined in this category, the “Israel” endangered here is not the Jewish State in the Middle East but rather the proverbial “people of Israel” as represented by the microcosm that is the Roth family of Newark, New Jersey, circa 1940.¹²⁶ Depicted as third-generation American Jews, the Roth family is meant to be reflective, if not representative, of the larger American Jewish community at that time in American History. This novelised version of Philip Roth describes himself, his family and his Jewish neighborhood in northern New Jersey as patriotic: “we’d already had a homeland for three generations,”¹²⁷ “our homeland was America.”¹²⁸ Though the author, the novel and the characters of *The Plot Against America* are American, and though the novel takes place in the United States, the narrative addresses the modern Jewish State of Israel early on:

Israel didn’t yet exist, six million European Jews hadn’t yet ceased to exist, and the local relevance of distant Palestine (under British mandate since the 1918 dissolution by the victorious Allies of the last far-flung provinces of the defunct Ottoman Empire) was a mystery to me.¹²⁹

¹²² Paul Berman, “The Plot Against America,” *The New York Times* Sunday Book Review, October 3, 2004.

¹²³ Jason Siegel, “*The Plot Against America*: Philip Roth’s Counter-Plot to American History”, *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the US*, 37, 1 (Spring 2012), 131-154: “One of the ways Roth keeps *The Plot Against America* from delving into political allegory is his propensity to concretise broad political developments by displaying their effects on the experiences of his family.”

¹²⁴ Hana Wirth-Nesher, “Roth’s autobiographical writings,” Chapter Two in *The Cambridge Companion to Philip Roth*, ed. Timothy Parrish (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 168.

¹²⁵ Berman, “The Plot Against America.”

¹²⁶ Siegel, “*The Plot Against America*: Philip Roth’s Counter-Plot to American History,” 139: “Lindbergh’s nomination is the springboard for the novel’s alternate history, and it appears to bring about the fascist anti-Semitic counter-America that victimises the Roths.”

¹²⁷ Roth, *The Plot Against America*, 4.

¹²⁸ *ibid*, 5.

¹²⁹ *ibid*, 4.

The “me” in the above excerpt is the fictional version of Philip Roth. As first person narrator, Roth is not only using “the trappings of autobiography as a window through which to dramatise events,”¹³⁰ he is also addressing the nuanced question of what happens to Israel. Israel, in short, does not yet exist in *The Plot Against America*, but that fact is hardly the point of historic divergence in this Uchronic novel which, as it turns out, appears very quickly after Roth as narrator answers that nuanced question: “Then the Republicans nominated Lindbergh and everything changed.”¹³¹

The Point of Historic Divergence in *The Plot Against America*

The point of historic divergence in *The Plot Against America* is the election of Charles Lindbergh as US President in 1940 as alluded to in the title of the first chapter: “June 1940-October 1940: Vote for Lindbergh or Vote for War.”¹³² Though this differs from the historic record, there were some factions of the Republican Party in the early 1940s that were keen to nominate Lindbergh, a famous American isolationist, in light of rising military tensions in continental Europe at that time.¹³³ Though this point of historic divergence is alluded to early on in the novel, the reader does not become privy to the scene until Roth the narrator tells the reader about it on page fifteen.¹³⁴

The Plot Against America is written as a “false memoir”¹³⁵ with a first-person narrator telling the story many years after the events of the novel have taken place.¹³⁶ This telling, rather than showing, obscures the delineation between the elliptical revelation of an alternate world history and the info-dump, wherein a wealth of information regarding the alternate world depicted in a Uchronic novel is dumped into the narrative. For example, though Lindbergh is elected president of the United States off the page between the first and second chapters, Roth tells the reader that Lindbergh won with fifty-seven percent of the vote.¹³⁷ Roth also describes an alternate sequence of events for the Second World War, but conspicuously absent from this alternate history timeline is the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, which is left unharmed as a

¹³⁰ Elaine B Safer, *Mocking the Age: the Latter Novels of Philip Roth* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 155.

¹³¹ Roth, *The Plot Against America*, 5.

¹³² *ibid*, 1: “...in June of 1940—the nomination for the presidency of Charles A. Lindbergh... by the Republican Convention...”

¹³³ Wirth-Nesher, “Roth’s autobiographical writings,” 170: “...a Lindbergh presidency is imaginary, but the anti-Semitism of the real historical Lindbergh was not, nor was the movement toward his nomination within the Republican Party.”

¹³⁴ Roth, *The Plot Against America*, 14-15.

¹³⁵ Safer, *Mocking the Age: the Later Novels of Philip Roth*, 150: “...*The Plot Against America* is ‘a false memoir.’”

¹³⁶ Philip Roth, “The Story Behind *The Plot Against America*,” *The New York Times*, September 19, 2004: “The story is narrated by me as an adult looking back 60-odd years at the experience of that child’s family during the Lindbergh presidency.”

¹³⁷ Roth, *The Plot Against America*, 52.

result of pacts the Lindbergh administration has signed with both Japan and Germany. This information is pooled into one lengthy paragraph that informs the reader that the sequence of World War Two continues in much the same way that it did in actual history, albeit with a Nazi-tolerant, Republican-controlled and Lindbergh-led United States sitting off to the sidelines. This does not mean Roth has eschewed the elliptical revelation of an alternate world history in favour of an info-dump. Though occasionally prone to telling the reader Uchronic “facts,” Roth also reveals an alternate sequence of American history as it affects not only the entire world but perhaps more poignantly the Roth family and their Jewish community in New Jersey.¹³⁸

A prime example of the elliptical revelation of an alternate world history in *The Plot Against America* can be found when Roth tells the reader about “the Newsreel Theater on Broad Street”: “the Newsreel’s one-hour show comprised [of] news clips, shorts and ‘The March of Time’ and it ran daily from early morning until midnight.”¹³⁹ Roth later travels “to the Newsreel theatre” to watch a series of news headlines—nine of them—detailing the events of the Second World War taking place across Asia and Europe appearing, as they do, indented one right after the other.¹⁴⁰ Roth also explains how and why Charles Lindbergh selected “the casually anti-Semitic”¹⁴¹ Senator Burton K Wheeler of Montana as his Vice President, which is followed by “the German-American Bund fill[ing] Madison Square Garden [in New York City] with a near-capacity crowd” wearing “buttons that read”:

KEEP AMERICA
OUT OF
THE JEWISH WAR¹⁴²

The Democratic Party, led by the turned-out-of-office Franklin Roosevelt, “held a Madison Square Garden rally of their own,” but again, the reader is told about this rally by Roth the narrator, who recalls seeing this event at the Newsreel theatre. At this moment, Roth the author takes Roosevelt’s oft-quoted and most famous line: “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself,” and he alters it partially, yet entirely:

¹³⁸ Michiko Kakutani, “A Pro-Nazi President, A Family Feeling the Effects,” *The New York Times*, September 21, 2004: “The real drama in this book does not concern the Lindbergh president or World War II, but rather the effect that these huge, clanging events have on the Roth family and on Philip’s boyhood consciousness.”

¹³⁹ Roth, *The Plot Against America*, 180.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid*, 199.

¹⁴¹ Timothy Parrish, Chapter Ten: “Autobiography and History in Roth’s *The Plot Against America*, or What Happened When Hitler Came to New Jersey,” in *Philip Roth: American Pastoral, The Human Stain, The Plot Against America*, ed. Debra Shostak (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011) 152.

¹⁴² Roth, *The Plot Against America*, 176-177.

“The only thing we have to fear... is the obsequious yielding to his Nazi friends by Charles A. Lindbergh, the shameless courting by the president of the world’s greatest democracy of a despot responsible for innumerable criminal deeds and acts of savagery, a cruel and barbaric tyrant unparalleled in the chronicle of man’s misdeeds. But we Americans will not accept a Hitler-dominated America. We Americans will not accept a Hitler-dominated word...”¹⁴³

Though a world dominated by Hitler is never fully achieved in *The Plot Against America*, Roth has made it a point to depict a Uchronic world that is at least influenced by Hitler’s Nazi ideals. Despite the peace and security the United States enjoys under a Lindbergh administration, not all Americans are appreciative or in awe of the aviator-cum-president. Walter Winchell, the well-known radio personality and newspaper columnist of the era, is recast by the author as an indignant, one-man Greek chorus critical of Lindbergh’s veritable appeasement of Adolf Hitler. Winchell’s role in this Uchronic narrative also highlights how anti-Semitism in this re-imagined United States becomes progressively worse as the novel continues.

First mentioned in the opening chapter, Walter Winchell’s role in this Uchronic world is similar to his role in actual history; Roth’s Walter Winchell is outspoken and, as a result of his opposition to the Lindbergh White House, fired from his job, allowing Winchell to announce his candidacy for the presidency of the United States “almost thirty months in advance of the ’44 election.” Roth recalls seeing angry, anti-Semitic crowds greet Walter Winchell in both New York and Boston, surging “forward scream[ing] ‘kill him!’” Rioting later erupts in “Jewish neighborhoods in Cleveland, Indianapolis, and St. Louis,”¹⁴⁴ climaxing in the “death of Walter Winchell,” who is “shot and killed”¹⁴⁵ in Louisville, Kentucky, after “his unorthodox [presidential] campaign... touched off the century’s worst anti-Semitic rioting outside Nazi Germany.”¹⁴⁶

The story of Walter Winchell is, in essence, emblematic to some degree of what could have happened to the Jews of America had Lindbergh, rather than Roosevelt, won the 1940 US Presidential election. Philip Roth has taken a well-known personality of that era and has recast him in a role that, unfortunately for Winchell, leads to anti-Semitic pogroms and his premature death thirty years before his actual death on 20 February 1974.

¹⁴³ Roth, *The Plot Against America*, 177.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid*, 266.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid*, 273.

¹⁴⁶ *ibid*, 272.

The Rectification of History in *The Plot Against America*

The “self-correcting” feature, or what Edgar Vernon McKnight in his PhD dissertation for the University of North Carolina called “the rectification of history,” is defined as a “mechanism... devised by which the novel’s history is finally rectified... restoring the reader’s history while at the same time undermining its normality.”¹⁴⁷ In the words of Elaine B Safer, “Roth uses [just such] a *deus ex machina* to resolve... the plot.”¹⁴⁸ The rectification of history is not a frequent feature of Uchronic fiction when compared to other features of the genre, yet it appears swiftly and abruptly in *The Plot Against America*.¹⁴⁹

Starting in Chapter Eight, Roth recalls the sequence of events “Drawn from the Archives of Newark’s Newsreel Theater,”¹⁵⁰ which provides a day-to-day summation covering a ten-day period starting on Tuesday, 6 October 1942. On Wednesday, 7 October 1942, President Charles Lindbergh “disappears eastward, never to be seen again,” which leads to a news headline: “WHERE IS LINDBERGH?”¹⁵¹ Though a campaign of disinformation begins, some of which claims Lindbergh was kidnapped by ‘a conspiracy of “Jewish interests,”’¹⁵² the reader can presume that Lindbergh, piloting his own plane—the Interceptor—disappears somewhere between Kentucky and Washington, DC. Martial law is imposed the next day as “anti-Semitic riots” break out across America while the FBI rounds up prominent Jews just as Franklin Roosevelt is taken into custody.¹⁵³ None of this sits well with the American people or their political system and a special election is called that sweeps Franklin Roosevelt back into office.¹⁵⁴ The Japanese attack Pearl Harbor one page—and one year—later, and the United States, now under new leadership, declares war on the Axis Powers, thereby rejoining the alternate history of *The Plot Against America* with actual history.¹⁵⁵

Elaine B. Safer compares “the use of the *deus ex machina* [in Roth’s novel] with the endings in a Dickens’ novel. As with Dickens, one realises it would take a miracle to deliver the

¹⁴⁷ Edgar Vernon McKnight, “Alternate History: The Development of a Literary Genre,” (PhD thesis, University of North Carolina, 1994) 60.

¹⁴⁸ Safer, *Mocking the Age: The Latter Novels of Philip Roth*, 160.

¹⁴⁹ Kakutani, “A Pro-Nazi President, A Family Feeling the Effects,”: “...the overall novel... is brought to an abrupt conclusion that only underscores the slapdash contrivance of Mr Roth’s historical projections.”

¹⁵⁰ Roth, *The Plot Against America*, 301.

¹⁵¹ *ibid*, 308.

¹⁵² *ibid*, 309.

¹⁵³ It is important to note that Lindbergh’s disappearance in Chapter Eight of *The Plot Against America* stands in contrast to the historical record, wherein Charles Lindbergh died in 1974.

¹⁵⁴ Roth, *The Plot Against America*, 319.

¹⁵⁵ *ibid*, 313 and 327.

people from Lindbergh. Lindbergh's flying into the blue is similar to Dickens's implied meaning when *Oliver Twist* gets an inheritance."¹⁵⁶ According to Safer, the manner and method Roth utilises to induce the self-correcting feature "presents the most problematic aspect of Roth's alternate history":

Roth spends three hundred pages developing a... plausible and sober-minded counter-history of America... [he] then resolves... in less than thirty pages of fiction posing as a collection of excerpts from the Newark Newsreel archive... and history as we know it resumes. This... neat ending... contributes to the negative opinion of reviewers such as Michiko Kakutani, who does not accept the historical portion of Roth's narrative. Indeed, given Roth's self-professed devotion to verisimilitude, his decision to resolve a complex historical plot in a slap-dash manner is puzzling.¹⁵⁷

The rectification of history brings the narrative climax of *The Plot Against America* to a "happy end,"¹⁵⁸ yet further explanation is provided by the author. Chapter Nine, entitled "October 1942: Perpetual Fear," is in essence an info-dump where "the secret reason behind Lindbergh's actions is unceremoniously dropped on the reader":

...devoted to speculation on the unexplained fate of America's thirty-third president... The most elaborate, the most unbelievable story—though not necessarily the least convincing—was first made known to our family by Aunt Evelyn after Rabbi Bengelsdorf's arrest, her source none other than [First Lady] Anne Morrow Lindbergh... Mrs. Lindbergh... traced everything to the 1932 kidnapping of her infant son... secretly plotted and financed, she maintained, by the Nazi Party shortly before Hitler came to power... the baby... was... lifted from the... crib and... smuggled out of the country... to Germany. The corpse found and identified as the Lindbergh baby ten weeks later was another child, selected by the Nazis... because of its resemblance to the Lindbergh baby.¹⁵⁹

The incorporation of the Lindbergh baby is a major twist in *The Plot Against America*, but as for these Nazi schemers, Lindbergh's disappearance brings an end to their plot against America and to the life of that kidnapped baby:

Within an hour of Lindbergh's disappearance, Mrs. Lindbergh had been informed by the German embassy that responsibility for her child's well-being was now hers alone and that, should she do anything other than vacate the White House and withdraw in silence

¹⁵⁶ Safer, *Mocking the Age: The Later Novels of Philip Roth*, 160.

¹⁵⁷ Siegel, "The Plot Against America: Philip Roth's Counter-Plot to American History," 148.

¹⁵⁸ Wirth-Nesher, "Roth's Autobiographical Writings," 171.

¹⁵⁹ Kakutani, "A Pro-Nazi President, A Family Feeling the Effects,".

from public life, Charles Jr. would be... dispatched to the Russian front... and remain... there as the Third Reich's youngest combat infantryman until he valiantly expired on the field of battle for the greater glory of the German people.¹⁶⁰

Timothy Parrish, a scholar of American and Jewish fiction and the editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Philip Roth*, states, "some... might be surprised to discover... history resumes its known course" at the end of this Uchronic novel:

While *Plot's* events are sometimes harrowing and have prompted some to praise the book's capacity to create dread in the reader, the novel's conclusion is upbeat and effectively negates its originating premise. The book you read, the one that so powerfully causes you to submit to the proposition that America might just as well have elected a president sympathetic or at least indifferent to many of Hitler's aims, turns out not to be interested in that premise after all.¹⁶¹

The Political Agenda in *The Plot Against America*

The Plot Against America was published in September 2004, three years after the events of September 11, 2001, and just a year after US President George W. Bush's notorious "Mission Accomplished" speech regarding the American-led invasion of Iraq. As a result, many readers, reviewers and critics have assumed *The Plot Against America* is meant to serve as a sort of satirical allegory of the second Bush administration.¹⁶² Many readers of *The Plot Against America* view the narrative as making an overt political statement, yet "one of the ways Roth keeps *The Plot Against America* from delving into [politics] is his propensity to concretise broad political developments by displaying their effects on the experiences of his family."¹⁶³ Rather than address any grievances he might have toward the second Bush administration, "Roth has simply run his eye across the modern horizon, and gathered in the sights, and rearranged them in a 1940's kaleidoscope."¹⁶⁴ While Paul Berman, a critic writing for *The New York Times*, has said "*The Plot Against America* is not an allegorical tract about the present age, with each scene or character corresponding to events of our own modern time," many reviewers have drawn parallels between actual history and the alternate history depicted in this Uchronic novel. For

¹⁶⁰ Roth, *The Plot Against America*, 326.

¹⁶¹ Parrish, "Autobiography and History in Roth's *The Plot Against America*, or What Happened When Hitler Came to New Jersey," 153.

¹⁶² Safer, *Mocking the Age: The Latter Novels of Philip Roth*, 151; and Michael Rothberg, Chapter Four: "Roth and the Holocaust," in *The Cambridge Companion to Philip Roth*, ed. Timothy Parrish (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 53-67.

¹⁶³ Sigel, "*The Plot Against America*: Philip Roth's Counter-Plot to American History," 144.

¹⁶⁴ Paul Berman, "The Plot Against America," *The New York Times*, October 3, 2004.

example George W. Bush, often derided by detractors as “hubristic,”¹⁶⁵ is often compared to “Roth’s Lindbergh [who] is laconic to the point of simplemindedness,”¹⁶⁶ while the general suspension of civil liberties in the wake of Lindbergh’s penultimate disappearance is evocative of the general erosion of privacy in the wake of the September Eleventh attacks.¹⁶⁷

The question of credibility and plausibility looms large in Uchronic fiction and must be addressed as it pertains to *The Plot Against America*. Though “Roth had doubts that he was writing this book for his usual audience,”¹⁶⁸ he “took care in fitting his inventions to historical facts.”¹⁶⁹ In a specific and direct nod to credible plausibility, Roth included the names of real congressmen who were present at the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia in 1940 in the lead up to Lindbergh’s nomination for president in the first chapter.¹⁷⁰ Roth also did not turn Lindbergh “into Hitler or into any sort of caricature—in fact, [Lindbergh] departs in no significant way from his real political positions and recorded words,”¹⁷¹ a point echoed by Elaine Safer.¹⁷² According to Michael Gorra, writing for the *Times Literary Supplement*, “*The Plot Against America* offers a plausible description of a world that never was.”¹⁷³ Jason Siegel, a scholar of American Literature and postmodernism at the University of Wisconsin, agrees: “Roth’s novel emphasises formal realism by adopting the form of a memoir and rendering in...plausible detail a fallacious history of the US between 1940 and 1942.” In particular, the depiction of Charles Lindbergh has been noted by many as “not invented... out of thin air... Lindbergh, in real life as in the novel, famously admired Hitler and even accepted a medal from Hitler’s government.”¹⁷⁴

In the words of Hana Wirth-Nesher, a professor of English and American Studies and Chair on the Study of the Jewish Experience in the United States at Tel Aviv University in Israel, the “Lindbergh presidency is imaginary, but the real anti-Semitism of the real historical Lindbergh was not.”¹⁷⁵ Even Michiko Kakutani, herself a Pulitzer-prize winning literary critic, has said “*The Plot Against America* takes place in a political landscape that remains cartoonish in

¹⁶⁵ Blake Morrison, “The Relentless Unforseen,” *The Guardian*, October 2, 2004.

¹⁶⁶ Bill Kaufman, “Heil to the Chief,” *The American Conservative*, September 27, 2004, www.TheAmericanConservative.com.

¹⁶⁷ Kakutani, “A Pro-Nazi President, A Family Feeling the Effects,”.

¹⁶⁸ Claudia Roth Pierpont, *Roth Unbound: A Writer and His Books* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013), 275-276.

¹⁶⁹ Roth Pierpont, *Roth Unbound: A Writer and His Books*, 277.

¹⁷⁰ Charles Peters, *Five Days in Philadelphia: The Amazing "We Want Willkie" Convention of 1940 and How It Freed FDR to Save the Western World* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005).

¹⁷¹ Roth Pierpont, *Roth Unbound: A Writer and His Books*, 274.

¹⁷² Safer, *Mocking the Age: The Later Novels of Philip Roth*, 160.

¹⁷³ Michael Gorra, “A Kitchen Table in New York,” *Times Literary Supplement*, October 6, 2004, 22-24.

¹⁷⁴ Berman, “The Plot Against America,” 6.

¹⁷⁵ Roth, *The Plot Against America*, 365 ; and Wirth-Nesher, “Roth’s autobiographical writings,” 170; and Roth, “The Story Behind *The Plot Against America*,”.

the extreme” and “can be read as a not-altogether-successful attempt to mesh two incompatible genres: the political-historical thriller and the coming-of-age tale.” Kakutani also notes that “Lindbergh... in real life articulated anti-Semitic sentiments and isolationist politics.” Despite this, or perhaps because of it, several readers, critics and reviewers attribute a political agenda on the part of Philip Roth that is an oblique critique of the second Bush White House.¹⁷⁶ “*The Plot Against America*,” writes Kakutani, “is a novel that can be read, in the current Bush era, as either a warning about the dangers of isolationism...[or as] a warning about the dangers of the Patriot Act and the threat to civil liberties.”¹⁷⁷

“Or,” asks Paul Berman, “is it ludicrous to suggest any parallels?” Hana Wirth-Nesher believes Roth is “responding to the global rise of anti-Semitism in recent years, [bringing] a version of that tragic European Jewish life to the shores of the United States in *The Plot Against America*, so that the American-Jewish experience rejoins a version of Jewish history whose distinguishing feature is persecution as a minority.”¹⁷⁸ In her words, “the power of *The Plot Against America* lies in the incremental, credible and sinister steps that lead to the systematic targeting of America’s Jews.”¹⁷⁹ Despite these speculations, the author himself dismisses any connection—satirical, analogous, allegorical, oblique or otherwise—between his Uchronic version of Lindbergh as president and the George W. Bush administration:

Some readers are going to want to take this book as a *roman à clef* to the present moment in America [the early 2000s right after the September Eleventh attacks]. That would be a mistake. I set out to do exactly what I’ve done: reconstruct the years 1940-42 as they might have been if Lindbergh, instead of Roosevelt, had been elected president in the 1940 election. I am not pretending to be interested in those two years—I am interested in those two years. They were turbulent in America because they were catastrophic in Europe. My every imaginative effort was directed toward making the effect of that reality as strong as I could, and not so as to illuminate the present through the past but to illuminate the past through the past.¹⁸⁰

Though Roth asserts that “*The Plot Against America* is an exercise in historical imagination,” he also insists his agenda in writing the novel was more personal than political:

¹⁷⁶ Siegel, “*The Plot Against America*: Philip Roth’s Counter-Plot to American History,” 144: “Philip Roth’s *The Plot Against America* (2004), which presents an alternate history of the United States during the years 1940-42, has been interpreted by reviewers and critics as a social satire, a cautionary tale, and a veiled allegory of the George W. Bush administration.”

¹⁷⁷ Kakutani, “A Pro-Nazi President, A Family Feeling the Effects,” *The New York Times*, September 21, 2004.

¹⁷⁸ Wirth-Nesher, Chapter Two: “Roth’s autobiographical writings,” 166.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid*, 169.

¹⁸⁰ Roth, “The Story Behind *The Plot Against America*,”.

It also gave me an opportunity to bring my parents back from the grave and restore them to what they were at the height of their powers in their late 30s... and then... to imagine how they might have conducted themselves under the enormous pressure of Jewish crisis such as they never really had to encounter as native-born New Jerseyans, living all their lives, luckily enough, without an Aryan white supremacist in the White House. I've tried to portray them here as faithfully as I could—as though I were, in fact, writing nonfiction.¹⁸¹

Many critics praised Roth's verisimilitude in *The Plot Against America*, yet this praise was not universal. The aforementioned Michiko Kakutani rejects and dismisses "the historical portion"¹⁸² of Roth's "provocative, but lumpy" Uchronic novel in her review of *The Plot Against America*.¹⁸³ Philip Roth preemptively counters Kakutani in his essay, published two days earlier on 19 September 2004:

I don't think it's far-fetched to imagine the election outcome as I do in the book, to imagine Lindergh's depriving Roosevelt of a third term. It was far-fetched for Orwell to imagine the world as he did [in *1984*], but he knew that. His book wasn't a prophecy. It was a futuristic horror story containing, of course, a political warning. Orwell imagined a small change in the past with horrendous consequences for everyone; I tried to imagine a small change in the past with horrendous consequences for a relative few. [Orwell] imagined a dystopia, I imagined a uchronia.¹⁸⁴

The Image of Women in *The Plot Against America*

The images of women in Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* are complex, thorough and compelling. They are crucial to the narrative and, in the case of First Lady Anne Morrow Lindbergh, pivotal to the overall resolution of the plot. There are three women in *The Plot Against America*: Bess Roth, the fictionalised version of the author's mother; Selma Wishnow, the Roth's fictionalised downstairs neighbor; and Aunt Evelyn, Roth's fictionalised aunt. Anne Morrow Lindbergh, the wife of President Charles Lindbergh and First Lady of the United States, is also mentioned numerous times throughout the novel, but she is a point of reference and not seen interacting with any other characters. Beyond these, there are momentary references to other women who appear in the novel, but for the most part these three characters—Bess Roth, Selma Wishnow and Aunt Evelyn—are the main women depicted in *The Plot Against America*.

¹⁸¹ Roth, "The Story Behind *The Plot Against America*,".

¹⁸² Siegel, "*The Plot Against America*: Philip Roth's Counter-Plot to American History," 148.

¹⁸³ Kakutani, "A Pro-Nazi President, A Family Feeling the Effects,".

¹⁸⁴ Roth, "The Story Behind *The Plot Against America*,".

Bess Roth is the matriarch of the Roth family and is depicted as a strong woman who, against formidable but not insurmountable odds, holds her immediate family together during the two-year period that Lindbergh is president of the United States. Her characteristic default is maternal, as can be seen in the fifth chapter when Roth as narrator returns home from school to find Mr Wishnow, Selma Wishnow's husband, dead and his mother "home from work" to help the surviving Wishnows through the ordeal.¹⁸⁵

In Chapter Seven, Roth as narrator locks himself in the bathroom whilst visiting his downstairs neighbor. Mrs Wishnow—Selma—helps Philip remain calm until Roth finally breaks free and then, like a child, proceeds to bawl.¹⁸⁶ This maternal comforting is returned in Chapter Nine; by this point in the novel the Wishnows have relocated to Danville, Kentucky, just as anti-Semitic pogroms engulf various cities located east of the Mississippi River, including cities in Kentucky.¹⁸⁷ In short, Selma Wishnow is killed, though this detail is not revealed until a few pages later. Nevertheless, a strong sense of ominous foreboding is not lost on any of the characters, least of her son, Seldon, and this no doubt motivates the narrator's mother to talk to Seldon over the phone in an effort to keep him calm and—like any Jewish mother—to make sure he at least gets something to eat.¹⁸⁸

Bess Roth's nearest counterpart in the novel is Selma Wishnow, the widowed mother of Seldon who lives with her son in the apartment downstairs from the Roth family. Aside from one scene in one chapter, Selma Wishnow is a stoic character. Widowed in Chapter Five, Selma Wishnow is described as "a beefy woman, tall and ungainly, who walked around with her fists clenched... *her* life was a fight... you had only to look at her fists."¹⁸⁹ Selma Wishnow's "clenched fists" are mentioned repeatedly¹⁹⁰ and most gruesomely when Roth recalls "the casket containing Mrs Wishnow's remains... I kept envisioning her inside the casket with her fists still clenched."¹⁹¹ Depicted sadly and tragically, she is described as "benumbed."¹⁹² As a character, she has almost no lines of dialogue aside from the bathroom scene in Chapter Seven. Despite this, Bess Roth and Selma Wishnow, as characters, arguably represent two different versions of a Jewish mother as remembered and envisioned by the author. Both women are devoted to their

¹⁸⁵ Roth, *The Plot Against America*, 193-194.

¹⁸⁶ *ibid*, 259.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid*, 329.

¹⁸⁸ *ibid*, 330-331.

¹⁸⁹ *ibid*, 188.

¹⁹⁰ *ibid*, 224: "Mrs Wishnow, who sat at the kitchen table with her fists clenched, still embattled, still grappling day in and day out with everything determined to crush her and her fatherless son."

¹⁹¹ *ibid*, 336.

¹⁹² *ibid*, 331.

sons and both are depicted as kind and, in terms of maternal instinct, unwavering. Bess Roth seems to serve an additional function: she is a foil meant to rein in Herman Roth's irate dislike of Charles Lindbergh and "those fascists in the White House," as she does during the family trip to Washington, DC, in the second chapter.

The third woman character depicted in Philip Roth's Uchronic novel is Aunt Evelyn. Described as "the maverick on my mother's" side of the family and as "my mother's vivid younger sister," Roth reveals in the third chapter that Aunt "Evelyn [had] resigned from teaching, quit the union, and, seemingly without a qualm, abandoned her political loyalties to work for Rabbi Bengelsdorf in Lindbergh's [Office of American Absorption]." ¹⁹³ It is Aunt Evelyn's relationship with this "Rabbi Rasputin" ¹⁹⁴ that especially presents a problem in terms of her role in the narrative and the impact this alternate history has on this fictional version of the Roth family. ¹⁹⁵

Rabbi Lionel Bengelsdorf is a fictional character, a fabrication on the part of the author and not a historical figure recast in the form of a clergyman. He supports Lindbergh's candidacy "because the political objectives of my people are identical with his." ¹⁹⁶ As a result, various members of the Roth family regard this Rabbi with suspicion. He is often derided as opportunistic, arrogant and stupid. ¹⁹⁷ Roth's fictionalized Cousin Alvin, who is so angered by Nazi atrocities in Germany that he joins the Canadian Army to fight them, losing his leg in the process, is incensed by Rabbi Bengelsdorf's endorsement of Lindbergh for president, thereby "cleansing" the aviator and his ties to Nazi Germany in an effort to make him more palatable to a Jewish-American audience: "'Yep,' Alvin said, 'they bought him. The fix is in. They slipped a gold ring through his big Jew nose, and now they can lead him anywhere.'" ¹⁹⁸

The convoluted connection between Anne Morrow Lindbergh and the fictional fabrication of the Aunt Evelyn character, as well as the character of Rabbi Lionel Bengelsdorf, are no doubt meant to problematise and complicate the connection between the alternate history depicted in this Uchronic novel and the impact it has on this fictional version of the Roth family. For her part, Aunt Evelyn is depicted as enthralled, bedazzled and enamored with Rabbi

¹⁹³ Roth, *The Plot Against America*, 85: It is revealed that Aunt Evelyn is now the "executive assistant to Rabbi Lionel Bengelsdorf, who'd been appointed by the new [Lindbergh] administration to serve as the first director of the OAA office for the state of New Jersey."

¹⁹⁴ *ibid*, 312.

¹⁹⁵ *ibid*, 86-87.

¹⁹⁶ *ibid*, 35.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid*, 35.

¹⁹⁸ *ibid*, 37.

Bengelsdorf who is, in turn, enthralled, bedazzled and enamored with Charles Lindbergh despite his close ties to the Third Reich.¹⁹⁹ This presents a number of issues: in the words of Roth as narrator, “a rabbi was to officiate at weddings and funerals [and] to bar mitzvah their sons... beyond that he did not play a role of any importance in their day-to-day lives, nor did any of them—including my respectful mother—expect him to”²⁰⁰ yet, in supporting Lindbergh, Rabbi Bengelsdorf is able to influence the course of events for Jewish Americans and is viewed with hostility and suspicion by the patriarch of the family, Herman Roth.

It is not clear what Philip Roth was attempting to achieve by depicting Rabbi Bengelsdorf as a character with a “courtly Southern accent,” yet in the next Uchronic narrative to be scrutinized—*The Yiddish Policemen’s Union* by Michael Chabon—the image of rabbis was considered to be quite insulting towards Orthodox clergy. To another reader, however—a Muslim or Arab reader, for instance—Michael Chabon’s narrative may present a number of images that are downright blasphemous.

***The Yiddish Policemen’s Union* by Michael Chabon**

The main narrative thrust of *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union* is a whodunnit murder mystery revolving around the demise of Mendel Shpilman, who turns up dead, shot in the head execution-style at the same flop house that the protagonist-investigator, Meyer Landsman, lives in. It is both a Uchronic novel which takes place in an alternate version of Alaska as well as “a detective story in the hardboiled style of Raymond Chandler, where the dead body and the detective both make their first appearance on the first page.”²⁰¹ Thus one of the recurrent features of the Uchronic genre—the detective narrative format—is central to this particular Uchronic novel.

Like all Uchronic novels, *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union* is premised on a what-if question: What if the United States had opened the District of Sitka in Alaska to Jewish settlement in the 1940s?²⁰² Similar to the Kimberley Plan, which was proposed to the highest levels of government in Australia, the parallel “Sitka Plan,” officially known as *The Problem of Alaskan Development*, was first proposed in a report produced in 1939-40 for the United States

¹⁹⁹ Roth, *The Plot Against America*, 215.

²⁰⁰ *ibid*, 219-220.

²⁰¹ Patricia Cohen, “The Frozen Chosen,” *The New York Times*, April 29, 2007.

²⁰² Todd Hasak-Lowy, “The Language Deep, Deep in Chabon’s Ear”, 2009, http://www.jbooks.com/interviews/index/IP_HasakLowy_Chabon.htm

Department of the Interior. Like the Kimberley Plan, which was proposed around the same time, the comparable Sitka initiative was also defeated by a national leader, US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who declined to implement the proposal. There are many similarities between the demise of the Kimberley Plan and the defeat of its Alaskan counterpart. There are also several similarities between *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* and the creative narrative, especially in regard to the central feature of Uchronic fiction: the point of historic divergence.

The Point of Historic Divergence in *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*

Both *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* and the creative narrative that accompanies this research contain points of historic divergence. In both novels, those points involve the deaths of obscure government officials: Anthony Dimond and Joseph Carrodus. In 1939-1940, at the time *The Problem of Alaskan Development* was published, Anthony Dimond was the Alaska Territory delegate to the United States House of Representatives. According to Tom Kizzia, the journalist who wrote a four-part series about the Sitka Plan for the *Anchorage Daily News* in May of 1999 entitled "Sanctuary: Alaska, the Nazis and the Jews: the Forgotten Story of Alaska's Own Confrontation with the Holocaust", "the main arguments against the [Sitka Plan] were presented... by Anthony J Dimond." As Tizzia's article explains, Anthony Dimond evinced sympathy "for the persecuted minorities of Europe" but, "while... studiously avoid[ing] anti-alien rhetoric," he came out against the idea which, in effect, influenced President Roosevelt to reject the plan.

Michael Chabon changes this with the point of historic divergence by bumping Anthony Dimond off in a Washington, DC, car accident, thereby altering the sequence of history. Though the point of historic divergence is buried thirty pages into the novel, the death of Anthony Dimond in *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* is similar to the sudden death of Joseph Carrodus in the creative narrative. As recorded in history, both men influenced various reports prepared for their Departments of the Interior and both men were against any plans for Jewish settlements in their respective geographical areas. Both men were also not killed prematurely: Anthony Dimond was not hit and killed by a taxi in 1939 but lived until 1953; Joseph Carrodus was not trampled to death by a horse in 1939, but lived until 1961.²⁰³

²⁰³ "Anthony Dimond," Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, accessed on March 3, 2013. <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=D000353>; "Joseph Aloysius Carrodus," Australian Dictionary of Biography, accessed on March 14, 2013. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/carrodus-joseph-alloysius-9694>

In both Uchronic novels, their deaths serve as the primary point of historic divergence. Anthony Dimond's sudden death—and subsequent absence from the Jewish Settlement in Alaska discussion—leads to the opening of the Sitka District to the Jews of Europe who, as it is later revealed, flood Sitka *en masse* much the same way the Jews flood the East Kimberley region in the creative narrative.²⁰⁴ Though the general premise, as well as the points of historic divergence between the creative narrative and *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* are similar, several notable differences between these two Uchronic novels become apparent when Chabon's narrative is examined utilising the thematic framework outlined previously.

The Elliptical Revelation of an Alternate World History in *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*

There are two basic ways an author of Uchronic fiction can reveal the alternate world history: either elliptically or directly through the use of an info-dump. Michael Chabon employs both methods in *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*. The elliptical revelation of an alternate world history is handled in a way reminiscent of Raymond Chandler's hardboiled style. As such, the elliptical revelation of an alternate world history overlaps with the detective narrative central to this Uchronic novel. Meyer Landsman, the protagonist-investigator, is seen, for example, snooping around like a detective in an apartment. On the second page, he picks up a souvenir shot glass of the World's Fair of 1977 which took place in Sitka thirty years earlier, elliptically revealing that this narrative takes place in the twenty-first century.²⁰⁵ The reader is reminded of this much later in the novel with the passing, expository yet elliptical mentioning of the "Internet" in the following line of dialogue attribution:

"Uh-huh," Spade says amiably, a little distracted, maybe, like someone pretending to take an interest in the minutiae of your life while surfing some inner Internet of his mind.²⁰⁶

It is elliptically revealed later that one of the first ladies of the United States is/was none other than Marilyn Monroe Kennedy, who is mentioned wearing a "pink pillbox hat" in a style reminiscent of the iconic fashion sense of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, yet details as to *which*

²⁰⁴ Michael Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* (Sydney: Harper Collins Australia), 28: "The population of Sitka Settlement had already swollen to two million. In direct violation of the act, Jews had spread up and down the western shore of Baranof Island, out to Kruzof, all the way up to West Chicagof Island. The economy was booming. American Jews were lobbying hard."

²⁰⁵ Hasak-Lowy, "The Language Deep, Deep in Chabon's Ear."

²⁰⁶ Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, 328.

Kennedy is/was blissfully wed to Marilyn Monroe, or when they got married or, for that matter, when she was first lady, are never clarified at any point during the narrative.²⁰⁷ Other elliptical revelations of an alternate world history in *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* include an alternate sequence of events leading to the end of the Second World War

Each category of this genre study has its own peculiar nuance and Uchronic novels premised on Israel Endangered include a certain set of somewhat regressive if not recurrent anxieties, chief among them “What about Israel?” or “What happens to Israel?” as well as “How do we look in this book?” Michael Chabon addresses these questions in his novel but, as will be discussed, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* presents some complex and complicated images of Jewish characters, many of whom were deemed offensive for a time by certain sectors of the American Jewish community. Perhaps part of that complex and complicated image can be seen in Chapter Seventeen, where the existence of regulations regarding the number of Jews that can live in Jerusalem is revealed elliptically: “He has never seen the regulations for the admission of Jews to Jerusalem, but he’s fairly certain that not being an obsessed religious lunatic is at the top of the list.”²⁰⁸

This is followed a few lines later by a paragraph that informs the reader that “there are still Jews living in Jerusalem, as there always have been. A few. They were there long before the Zionists started showing up, their trunks packed with Hebrew dictionaries, agricultural manuals, and plenty of trouble for everyone.”²⁰⁹ This sentence, appearing in a paragraph of expository prose, provides suggestive implications regarding where the author might stand in relation to religious Jews (i.e. “obsessed religious lunatics”) and in relation to Israel: “Zionists,” at the end of the excerpt above, are “plenty of trouble for everyone.” Does this suggest a predilection for anti-Zionism, if not an anti-religious fervor, on the part of the author, or does it suggest an inherent disregard for Israel and Jews, especially when viewed in light of the plot?²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, 201: Screen siren Marilyn Monroe recast as First Lady has relevance for the creative narrative: it is revealed in Part Four that Joanne Woodward, another Hollywood actress, has become the First Lady of the United States by the mid-1970s. Like Chabon's recast version of Marilyn Monroe, who adds “Kennedy” to her last name, Joanne Woodward similarly adds “Vidal” to her last name.

²⁰⁸ *ibid*, 150.

²⁰⁹ *ibid*, 150.

²¹⁰ Michael Chabon has recently denounced what he calls Israel's occupation of the West Bank: Stephen M. Flatow., “Jewish novelist Michael Chabon rails against fictional ‘occupation.’” *Jewish News Service*, May 3, 2016, accessed June 9, 2016 at 4:20pm: <http://www.jns.org/latest-articles/2016/5/3/jewish-novelist-michael-chabon-rails-against-fictional-occupation#.V1nNn9R97wc>=

These are some of the many questions—many of them greeted with offense—that put the American Jewish Establishment on the defensive at the time of the book's publication in 2007, as alluded to in Ruth Wisse's review of *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* in *Commentary* magazine:

Protracted hostility tends to tarnish the culture of any group it assaults, [getting] away with flaunting harsh stereotypes of their kin that would promptly be labeled racist if coming from outsiders. This brand of "staged alienation," as John McWhorter calls it, has long turned a profit among Jews... audiences pay good money to enjoy abuse at the hands of their own. But what sort of art do such in-group muggings produce?²¹¹

In the same article, Ruth Wisse again raises the issue of "protracted hostility" on the part of Michael Chabon in writing *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*:

Again, nothing new here: protracted hostility, as I say, tends to tarnish the self-image of any group that it assaults, and Chabon, as a supplier of mass culture, also dutifully supplies an example of the syndrome.

That he himself is not joking about it, however, becomes clear from his literary choices.²¹²

More will be said about the image of Jewish characters in this novel and about Michael Chabon's political agenda in writing *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, but in terms of the elliptical revelation of an alternate world history, perhaps the two most compelling examples of this appear in Chapter Thirty-eight and Chapter Forty. In Chapter Thirty-eight, the protagonist-investigator enters a penthouse and sees young Jewish men passively watching a television:

The young men are watching a very large television turned to a satellite news channel. On the screen, the prime minister of Manchuria is shaking hands with five Manchurian astronauts. The box that the television came in is sitting on the floor besides its former contents.²¹³

This excerpt reveals that global satellite news and flat-screen plasma television technology exist in this Uchronic world and that Manchuria is independent from China, has a space program and is presumably subject to parliamentary rule. More importantly, it also sets up a scene that plays out a few pages later in Chapter Forty when the protagonist-investigator re-

²¹¹ Ruth Wisse. "Slap Shtick: *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*." *Commentary Magazine*, July 1, 2007.

²¹² *ibid.*

²¹³ Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, 333.

enters that penthouse to again view the same young Jewish men watching television, though this time not as passively:

In the other room of the penthouse, the young believers hug one another and jump up and down in their suits. Their yarmulkes tumble from their heads. Their faces shine with tears.

On the big television screen, Landsman gets his first look at an image that will soon be splashed across the front page of every newspaper in the world. All over town, pious hands will clip it and tape it to their front doors and windows. They will frame it and hang it behind the counters of their shops. Some hustler, inevitably, will work the thing up as a full-size poster, two feet by three. The hilltop in Jerusalem, crowded with alleys and houses. The broad empty mesa of paving stone. The jagged jawbone of burnt teeth. The magnificent plume of black smoke. And at bottom the legend, in blue letters, AT LAST! These posters will sell at the stationers' for between ten dollars and \$12.95.²¹⁴

It is revealed elliptically through a satellite news broadcast that the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem has been bombed and destroyed by Orthodox Jews.²¹⁵ While the Jewish Establishment bemoaned the seemingly negative depictions of Michael Chabon's Jewish characters, no one has claimed this image is negative due to the fact that fundamentalist Jews, in concert with exiled Israeli Zionists and supported, as parts of the narrative reveal, by Christian Evangelicals running the American government, plot and scheme to destroy the third holiest site in Islam. This part of the story does not raise any alarm in Ruth Wisse's 2007 review of the novel, which suggests the Jewish Establishment, in criticizing Chabon for penning such a negative depiction of Jews in general and Orthodox Jews in particular, completely overlooked this potentially offensive aspect of the plot. In her review, Ruth Wisse only mentions "the Arabs" once:

The Arab alternative version of Jewish history, which erases Israel from the map of the world while simultaneously fantasizing about a gigantic Zionist-American anti-Arab crusade, has been making inroads in the "progressive" circles to which Chabon belongs.²¹⁶

Michael Chabon is a Jewish American writer or, conversely, an American writer who happens to be Jewish. The primary, or at least initial, audiences for his novels are English-language readers in North America. Considering the fact that as recently as 2013, just six years

²¹⁴ Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, 358, 370.

²¹⁵ *ibid*, 359: "There is a lot that shocks Landsman about the image on the television screen, but the most shocking thing of all is simply that an object eight thousand miles away has been acted upon by Jews from Sitka."

²¹⁶ Ruth Wisse, "Slap Shtick: *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*." *Commentary Magazine*, July 1, 2007.

after the publication of *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, Michael Chabon was feted by the Central Conference of America Rabbis, the largest rabbinical organisation in the world,²¹⁷ one can assume that a fair number of Chabon's readers probably self-identify in some way or other as Jewish (though Ruth Wisse disagreed with this in her review of the novel). Though *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* has been translated into at least nine languages—Hebrew among them—and though the book has been published separately in both Britain and Australia, the fact is that this novel was written by a Jewish American writer and was likely and initially published for an English-speaking, American-based audience, many of whom may very well be and probably are Jewish. Timing should also be considered: the book was published in 2007, just six years after the tragic events of September 11, 2001; the presumption can be made that Michael Chabon wrote *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* in the tangible shadow of the September Eleventh attacks. These possibilities, coupled with the narrative's climax—the destruction of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem at the hands of fundamentalist, Orthodox Jews—might be viewed as offensive to a Muslim or Arab reader of the novel.

Unfortunately, the inclusion of Muslim or Arab reactions to *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* is beyond the scope of this research, but it can be assumed that the contents of the narrative might be viewed as offensive or even blasphemous to a Muslim or Arab reader. Based on many of the reviews, which are positive and excerpted in the paperback edition, as well as the fact that the Jewish Establishment overlooks this particular aspect of the narrative, it can be assumed that the destruction of the Dome of the Rock at the hands of Orthodox Jews sponsored by American Christian Evangelicals was not the part of the book Ruth Wisse found offensive in terms of how Jewish characters are depicted in this Uchronic novel.

The Direct Revelation of an Alternate World History in *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*

As stated previously, the direct revelation of an alternate world history, also known as an “info-dump,” is defined as a moment when the author inserts—dumps—information about the alternate history into the text of a Uchronic narrative. Though most of the back story of Jewish Sitka is revealed elliptically, there are instances where the author dumps information about the

²¹⁷ Tom Teicholz, “Michael Chabon's Search for Authentic Expression,” *Jewish Journal*, March 13, 2013.

alternate world history into the narrative.²¹⁸ Many criticisms can be leveled at the use of an info-dump in Uchronic fiction. In this case, the main criticism is that any information directly revealed to the reader stands out in the text all too obviously, for example:

In the past, it has struck him that, apart from homosexuals, only chess players have found a reliable way to bridge, intensely but without fatal violence, the gulf that separates any given pair of men.²¹⁹

This line gives away a major clue that directly impacts the final plot conclusion; the reader can now assume, and correctly so, that something homosexual will prove central to the resolution of the murder mystery. The word “homosexual” sticks out like a spoiler-alert; this is foreshadowing at its most obvious. The notion that something homosexual will have central implications for the resolution of the murder mystery are again raised in Chapter Sixteen in the following line of dialogue attributed to the Verbover rebbe: “My son has been dead to me for many years, Detective. Many years. I tore my clothes and said kaddish and lit a candle for his loss long ago.”²²⁰

When the father of the murder victim—the Verbover rebbe—tells police his “son has been dead for many years,” what he is in effect admitting is my “son has been dead [to me, the father] for many years.” That is to say it is quite common, even in the twenty-first century, for Orthodox Jews to reject and disown their gay offspring, treating them instead as a memory of someone who has died, enabling the survivors, in this case their parents, to adopt mourning procedures such as the tearing of clothes. Another point that foreshadows the eventual resolution of the plot appears in Chapter Twenty, where the image of the Messiah is transformed into a weather phenomenon: “The Sitka Saturday afternoon lies dead as a failed messiah in its winding rag of snow.”

In summation, Michael Chabon employs both the direct revelation as well as the elliptical revelation of an alternate world history in *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, but what exactly is the difference between the two as it appears in Uchronic fiction?

²¹⁸ Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, 29: Whilst in the midst of the back story for one of the primary characters, author Chabon inserts the following sentence into the text: “Japan attacked Pearl Harbor” before immediately returning in the next sentence to the character's back story.

²¹⁹ *ibid*, 88.

²²⁰ *ibid*, 140.

The Elliptical Revelation versus the Info-Dump in *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*

Michael Chabon's use of the info-dump proves to be occasionally unnecessary in that these direct revelations could, in most instances, be excised from the narrative text without any detrimental impact to the plot. The most pertinent line in this novel, for example, is found in Chapter Sixteen:

In the corner by the door stands the famous Verbover Clock, a survivor of the old home back in the Ukraine. Looted when Russia fell, then shipped back to Germany, it survived the dropping of the atomic bomb on Berlin in 1946 and all the confusions of the time that followed.²²¹

This sentence elliptically reveals key details about the alternate sequence of history inherent to this Uchronic novel: that the Orthodox Jewish Verbover sect started in the Ukraine, and that the Soviet Union was overrun by Nazis during the Second World War, presumably taking the Ukraine with it, prolonging the war until 1946 when it was brought to an end with the atomic bombing of Berlin. This sequence of history stands in contrast to actual history in which, to start with, the Verbovers do not exist (they are a fabrication dreamed up by the author), the Soviet Union was not overrun, nor was Nazi Germany A-bombed during World War Two, which ended in 1945 and not in 1946. The fact that Michael Chabon has the revelation of an alternate world history tied up with the prop that is the seemingly indestructible "famous Verbover Clock" exemplifies the difference between the elliptical revelation of an alternate world history and a direct revelation dumped, dropped or, in this case, slipped in to the narrative in such a way as to stand out.

Another example of this can be found in Chapter Five where Chabon inserts a direct revelation about Israel into the narrative, thereby answering one of the questions applicable to this category of the genre study, What happens to Israel?:

Nineteen forty-eight: Strange times to be a Jew.²²² In August the defense of Jerusalem collapsed and the outnumbered Jews of the three-month-old republic of Israel were routed, massacred, and driven into the sea.

²²¹ Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, 136.

²²² *ibid*, 7, 13, 29, 112, 304: This line "Strange times to be a Jew" could be likened to a refrain for *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, which many critics have highlighted.

This sentence appears as expository prose in the context of a character's back story, but could have been excised without much major damage to the story or plot:

With the Direct Revelation:

‘Hertz studied criminal justice at the new Sitka Technical Institute and, on graduating in 1948, was hired as a paralegal by the first big U.S. law firm to open a branch office here. His sister, Freydl, Landsman’s mother, was among the earliest Girl Scouts in the settlement.

“Nineteen forty-eight: Strange times to be a Jew. In August the defense of Jerusalem collapsed and the outnumbered Jews of the three-month-old republic of Israel were routed, massacred, and driven into the sea.”

‘As Hertz was starting his job at Foehn, Harmattan and Buran, the House Committee on Territories and Insular Affairs began a long-delayed review of status called for by the Sitka Settlement Act.’

Without the Direct Revelation:

‘Hertz studied criminal justice at the new Sitka Technical Institute and, on graduating in 1948, was hired as a paralegal by the first big U.S. law firm to open a branch office here. His sister, Freydl, Landsman’s mother, was among the earliest Girl Scouts in the settlement.

‘As Hertz was starting his job at Foehn, Harmattan and Buran, the House Committee on Territories and Insular Affairs began a long-delayed review of status called for by the Sitka Settlement Act.’²²³

²²³ Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, 29.

Although the Hertz character is a Jew in Alaska, there seems to be no direct interaction between that fact and the “routed” state of Israel as presented in this Uchronic novel; the link between the two is indirect, brought together here in the same sentence. Though Hertz starts a new job on this page, and though it is recalled that his mother was “among the earliest Girl Scouts” in Sitka, the information revealed to the reader via the excerpted sentence is about the alternate history of Israel in this Uchronic world. The Hertz character does not appear again until seven sentences later at the start of a new paragraph. Once this info-dump about Israel is revealed, the story returns to Hertz Shemets, making it obvious to the reader that they have just read an info-dump. For all intents and purposes, this direct revelation could be excised entirely or, at the very least, placed *anywhere* in the novel without any major impact on the plot. In some ways, one could subtract the Uchronics of this Uchronic novel, theoretically leaving behind a bizarre, Yiddish-inflected *noir* that, though flawed, stands up on its own as a sort of Old World, Judeo-yid-inspired murder mystery perhaps set in a nameless, frozen block of pogrom-prone Europe.

The Reconfigured Image of Indigenous Peoples in *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*

The Yiddish Policemen's Union features a dynamic between the Jews of Sitka and the Tlingit, an Indigenous group native to the geographical stretch of Alaska depicted in this Uchronic novel. The image of Tlingit people is reconfigured to the extent that their gene pools mix together with Jews once the racial barrier is crossed, and not just sexually. Though this line is crossed many times throughout the narrative, most prominently through communal rejection/acceptance and illegal activity such as criminal bribery, there are also instances of “Indian-Jew violence in the sixty-year history of the [Sitka] District.”²²⁴

The image of the Tlingit people, however, is not necessarily elevated. The relationship between the Tlingit people and the Jews of Sitka, firstly the immigrants fleeing *shtetl* Europe and the Pale of Settlement along with their multi-generational and largely Orthodox offspring, is characterised as violent and uneasy and, as is revealed elliptically, includes murder, bribery,

²²⁴ Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, 320.

suspicion, fear and resentment.²²⁵ This Jewish-Tlingit dynamic is further characterised in Chapter Six by “the Synagogue Riots... the lowest moment in the bitter and inglorious history of Tlingit-Jewish relations.”

This relationship between Jews and Tlingit is fictional, a total fabrication on the part of the author. In terms of American literature, there are not many prominent examples of narratives where two cultures as different as European Jewish culture and Indigenous native North American cultures meld and mesh together, unlike in Australian literature where there are two well known examples of this: *Riders in the Chariot* by Patrick White and *Poor Fellow My Country* by Xavier Herbert. Though Chabon depicts the relationship between Jews and Tlingit as negative and violent,²²⁶ on a more personal level, once cultural dissociation gives way to carnal lust and once the racial barrier is crossed both literally and figuratively, the central half-Tlingit half-Jewish character, Berko Shemets, is shunned by his Native American relations only to be reluctantly accepted by the Jews.²²⁷ He is also Meyer Landsman’s partner, and what Michael Chabon does with Berko Shemets is to infuse this character’s back story with the elliptical revelation of local history as it pertains to Jewish-Tlingit relations in Sitka:

Berko Shemets started off as ‘a shambling giant boy known in the Sea Monster House of the Raven Moiety of the Longhair Tribe as Johnny “the Jew” Bear.

Hertz Shemets remains a noted expert of Tlingit art and artifacts. At one time this hobby or pastime sent him wandering farther and deeper into the Indianer-Lands than any other Jews of his generation. So, yes, his study of Native culture and his trips to the Indianer-Lands were a beard for his COINTELPRO work during the sixties... And he fathered a child of Miss Laurie Jo Bear of Hoonah. When she was killed during the so-called Synagogue Riots, her half-Jew son, an object of torment and scorn among the Raven Moiety, appealed for rescue to the father he barely knew.’²²⁸

Though the Jewish-Tlingit dynamic in Sitka is marked by violence, and though with Berko Shemets the Tlingit are depicted as disapproving of any mixed-race offspring with Jews,

²²⁵ Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*, 38; and Adam Rovner, “Alternate History: The Case of Nava Semel’s *Isralsland* and Michael Chabon’s *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*,” *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, 9, 1 (2011): 131-152: “The Jews of Chabon’s Sitka Island coexist uneasily with their Tlingit neighbors who feel that their tribal lands have been poached. Frequent provocations in Sitka result in mutual suspicion and give rise to conflicts and reprisals.”

²²⁶ Rovner, “Alternate History: The Case of Nava Semel’s *Isralsland* and Michael Chabon’s *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*,” 131-152.

²²⁷ Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*, 43-44 and 81.

²²⁸ *ibid*, 41-42.

there are instances of cooperation between the two groups. As the plot of the murder mystery thickens, the protagonist-investigator flies to Peril Strait, a location described as “nothing but” Tlingit natives.²²⁹ Located beyond the Sitka District in Alaska proper, Peril Strait is home to what appears to be a secret treatment facility for Jews addicted to drugs and alcohol called “Beth Tikkun,” Hebrew for “House of Repair.”²³⁰ This strikes the protagonist-investigator as unusual:

Landsman’s heart thrashes with the wildness of his guessing. He’s wondering why any Jews would need or want such a large facility out here and how they could manage to persuade the Natives to let them build it. Could they have bought themselves a piece of the Indianer-Lands to build a new McShtetl?²³¹

This adds some complication to the image of the Tlingit people; of the Indigenous Tlingit characters, virtually all of them are described as being “half-Tlingit,” the other half usually as “half-Jewish”. The first “full-blood Tlingit,” “Detective Inspector Wilfred Dick,” is mentioned in Chapter Thirty-one. Standing at “four feet seven inches tall,” “Inspector Dick” enters the narrative calling the Jews of Sitka “yids” and “mad Hebrews.”²³² In Chapter Thirty-three, the protagonist-investigator witnesses a linguistic skirmish between Berko Shemets and Inspector Dick, wherein the languages of Tlingit and Yiddish are juxtaposed for the sake of insult:

In his rich but rusty Tlingit, Berko expresses a wish to one day see Dick lying dead and shoeless in the snow.

“Go shit in the ocean,” Dick says in flawless Yiddish.²³³

A few pages later, Inspector Dick tells Berko and Landsman that the Jews of Sitka have bribed local law enforcement well beyond the confines of Sitka, dropping cash into the police force of a nearby Indian reservation:

“... Those gentlemen... they do not pay my salary, fuck you very much. But through means not given to me to understand, and that I don’t have the stomach to speculate

²²⁹ Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*, 242.

²³⁰ *ibid*, 245.

²³¹ *ibid*, 259.

²³² *ibid*, 273-274.

²³³ *ibid*, 283.

about, those gentlemen have friends, Tlingit friends, who do pay my salary, or to be specific, who sit on the council that does..."²³⁴

The reconfigured image of Indigenous people is furthered when the nefarious depths of Jewish-Tlingit relations are mentioned in dialogue in Chapter Thirty-four:

"... I don't care how much money they throw around. I buy that a member of your tribal council might take a bribe from a Jew every now and then. Business is business, a dollar's a dollar, and so forth. Who knows, I have heard people argue that the flow of illegal funds back and forth over the Line is the closest that Jews and Indians ever come to peace, love and understanding."

"That's sweet."

Whether or not this particular image of the Tlingit is elevated in any way is questionable, but it is certainly reconfigured. It is important to note that there is an actual Tlingit community in Alaska and that there are people alive today who identify as Tlingit, yet it is not known how modern Tlingit people feel about their depiction in this Uchronic novel.

The Detective Narrative Format in *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*

As is obvious from the book's description, both in the first edition and all subsequent paperback editions, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* is a murder mystery written in the hardboiled style of Raymond Chandler that was well-reviewed both in terms of critical volume as well as critical value, receiving many positive reviews and several awards including the Nebula, Locus and Sidewise awards, with many critical reviews approaching *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* as a pulpy *noir*. The detective narrative format is one of the most frequently recurring features of the Uchronic fiction genre, proving a popular way to explore Uchronic worlds that serve as a setting to an alternate history narrative. As such, the author sticks closely to the conventions and features inherent to the Raymond Chandler's hardboiled writing style which, by definition, employs a type of detective narrative format. The author explained his reason for this in an interview with Patricia Cohen:

²³⁴ Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, 285.

Since Mr. Chabon envisioned a “story that would encompass many levels of society,” he needed a character who would have access to them all. “That’s why writers have been using detectives,” [Chabon] says, mentioning Inspector Bucket in Dickens’ *Bleak House*.²³⁵

Michael Chabon also removes “the Holocaust” from the vernacular, replacing it with “the Destruction” in which two to three million Jews were killed by the Nazis rather than six million, yet the Jews that populate the District of Sitka are likened to “the ones who had been in the ghetto at Warsaw.”²³⁶ This is important because it directly carries over to the creative narrative that accompanies this research where, in a manner similar to *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*, the effects of the Nazi Holocaust against Jews are significantly downgraded.

The Political Agenda in *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*

While commentators, such as Ruth Wisse of *Commentary* magazine, might speculate about the author’s intentions, Chabon provides an official answer to the question of agenda in writing *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*. An article entitled “The Frozen Chosen” is reprinted with the author’s permission in the paperback edition of this Uchronic novel published in 2008:

With *Policemen’s Union*, Mr. Chabon was aiming not only for a classic detective story with a twisting, page-turning plot but also for rich characters and detail, psychological depth and cosmic truth—or at least cosmic questions.²³⁷

Toward the end of Cohen’s article, the author is quoted:

Thinking about what the world would look like without the state of Israel was “one of the motivating impulses of writing the book,” [Michael Chabon] says. “How mad it seems that this tiny little scrap of land” should be the centre of global conflicts. “I have a very strong feeling of complete ambivalence about a world without Israel,” Mr. Chabon says. “I didn’t come in with a point to prove or an agenda.”²³⁸

²³⁵ Cohen, “The Frozen Chosen,”.

²³⁶ Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*, 22: As this novel takes place in the modern era, the back story of how the Jews got to Alaska is revealed in Chapter Five; Denny Lenning, now regarded as a hero by the Jews of Sitka, “accidentally” hits and kills Anthony Dimond, thus providing the primary point of historic divergence. As actual history shows, Anthony Dimond was not killed by a taxi but went on to prevent a vote regarding the Slaterry Report that, had it been implemented, would have seen Sitka, Alaska, opened for Jewish settlement.

²³⁷ Cohen, “The Frozen Chosen,”.

²³⁸ *ibid.*

It can be presumed that, in reprinting this article at the end of the paperback edition for *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, this answer is the definitive statement regarding a political agenda on the part of Michael Chabon in writing this Uchronic novel. In fact, it seems his official answer is more personal than political:

Michael Chabon... took the first, unwitting step down this road-not-taken a decade ago. That's when Mr. Chabon... wrote a controversial essay about *Say It In Yiddish*, a 1958 phrase book for travelers that he found both poignant and funny.

Chabon's essay, "Guidebook to a Land of Ghosts," was first published in the June/July 1997 issue of *Civilization* and again in the October 1997 issue of *Harper's* magazine (like Patricia Cohen's article, Chabon's essay is reprinted in the 2008 paperback edition). In his essay, Chabon says he "first came across *Say It In Yiddish* on a shelf in a big chain book store in Orange County, California" and that he "couldn't quite believe... it was real," declaring the Yiddish phrasebook as "probably the saddest book" he owns. In the ensuing essay, Chabon asks where and when would someone need to know how to say Yiddish phrase 1372: "I need something for a tourniquet." His closing line of the essay: "Just what am I supposed to do with this book [*Say It In Yiddish*]?"

Chabon's essay was "attacked for mocking the [Yiddish] language and prematurely announcing its demise," and this surprised the author: "I had a double reaction... I was embarrassed and shamed. I had the nice Jewish boy impulse that I disrespected my elders and caused pain and embarrassment. But I also felt a total sense of irritation and spite." The author's "nice Jewish boy impulse" propelled his creative output and, in short, that essay birthed this novel:

...[Chabon] explain[ed]... "Oh yeah? That [essay] offended you? Well, I'm going to write a goddamn novel, and you think that was offensive? Just wait."

Perhaps more revealingly, Michael Chabon also said:

Oh, really[?] so the essay bothered you, well, okay then, here's a whole damn novel, motherfuckers!²³⁹

In this regard, Chabon did not mince words or, as will be shown, images. Though this novel was written in English by an English-language author, the characters and the action of the novel are meant to be taking place in Yiddish; this is a leap the reader is meant to make. Chabon is perhaps trying to assist his readers with this in Chapter Five when one of the women characters has “learned American,” which is presumably meant to be American-accented, vernacular English. This is the first of many times throughout this Uchronic novel when Yiddish-speaking characters switch to “American” to curse in foul and vulgar language (Chabon readily admits to not speaking Yiddish,²⁴⁰ thus we can presume he probably does not know curse words in Yiddish, thereby forcing his characters switch to “American” whenever they need to blurt out words like “fuck” or “shit” or “asshole”). The protagonist-investigator, for instance, switches from Yiddish to “American” in order to say “What the fuck?” in Chapter Twenty-two. However, in English—depicted by Chabon as Yiddish in automatic translation—when the characters swear, an English-language reader can “hear,” so to speak, the Yiddish:

“You were doped up pretty good,” Berko says. “Talking many kinds of shit”

Rather than:

“You were doped up pretty good,” Berko says. “Talking all sorts of shit.”

To further emphasise the use of the Yiddish language in this Uchronic setting, the word “*sholem*” replaces “gun,”²⁴¹ “*shoyfer*” replaces “phones/cellphones,”²⁴² “Halibut Point” becomes “Shvartser-Yam,”²⁴³ “*noz*” becomes “policeman”, but perhaps the most offensive aspect of this “use” of Yiddish is the frequent use of the derogatory term “*yid*,” which many characters use in

²³⁹ Hasak-Lowy, “The Language Deep, Deep in Chabon’s Ear”.

http://www.jbooks.com/interviews/index/IP_HasakLowy_Chabon.htm

²⁴⁰ Jon Wiener, “Arctic Jews: An Interview with Michael Chabon,” *Dissent: A Quarterly of Politics and Culture*, April 14, 2007.

²⁴¹ Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*, 2.

²⁴² *ibid*, 5.

²⁴³ *ibid*, 9.

passing. Meyer Landsman, for example, the protagonist-investigator, inaugurates the casual use of “*yid*” on page four as part of his character’s inner monologue. From then on, “*yid*” appears more than seventy-five times in the novel.²⁴⁴ While the prevalent use of “Yiddish” and the frequent use of “*yid*” are both issues that, on some levels, problematise the narrative, these issues pale in comparison to this image of Orthodox Jews:

Every noz in the District learns to respect the silence of the black hat. It is a refusal to answer that can spread and gather and deepen until, like a fog, it fills the streets of an entire black-hat neighborhood. Black hats wield skillful attorneys, and political clout, and boisterous newspapers, and can enfold a hapless inspector or even a commissioner in a great black-hatted stink that doesn’t go away until the witness of suspect is kicked loose or the charges are dropped.²⁴⁵

As this excerpt indicates, these Jews of Sitka are depicted as a criminally ambivalent lot that can extend the “benefits of corruption” to a communal level.²⁴⁶ The Verbovers, as in “the famous Verbover clock” mentioned previously, are a fictionalised sect of Orthodox Jews and are a complete fabrication on the part of the author. They trace their lineage back to the Ukraine and are described as uber-religious Chasidic Jews who sit at the top of a “criminal empire” so vast and powerful that it maintains an island in Sitka—Verbov Island—and are referred to as “the most powerful underworld characters north of the 55th parallel.”²⁴⁷ This image of Orthodox Jews is negative at best, casting the fictional Verbovers, specifically the Verbover rebbe, whose physical descriptions are hideous and grotesque,²⁴⁸ as heavyweights in the criminal underworld of Sitka. They are not only xenophobic and racist, but also pious in their resentment and intolerance of “others,” as shown in their rejection of the half-Jewish/half-Tlingit Berko Shemets character.

²⁴⁴ Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*, 186: The word “kid” could have substituted for “yid”, but perhaps the author was trying to push the proverbial envelope by choosing “yid” over “kid”: “He shrugs and runs his fingers along the bandage at the back of his head. “I just wanted to talk to the yid.””

²⁴⁵ *ibid*, 90.

²⁴⁶ *ibid*, 96: The two homicide detectives are also Jews, as is the author of *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*. Be that as it may, Jews are depicted as criminally prone, as well as prone to tears: “Sometimes when the younger black hats are caught by the police, they turn haughty and angry and demand their rights as American subjects. And sometimes they break down and cry. Men tend to cry...”

²⁴⁷ *ibid*, 99, 102: A “Shavuous Massacre” is mentioned on page 99, indicating a violent interaction between the Verbovers and the local Indigenous population.

²⁴⁸ *ibid*, 135.

In the category of Israel Endangered, the image of rabbis has been somewhat negative. In *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, the Verbover rebbe is depicted as the head of a hereditary criminal syndicate who just happens to be an Orthodox rabbi. The rabbi in Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America*—Rabbi Bengelsdorf—has ingratiated himself into the pseudo-fascist Lindbergh White House and is later accused of colluding with an American government in appeasement to the Nazis. Based on these two images, it is easy to presume both Philip Roth and Michael Chabon perhaps hold a grudge against Jewish clergy. There is also a tone of cynical pessimism throughout *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* that may be attributable to the hardboiled style of Raymond Chandler which the author is attempting to mimic. As such, a spectacle of Jewish discord runs through this Uchronic version of Sitka:

For forty years—as Danny Brennan's stories revealed—Hertz Shemets [father to Berko Shemets] used his position as local director of the FBI's domestic surveillance program to run his own private game on the Americans. The Bureau first recruited him in the fifties to fight Communists and the Yiddish Left, which, though fractious, was strong, hardened, embittered, suspicious of the Americas, and, in the case of the former Israelis, not especially grateful to be here. Hertz Shemets's brief was to monitor and infiltrate the local Red population; Hertz wiped them out. He fed the socialists to the Communists, and the Stalinists to the Trotskyites, and the Hebrew Zionists to the Yiddish Zionists, and when feeding time was over, he wiped the mouths of those still standing and fed them to each other. Starting in the late sixties, Hertz was turned loose on the nascent radical movement among the Tlingit, and in time he pulled its teeth and claws, too.²⁴⁹

The images suggested at the end of this excerpt further complicate and confound the image of the Tlingit people and, for that matter, Jews. In this passage, the reader is exposed to another Jew—the aforementioned Hertz character—in corrupt cahoots with the national law enforcement who is “feeding” various types of Jews to “each other” before pulling the “teeth and claws” of some local Indigenous people. If that's not enough to dirty the otherwise reputable image of the Jewish immigrant as upstanding citizen, Michael Chabon adds bribery and drug addiction to this fictional mix.²⁵⁰ One could make a speculative connection between Michael Chabon's aforementioned essay about the Yiddish language, in which he asks where would someone need to say Yiddish phrase 1372: “I need something for a tourniquet”, and the narrative

²⁴⁹ Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, 76.

²⁵⁰ *ibid*, 77.

content found in Chapter Four where the author made some attempt, perhaps an irreverent one, to answer that very question:

Shpring is running his fingers in their latex glove across the freckled skin of Lasker's left arm. It bears needle track and faint marks where the deceased tied himself off.²⁵¹

It is discovered on the next page that the deceased used *tefillin*, the daily Jewish ritual of phylacteries, to "dilate the vein in his arm."²⁵² The notion that one could use phylacteries as a tourniquet to inject illegal narcotics into one's arm undoubtedly and irreverently recasts—some might say miscasts—what is meant to be a daily religious practice. Though this particular plot detail is not discussed in secondary sources or in any companion material, it ought to be imagined that phylacteries-as-tourniquet contributes to the notion that the image of Jews in this Uchronic novel is, at best, negative or at worst, offensive to some readers.

The Image of Women in *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*

There are three major women characters in *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*: Ester-Malke Shemets, Bina Gelbfish and Batsheva Shpilman. Though there are other women characters in this Uchronic novel, these three women are in essence the female leads in this narrative and, as a collective, they depict three different women characters.

Ester-Malke is the wife of Berko Shemets, the half-Jewish/half-Tlingit partner of Meyer Landsman, and though she is depicted as a Jewish mother perpetually pregnant, she is not immune to the criminal underworld that plagues Jewish Sitka:

The thing about Ester-Malke... is that before she went back to school, became a social worker and married Berko, she enjoyed a brief but distinguished career as a South Sitka fuckup. She has a couple of small-bore criminals in her past, a regretted tattoo on her belly, and a bridge in her jaw, a souvenir of the last man to mistreat her. Landsman has known her longer than Berko has, having busted her on a vandalism charge when she was still in high school. Ester-Malke understands how to handle a loser, but intuition and habit, and without any of the reproach she brings to bear on her own wasted youth.²⁵³

²⁵¹ Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, 22.

²⁵² *ibid*, 23.

²⁵³ *ibid*, 39-40.

A reader well-versed in modern Jewish culture can deduce from that excerpt two facts about this character: she was once a wild, rebellious youth but now, as an adult, she is *ba'al tshuvah* and has returned to Orthodox Jewish practice, a turn that is buttressed by the “regretted tattoo on her belly.” This excerpt also gives the character of Ester-Malke a background in petty crime she presumably abandoned before the start of the novel.

The next woman depicted in *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* is Bina Gelbfish, the protagonist-investigator's ex-wife. Bina Gelbfish enters the story in Chapter Seven and, in a twist only fiction can produce, turns out to be her ex-husband's boss due to a recent job promotion, thereby endowing her character with a sense of comedic irony:

“Aren't you happy to see me, Meyer?” she says. “You don't say anything about my parka?”

“It's extremely orange,” Landsman says.

“You need to be visible up there... Or they'll think you're a bear and shoot you.”²⁵⁴

A few pages later, she orders Meyer Landsman and his partner to close up all outstanding criminal cases of the Sitka District using first a “good faith effort” but “if that fails, put in a bad faith effort.” Motivated by Reversion,²⁵⁵ Bina Gelbfish demands her subordinates corrupt their own work prior to Sitka's handover back to the state of Alaska. She then shows the protagonist-investigator and his partner how to do this:

She pulls out a plastic tab for marking a case folder. A black one. She pries loose the red tab that Landsman attached to the Lasker file early that morning and substitutes the black one in its place, breathing shallowly the way you do when you clean a nasty wound or sponge up something awful from the rug. She ages ten years, it seems to Landsman, in the ten seconds it takes her to make the switch. Then she holds the newly cold case away from her body, tweezing it between two fingers of one hand.

“Effective resolution,” she says.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, 54: This twist is more thoroughly explained a few lines later when Bina Gelbfish tells Meyer Landsman that her previous boss “Turned in his badge two nights ago. Left for Melbourne, Australia,” a couple months ahead of “Reversion” when the District of Sitka is handed back to the state of Alaska in a manner akin to the “Handover” at the end of the ninety-nine year British lease over Hong Kong in 1997. This leaves a vacancy Bina Gelbfish—herself a police detective—was promoted to fill.

²⁵⁵ See previous footnote for clarification regarding “Reversion”.

²⁵⁶ *ibid*, 61.

Though this may colour her corrupt, Bina Gelbfish is a likeable character who is, as the narrative climax reveals, aware of her faults:

Bina rolls her eyes, hands on her hips, glances at the door. Then she comes over and drops her bag and plops down beside him. How many times, he wonders, can she have enough of him, already, and still have not quite enough?

“I can’t really believe you agreed to it,” she says.

“I know.”

“I’m supposed to be the brownnose around here.”

“Tell me about it.”

“The ass licker.”

“It’s killing me.”

“If I can’t rely on you to tell the big shots to fuck off, Meyer, why do I keep you around?”²⁵⁷

The third woman character depicted is Batsheva Shpilman, the mother of the murder victim. As stated earlier, Chabon’s depiction of Orthodox Jews is negative at best, yet the character of Orthodox Jewish women, as embodied by the character of Batsheva Shpilman, stands out for her strict adherence to religious Jewish practice. She enters the narrative in Chapter Twenty-three when the protagonist-investigator takes in the “image of Batsheva Shpilman. He’s been expecting some kind of witchy amalgam of Mrs. Macbeth and American first lady: Marilyn Monroe Kennedy.”²⁵⁸ Batsheva Shpilman is depicted as a woman of profound modesty, “the queen of Verbov Island.” Her behavior dictated to her by her position within the Orthodox Jewish world created in this Uchronic novel,²⁵⁹ she keeps “her face concealed behind a black veil” for most of her time in the narrative. Batsheva Shpilman is part of a brief face-to-face conversation with the protagonist-investigator which, in turn, activates her sense of *shomer negiyah*—Jewish rules of social conduct between men and women: “I haven’t sat this close to a strange man in forty-five years, Detective... It’s very wrong. I should be ashamed.”²⁶⁰

²⁵⁷ Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*, 408.

²⁵⁸ *ibid*, 201.

²⁵⁹ *ibid*, 206 .

²⁶⁰ Strict adherence to *shomer negiyah* can, in some Orthodox circles, forbid contacts between a woman and any other male relations aside from her father, grandfather, brothers, her husband, her sons, her sons-in-law, and her father-in-law. Additionally, the rules of modesty can be interpreted very strictly, as they are here in this novel; that is the deductive detail featuring prominently here in the subtext of this excerpted line of dialogue. In general, these gender-based relationship-restrictions also have resonance among many Aboriginal cultures Indigenous to Australia.

The introduction of this Orthodox Jewish woman, depicted with extreme, observance-based modesty, not only completes the trio of women images in *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* but also provides valuable information to the protagonist-investigator. In Chapter Twenty-four, Batsheva Shpilman reveals to Landsman that her son, the murder victim, left home and the Verbover sect many years prior to the start of the novel. In Chapter Twenty-five, it is revealed that Mendel Shpilman, a child prodigy, was a homosexual who fled from the Messianism imposed on him by his father, the Verbover rebbe. This messianic expectation, combined with the murder victim's homosexuality, which is forbidden by Jewish law, proved to be too taxing and, as the deceased's mother tells the protagonist-investigator, Mendel Shpilman left his home and family, turning instead to chess-hustling and heroin addiction, occasionally offering blessings to people, women mostly, one of whom wanted to be cured from nymphomaniac promiscuity.²⁶¹

The three main women of *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* are reformed petty criminals, corruptible police officers, or the wives of important rabbis. Each of them are, or were, mothers, and at one point they were all married. Other women in this Uchronic novel include, but are not limited to, Shprintzl—Batsheva Shpilman's Russian security guard—as well as waitresses, former nymphomaniacs, betrothed women or people willing to help rescue Mendel Shpilman from the Orthodox Jewish world he was born into. In summation, the women depicted by Michael Chabon in *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* are well-rounded, able to reform, comedic, enigmatic and not relegated to the periphery of the narrative with no viable role to play in the novel.

Each novel reviewed for this category of the genre study is Uchronic and each novel is premised on a different outcome for Jewish people, also known as "Israel," in the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. While one novel bypasses the Holocaust, another depicts a theoretical "second Holocaust" with another only altering history temporarily. These three novels also emblematised and exemplify many of the recurrent features inherent to the Uchronic genre: each novel, for instance, has a point of historic divergence, each unique and separate from each other; each novel reveals their alternate world histories either elliptically or through direct "info-dumping;" and, in every instance, the authors had some sort of agenda,

²⁶¹Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, 234.

whether political or personal, that motivated their writing. These Uchronic novels also differ: Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* involves the rectification of history, a recurrent feature not present in the other two novels, while Michael Chabon's *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* is distinct in being a detective narrative written in the hardboiled style of Raymond Chandler. Chabon's contribution to the Uchronic genre also includes a reconfigured image of Indigenous people, further separating this novel from the others under review for this category.

The three novels were included in the genre study due to the fact that they have each influenced the development of the creative narrative that accompanies this research. The use of multiple points of view seen in *If Israel Lost the War* has been adapted into certain sections of Part Three,²⁶² while the Verbover sect, a fictionalized group of uber-religious Jews, are included as part of the Uchronic world inherent to the creative narrative that follows this thesis. Both *The Plot Against America* and *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* depict Jewish rabbis who are problematic in the sense that their overtly negative depictions constitute a problem regarding what is considered by the other characters in those narratives, and most other reasonable people for that matter, to be appropriate behavior for a rabbi. This concept has been adapted into the creative narrative in the figure of Rabbi Jacob Esau Stintston, whose two vices are a loss of purpose and faith coupled with an insatiable thirst for alcohol. The notion of a rabbi out of touch with his Judaism is not an uncommon trope in modern Jewish fiction and can be seen in the prose of Isaac Bashevis Singer, Aharon Applefeld, Cynthia Ozick, Arnon Grunberg, Allan Hoffman, Mark Mirsky, Steve Stern, Evan Fallenberg and Nathan Englander, to name just a few. The notion of a clergyman losing his faith in Outback Australia also has a foundation in Australian literature, as seen in Randolph Stow's *To the Islands*. Conversely, there are few—if any—precedents for drunken rabbis in Jewish or Australian literature; the creative narrative that accompanies this research intends to change that.

²⁶² Second half of Part Three: Diamonds!

ALTERNATE AUSTRALIA

The final category of the genre study will focus on Uchronic narratives premised on an alternate history of Australia. Of these three Uchronic novels, two are based on the concept of “Asian Invasion” and take place in the same alternate version of history, with the first novel—John Hooker’s *The Bush Soldiers*—focusing on life in the deserts of New South Wales, while the other—John A. Scott’s *N*—takes place in Melbourne. In a way, *N* provides the other half of the story told in *The Bush Soldiers*; that is to say John A. Scott’s *N* is the city to John Hooker’s country in *The Bush Soldiers*. The third novel in this category is the creative narrative that accompanies this research, which is based on a different outcome to the Kimberley Plan and does not take place in the same Uchronic world as *The Bush Soldiers* and *N*, nor is it fixated on the concept of “Asian Invasion.”

The Point of Historic Divergence in *The Bush Soldiers* and *N*

As the creative narrative will later exhibit, there can be more than one point of historic divergence in a Uchronic novel. What is unique about *The Bush Soldiers* and *N*, aside from the fact that they inhabit the same Uchronic world, is that one point of historic divergence precedes and confounds the other. The point of historic divergence in *The Bush Soldiers* is a different outcome of the Battle of the Coral Sea in May of 1942. In actual history, the Battle of the Coral Sea pitted the United States and Australia against Imperial Japan and was a tactical victory for the Japanese but a strategic victory for the Allies; indeed it was the first major battle of the Second World War in which the Allies thwarted an Axis advance. John Hooker turns this historic fact on its head, a point of historic divergence he buries in Chapter Fourteen in expository prose that more resembles an info-dump than an elliptical revelation of an alternate world history.²⁶³ The Allied defeat in the Coral Sea leads to a Japanese invasion of Australia, thereby making *The Bush Soldiers*, in the words of Karen Hellekson, a “nexus story... that focuses on a crucial point in history, such as a battle... in which something different happens that changes the outcome.”²⁶⁴

²⁶³ This ambiguity is perceptible in that the paragraph detailing the point of historic divergence is located at the end of a chapter and not attributed to the internal thoughts of any individual character.

²⁶⁴ Karen Hellekson, *The Alternate History: Reconfiguring Historical Time* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State Press, 2001) 5.

In a manner similar to Michael Chabon's *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* and the creative narrative that accompanies this research, the point of historic divergence in *N* involves the sudden death of an obscure government official, in this case a politician—Norman Cole—who controls the balance of power in Australia's hung parliament. Cole's death proves to be “a body-blow for the Prime Minister,”²⁶⁵ causing the government of John Curtin to collapse in June of 1942, just one month after the Battle of the Coral Sea. As the coda-like dialogue later explains, after the Japanese win in the Coral Sea, the death of Norman Cole is organized by the “rich end of town,” thereby enabling the installation of Sir Warren Mahony who quickly abrogates “the constitutional laws of 1st of January 1901,”²⁶⁶ and, more importantly, strikes a deal with the Japanese prior to their invasion of Australia.

The Elliptical Revelation of an Alternate World History in *The Bush Soldiers* and *N*

In *The Alternate History: Reconfiguring Historical Time*, Karen Hellekson states: “the true alternate history occurs after the break.”²⁶⁷ In the case of *The Bush Soldiers*, that break is a different outcome to the Battle of the Coral Sea, which is followed by a Japanese invasion of Australia. In John A. Scott's *N*, once Warren Mahony is installed, the Japanese start shelling towns and cities along the coast of New South Wales, first attacking the coastal town of Newcastle, which is part of the alternate history revealed elliptically in the first chapter of John Hooker's *The Bush Soldiers*.²⁶⁸ Though the reader learns the invasion was successful, the geographical extent of the Japanese occupation of Australia remains uncertain during much of *The Bush Soldiers*²⁶⁹ but is disambiguated entirely in *N*: “...all of New South Wales and Queensland... and the North—the whole of it” is handed over to the Japanese²⁷⁰ while Australia enters into “a partnership in a new South-East Asian order which will guarantee Australia's pre-

²⁶⁵ John A. Scott, *N* (Blackheath, NSW: Brandl and Schlesinger, 2014) 136.

²⁶⁶ Scott, *N*, 145.

²⁶⁷ Hellekson, *The Alternate History: Reconfiguring Historical Time*, 5

²⁶⁸ John Hooker, *The Bush Soldiers* (Sydney: Collins, 1984), 6: “Counihan had fought strongly at Newcastle and Sawtell could ride with no better man.”

²⁶⁹ Hooker, *The Bush Soldiers*, 4.

²⁷⁰ Scott, *N*, 278.

eminence as an economic and political giant in the region throughout the remainder of this century and centuries to come..."²⁷¹

N reveals other details about the alternate history that are withheld in *The Bush Soldiers*. For example, the Australian Prime Minister in 1942 was John Curtin; he later died of natural causes in office in 1945, but in *The Bush Soldiers* it is stated only once that "Mr Curtin, is dead,"²⁷² and any further details regarding his demise are not disclosed.²⁷³ In *N*, details about John Curtin are revealed elliptically: first he and his Cabinet flee to New Zealand only to be "shipped back as 'traitors' [and] sent to Cowra... which... [was in the] part of the world [that] ended up in Japanese hands... Curtin, sadly, was one of the first to go."²⁷⁴

In terms of the historical sequence surrounding the end of the Second World War, very little is revealed in either novel. While most of the alternate history in *The Bush Soldiers* is revealed elliptically via dialogue, there are instances where revelations come about as part of a newsreel or, as it happens in Chapter Three, a radio message broadcast from Japanese-occupied Sydney.²⁷⁵ For the most part, the bush soldiers cease to know what is happening outside their immediate situation. They do not know where the Japanese are located in Australia and have no idea what is going on in the rest of the country, let alone the world, and have no way of finding out. An Australia ignorant of world events is a precedent set in *The Bush Soldiers* which carries over to *N*; the few details about the historical sequence surrounding the end of the Second World War are not revealed until the last eighteen pages of *N* where it is mentioned "in passing, as one might comment upon the weather, that the German Army had been defeated and Allied troops were now in occupation of Berlin," but that "there'll be nothing in the papers for the moment."²⁷⁶

²⁷¹ Scott, *N*, 278.

²⁷² *ibid*, 79.

²⁷³ *ibid*, 34: An especially disastrous fate awaited Darwin once Douglas MacArthur and the Americans fled and once the Japanese invade the Australian continent, a point first raised elliptically and in passing as one of the character searches for a signal on the "wireless": "St John Jackson never ceased to wonder what the Australians thought of all this. The military collapse had been complete: he had never seen such a shambles, it was far worse than the capitulations in Malaya and Singapore, and those had been a disgrace. Darwin had been unbelievable and heaven knows what was happening in the Western Desert and Europe. He was alone and God had forsaken him."

²⁷⁴ *ibid*, 570-571.

²⁷⁵ *ibid*, 34: This radio message is didactic; a product of propaganda disseminated by the conquering forces of Imperial Japan, and is derided and dismissed by the primary characters.

²⁷⁶ *ibid*, *N*, 481.

The Direct Revelation of an Alternate World History in *The Bush Soldiers* and *N*

This genre study has indicated the challenge to differentiate between the elliptical revelation of an alternate world history and an info-dump. In the case of *N*, “the novel moves at a fast pace, shifting from one character to another and drawing on the reader’s knowledge of some of the models for its fiction.” The polyphonic narrative leaps from “third person... to... [first person] [with] several characters”²⁷⁷ “sound[ing] implausibly similar [in that] they speak with the clear poeticism, no matter their station or situation.”²⁷⁸ Much of the alternate world history is told to the reader as the result of first person narration. In the fourth chapter, for instance, the Robin Telford character explains that “the war seemed to have reached a stalemate”:

The Japanese, we were told, had seriously underestimated both the cost and logistics of maintaining such a long line of attack. It was felt they had been stretched in mounting the original thrust into Australia, particularly after the enervating exchanges in the Coral Sea, and their available resources had fallen short of what was needed to overrun the East Coast. As a consequence they had dug in somewhere south of Sydney for a period of consolidation. They certainly had control of valuable resources in both Newcastle and Wollongong.²⁷⁹

This information is dumped into the narrative, establishing the meta-textual dynamic between *N* and *The Bush Soldiers*. In the ninth chapter, another info-dump is dropped into the narrative that details the fate of Imperial Japan:

Over Hiroshima, pervasive low cloud.
From above, poor visibility.
From below, a dull pearl light mottled with grey.
The B29 is redirected to its fallback option.
Kokura.
Above the harbor. Bright. Clear. A light wind following a brief rainstorm overnight has washed everything clean. Even the air itself, now dry, has a luminous transparency. The circling mountains are sharp. Every distance is sharp. Perfect, in fact.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁷ Susan A Lever, “Artists Against Fascism”, *Sydney Review of Books*, June 6, 2014.

²⁷⁸ TW (anonymous reviewer), “John A. Scott’s *N*”, *The Saturday Paper*, April 12, 2014.

²⁷⁹ Scott, *N*, 221.

²⁸⁰ *ibid*, 520.

Like the point of historic divergence in *The Bush Soldiers*, this direct, haiku-like revelation is not attributable to any character, nor is it presented as dialogue, nor as part of any character's internal monologue. It is not clear *who* is relaying this information to the reader, and though this direct revelation of an alternate world history provides key information about the Uchronic world of *N*—that the first atomic bomb destroyed Kokura and not Hiroshima—it could be excised from the narrative without any major damage to the plot.

In the case of Uchronic novels premised on Axis Exalted, the nuanced question unique to that category is “where is Adolf Hitler?” In the Israel Endangered category, the nuanced question is two-fold: “what happens—or happened—to Israel?” and “How do the Jews look in this book?” This category does not have a similar question except perhaps in the case of John A. Scott's *N*: what does the “N” stand for? The answer to this is revealed not through the context of a direct revelation but through coda-like dialogue taking place late in the novel. In the lead up to this direct revelation, Robin Telford tells the reader two things, first:

Over the next few days I had conversations—or I should say, *briefings*—with Wood-Conroy. I have, for the ease of telling, brought these together into a single meeting. To be honest, with the passage of time, this is largely how I remember it...²⁸¹

And second:

Unfortunately, this confabulation has created a situation typical of second-rate detective novels, where the final chapter is given over to a small European with an affecting ‘tic’, who smugly explains everything to everyone.²⁸²

Six pages of convoluted, pre-invasion, behind-the-scenes politicking are explained until the *N* of the title is finally revealed in casual conversation:

“I’m pretty sure they sent a message through – *N will be there at 8.00*, or something to that effect.”
[...]

²⁸¹ Scott, *N*, 565: In this excerpt, the general yet somewhat perplexing ambiguity between an elliptical revelation and an info-dump is as perceptible as it is in Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America*, in which a fictional version of the author provides a fictional first-person account of life in a Uchronic world: “To be honest... this is largely how I remember it” versus “Fear presides over these memories, a perpetual fear.” (Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America*, New York: Vintage, 2005) 1.

²⁸² *ibid*, 565.

‘So ‘N’ is—’
‘*Nippon*, yes. The Japanese. The crucial part of it, of course, was the date of the invasion.’²⁸³

Unlike the “Afterword” at the end, the dialogue between the Wood-Conroy character and Robin Telford provide a “coda” to the alternate history in the form of “*briefings*”—conversations—that are, as mentioned previously, remembered some time after-the-fact:

...the rich end of town wanted smooth relations with Japan... the commerce was simply too lucrative to let go... and [with] Mahony safely in power, [they] could make a deal with the Japanese... they actually assisted with their ‘invasion.’ An agreement was struck months before. You see it wasn’t *collusion*. It was by *invitation*.²⁸⁴

For the sake of differentiation, this information is *the* point of the conversation between the Telford character and Wood-Conroy; it is not info-dumped into the narrative, nor is it revealed elliptically. These details are front and centre, revealed directly through dialogue, explaining the hows and whys surrounding the alternate history of Australia during World War Two. These Uchronic details also pave the way for a quick resolution of the plot:

And then the war was over. We had been delivered from the Japanese. The streets were once again filled with the Americans. It was as if none of the preceding two-and-a-half years had happened.²⁸⁵

This swift and sudden plot development is hardly a *deus ex machina*. History, as indicated by the “Afterword [dated] October 2001,” does not rectify itself and the self-correcting feature is never activated in *N*.

“Asian Invasion” in *The Bush Soldiers* and *N*

It is worth discussing the historical, political, cultural and literary implications of “Asian Invasion” in modern Australia. First of all, Australia has shown a particular type of anxiety regarding the influx of Asians, whether at the hands of military conquest or large-scale, multi-

²⁸³ Scott, *N*, 571.

²⁸⁴ *ibid*, 571.

²⁸⁵ *ibid*, 575.

generational immigration.²⁸⁶ This anxiety has influenced both politics and the culture of Australia, a fact that is evidenced not only by the existence of novels like *The Bush Soldiers* and *N* but also the popular *Tomorrow When the War Began* series of young adult novels penned by John Marsden.

Australia has at times displayed ambivalence towards Asia and Asian people or, at other times, outright hostility as evidenced by the passing of anti-Chinese legislation in pre-federation Australia.²⁸⁷ One could argue that the Federation of Australian colonies into the Commonwealth of Australia and the subsequent enacting of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, which formed the basis of the White Australia policy, were in and of themselves large-scale political-national reactions to non-white, mostly Asian and predominately Chinese immigration.²⁸⁸ More than one hundred years later these issues still influence the culture and politics of Australia.

In *N*, Scott similarly exacerbates the anxieties surrounding the notion of “Asian Invasion” which, as the next excerpt will show, is reflected in Australian literature:

It had finally happened, as so many storytellers had said it would: in their nightmares of the Japanese, the Chinese, the Russians. Henry Lawson's storm that must surely come, *arrived*. The clouds that had gathered, broken now, raining on us like a biblical reckoning.²⁸⁹

Henry Lawson is one of Australia's best-known poets also responsible for *While the Billy Boils*, *On the Edge of a Plain*, and *The Drover's Wife and Other Stories*. He is a revered figure in Australian letters with a voluminous body of work standing as a testament to his esteem.²⁹⁰ By linking *N* to the work of Henry Lawson and to the aversion Australia has shown toward Asian Invasion, Scott is likely commenting also on the still-current notion of pervasive racism in Australia by depicting a moment in Australian history when the nation could have moved toward fascism under a specific set of what-if circumstances.

²⁸⁶ Agnieszka Sobocinska, *Visiting the Neighbors: Australians in Asia* (Sydney: New South Publishing/University of New South Wales Press, 2014), 17, 27, 57, 176 and 204.

²⁸⁷ Sobocinska, *Visiting the Neighbors: Australians in Asia*, 57-58.

²⁸⁸ *ibid*, 3, 25.

²⁸⁹ Scott, *N*, 174-175.

²⁹⁰ John Kinsella, “Introduction to this Edition,” in *Henry Lawson: The Penguin Henry Lawson Short Stories*, ed. John Barnes, (Sydney: Penguin, 1986), VII.

The Image of Indigenous People in *The Bush Soldiers* and *N*

Overall, the image of Indigenous people—in this case Aboriginal Australians—in both *The Bush Soldiers* and *N* is neither reconfigured nor elevated, quite the opposite. The image of Aboriginal people in these two Uchronic novels is disparaging, negative, disrespectful and, in the case of *N*, bleak. Aboriginal characters are marginalised in terms of their presence and depiction in both novels and, in the case of *The Bush Soldiers*, how the main characters interact with them. It is an unfortunate reality that this image is reflective of the disregard white settler Australia has shown toward the native Indigenous population over the course of actual history and in particular the era these two Uchronic novels depict.

Evidence of this disregard can be seen within the first nine pages of *The Bush Soldiers* where there are two references to Aboriginal people: on page four, the adjective used ahead of the colloquial term “blackfellows” is “thieving”, while on page nine, the primary character—Sawtell—describes “blackfellows” as “treacherous and unreliable.” From then on, Aboriginal Australians are referred to in derogatory terms such as “Abos,”²⁹¹ “buggers,”²⁹² “bastards,”²⁹³ or “picanninies,”²⁹⁴ and are described as “filthy,”²⁹⁵ drunk on “cheap booze”²⁹⁶ and as a “poor people”²⁹⁷ “beyond help.”²⁹⁸ In short, the depiction of Aboriginal Australians in *The Bush Soldiers* is so extremely negative it is nearly overwhelming.

In *The Bush Soldiers*, Aboriginal characters are relegated—until the last chapter—to the scenery and presented as part of the backdrop.²⁹⁹ This marginal depiction continues through most of the novel both within dialogue and in the inner monologues attributable to various characters. Perhaps the most damning is the way in which Aboriginal Australians are treated in Chapter Nine.³⁰⁰ The bush soldiers, in search of alcohol they are convinced the “Abos” have run off with, ride into a black settlement causing “the black women and children” to flee. After they discover

²⁹¹ Hooker, *The Bush Soldiers*, 15, 46, 83, 90, 91, 96, 167, 168, 179, 183, 185, 191, 346, 361, 408 and 411: The term “Abo” or its plural form “Abos” is used in relation to Aboriginal people frequently.

²⁹² *ibid*, 46.

²⁹³ *ibid*, 46, 91, 192.

²⁹⁴ *ibid*, 91.

²⁹⁵ *ibid*, 91.

²⁹⁶ *ibid*, 45-46, 71.

²⁹⁷ *ibid*, 196.

²⁹⁸ *ibid*, 173.

²⁹⁹ *ibid*, 179: “In 1939, they had ten pubs, some churches, shops and hundreds of Abos.”

³⁰⁰ *ibid*, 84.

“twelve Imperial quarts of Bundaberg rum”, Kevin O’Donohue—the youngest bush soldier—appears with “a young blackfellow.” The scene that follows is violent and, as the dialogue exhibits, laced with negative racial overtones underscored by pessimistic irony:

‘I caught this bugger going through our gear,’ O’Donohue said. Oh God, Padre Donaldson thought, when will these poor people ever learn?

[...]

‘It’s only another bloody Abo,’ Counihan said. ‘We shoot him.’ Sawtell stood there, irresolute.

[...]

... There was no point in questioning the young black any further, this was a new kind of war.

‘There’s Madigan’s orders,’ Counihan said. ‘Anybody collaborating with the enemy is shot.’

‘There’s no evidence of that, Frank, he’s just another pilfering black.’

... Summary justice, no more discussion. Sawtell swung the butt of the Lee Enfield and broke the blackfellow’s jaw.

‘Okay, Frank, dump him on the war memorial... down the street, it says *To Our Glorious Dead*.’³⁰¹

Like *The Bush Soldiers*, the image of Aboriginal Australians in *N* is marginal. As a Uchronic novel, *N* presents the lives of ordinary people against the backdrop of a Japanese occupation of Australia. For the most part, those various Australians are white and of European descent. Conversely, few Japanese characters—and there are *only* a few—are named and, in a manner similar to *The Bush Soldiers*, remain mostly unseen throughout most of *N*.

One of the main plotlines of *N* is the role art and artists play in this alternate, Japanese-occupied version of Australia. In *N*, the reader is made privy to a journal kept by Vic Turner, an artist who “finds himself with [Leon] Mischka [another artist] at Tocumwal army camp as part of the Australian Defence Forces.”³⁰² Leon Mischka is clearly based on Yosl Bergner, a Jewish artist who immigrated to Australia from Vienna in 1937 at the age of seventeen.³⁰³ In a journal

³⁰¹ Hooker, *The Bush Soldiers*, 196-197.

³⁰² Lever, “Artists Against Fascism,” 83.

³⁰³ Frank Klepner, *Yosl Bergner: Art as a Meeting of Cultures* (Melbourne: Palgrave Macmillan Australia, 2004): An important footnote, Yosl Bergner’s father was none other than Melech Ravitch who, like Isaac Steinberg, was involved in the Freeland League and the discussions surrounding the Kimberley Plan. Yosl Bergner, similar to the Leon Mischka character, also joined the Australian Army during the Second World War. Yosl Bergner is also well-known for his painted depictions of the Aboriginal community in Fitzroy, Victoria.

entry dated “April 9th”, Vic Turner finds himself “envious of [Leon Mischka’s] people’s oppression”:

Then as if to rub salt into the wound I find Mischka has been out painting amongst the aborigines (the Bangarang tribe, he tells me) where I would never dare go.³⁰⁴

For his part, Leon Mischka—a Jew—appears to establish some type of bond with these “banished blacks”:

Often, in the late afternoon, [Mischka] would go straight from the railway station, cutting between the Terminus hotel and the flour mill, then swinging away from the town, following the heavily-treed land towards the Murray to pass an hour with the aborigine, the two men talking of what painting might mean, in their various Englishes.³⁰⁵

The connection between the Aborigine and the Jew appears to override any formal language barriers, their common interest linked by art. This connection emphasises, by linkage and association, the plight of European Jews during the Second World War vis-à-vis what the Japanese do to the “aborigines,” which was likely the logic behind the scene where Leon Mischka notices “a cattle train [making] its way across the Murray River”:

What was it about this slow train which spoke of evil? – it drew him, nonetheless; running up the incline – the darkness of its timbers? The darkness of blood almost ready to be spilled? He watched the carriages pass, wooden-sides with small spaces between the planks. In the spaces he could see movement, but not the movement of cattle. Of people. He realised he could see people. Aboriginal people. Herded there.

“O dear God,” said Mischka.³⁰⁶

This cattle train filled with black people is, in and of itself, evocative of cattle trains filled with Jews en route to Auschwitz, yet there is only one Aboriginal character in *N*—Tom Bola—who makes his first appearance in the seventh chapter. Tom Bola’s role is to bring information regarding Japanese activities—specifically the testing of nuclear technology in Tallon, a small country town in remote New South Wales³⁰⁷—to the attention of Menadue, “a Captain in the

³⁰⁴ Scott, *N*, 83.

³⁰⁵ *ibid*, 104.

³⁰⁶ *ibid*, 183.

³⁰⁷ *ibid*, 494.

Australia Army” who, along with “Fisher, a *Sergeant*, and Cooke and Young, *common soldiers*”, are reminiscent of Sawtell and Counihan and company in *The Bush Soldiers*.³⁰⁸ Unlike the bush soldiers, Menadue appears to respect the one Aboriginal person he meets, even sharing a meal with him where Menadue hears how many local people both black and white have been sick:

“...men in white suit[s] with they head all covered. Guard or two be with them. Company. They turn up in a jeep. Look around the town like they wanna buy the place. Then drive away.”
“Do you know who they are?”
“All I know is when I see them taking off their suits, underneath they’re Jap fellas.”³⁰⁹

Menadue suggests Tom Bola leave Tallon at the “first opportunity,” telling him “You should go back to your people, Tom”:

Tom Bola looks up into Menadue’s face.
“No more any my people – no more for a long time. They all go before Japs take over Sydney,” he replies. “One time when Ma Eugenia don’t need me for a while I head off to the camp and all my people gone.”
“Where were they? Gone walkabout?”
“No walkabout, Mister John. I see tracks everywhere... not *their* tracks though. Plenty of tracks from the lorries. Empty lorries come. Full lorries go. Lorries take them all away.”³¹⁰

The implication here is the extension of the earlier scene in which the Jewish character, Leon Mischka, sees Aboriginal people packed on a train travelling across the Murray River; the Japanese are transporting Aboriginal people away from population centres where they are then likely killed.³¹¹ In the ninth chapter of *N*, a member of Sir Warren Mahony’s despotic regime

³⁰⁸ Scott, *N*, 315: “He has heard of a group in the North – Sawtell, Counihan and others – moving behind Japanese lines, poisoning wells, wrecking telephone exchanges, burning homesteads, destroying anything which be of use to the invader. Perhaps he will join them.”

³⁰⁹ *ibid*, 394.

³¹⁰ *ibid*, 395.

³¹¹ In the eighth chapter of John A. Scott’s *N*, on page 455, an “officer” by the name of Warwick tells his version of events from a first person perspective: “I am constantly sickened by the pleasure of the Japanese of all ranks derive from the torture and tormenting of living creatures. There seems an abyss between our mentalities.”

“[...]

“As for the blacks themselves they will play will-o’-the-wisp to the Japanese who must have come to afford them the status of ghosts, appearing only at the periphery of sight of those who would, opportunity permitting, deal them out treatment much like that give to the dog.”

drafts a “leaflet... modeled... on those used throughout the Japanese advance in South East Asia – a call to the indigenous population of the area to rise up against their white oppressors and join the Japanese in a ‘war of liberation,’” but “the new version of the leaflet seemed a blatant attempt to reposition the Aborigines as a potential (if not *actual*) enemy, presumably justifying some form of incarceration... [T]his hypothesis... [proved] to be... too true with arrangements... in place for transportation on a major scale.”³¹²

The image of Indigenous people in *N* is limited to the aforementioned Tom Bola, who serves a purpose in the narrative. But the image of Indigenous people in *N* is not at all reconfigured, quite the opposite. It appears the Japanese of *N* are ready, willing and able to mass exterminate the Aboriginal population by possibly using Indigenous people in nuclear tests (though this is never made clear at any point in *N*). Unlike *The Bush Soldiers*, where at least some of the main characters experience retribution for their appalling treatment of Aboriginal people, the Japanese of *N* never ‘get theirs’, so to speak, while the “banished blacks” remain “on the periphery of it all.”³¹³

The Image of Women in *The Bush Soldiers* and *N*

One of the pivotal plot points in *N* is the notion of “Artists Against Fascism” and it is the character of Missy Cunningham who explains this. Missy’s role in *N* is functional and several details regarding the alternate history are revealed elliptically through her first person narration. Her character enables the elliptical revelation of an alternate history of Australia and Melbourne from a first person point of view. Her husband Roy, for instance, decides to “curate an exhibition” that will be “a critique of the Mahony regime,” the aforementioned Artists Against Fascism.³¹⁴ Missy Cunningham describes some of the art as “smutty,”³¹⁵ yet she also reveals that “a group of uniformed men” wearing “shirts, the kind the Nazis might have worn” barged into the exhibit to slash the paintings whilst calling the various retinue of assembled artists “Jewish

³¹² Scott, *N*, 527-528.

³¹³ *ibid*, 104.

³¹⁴ *ibid*, 261.

³¹⁵ *ibid*, 262-263: ‘From the beginning one work had divided us. A painting by Roy Wilson, called “Crucifixion”. The painting showed Jesus upon the cross, Mary Magdalene’s eye line was directed towards a large bulge in Jesus’ loincloth. If this weren’t enough, the wound in his side gave the appearance of a gaping vagina.’”

bastards.” The Artists Against Fascism exhibition is shut down and the paintings are “seized”³¹⁶ as two men “from some Department – Civic Health” take Roy, her husband, who is sick with tuberculosis, “somewhere inland, nice and high, for the air.”³¹⁷

In the wake of her husband’s disappearance, Missy discovers that Roy is one of many people who have disappeared in the wake of Australia’s truce with Japan. Missy takes it upon herself to search for Roy, which leads to one of the most perplexing scenes in the novel. Robin Telford—arguably the main character of *N*—encounters Missy Cunningham at the State Library in Melbourne where she is searching for information about her husband at the same time Telford is searching for details regarding the death of Norman Cole:

I was caught by a disturbance some twenty steps away from my table. It was a red-haired woman emerging from the newspapers room who garnered my attention first of all, long before her voice had reached me, risen in protest about some thing or other. Her similarity to Esther Cole was enough to set my heart amok – in truth, for a moment I was convinced it *was* her – the build, the deportment, the general features of her face. It was as if Esther had decided to disguise herself as another, and this were her first, not wholly successful, attempt. It was, I suppose, hardly surprising that I fed my gaze upon this woman, and as she hastened around the periphery of the great domed reading room towards the exit, it was all I could do to resist taking off after her.³¹⁸

This is perplexing because it reveals that Missy Cunningham has a doppelganger in the form of the other woman in *N*, Esther Cole, the widow of Independent MP Norman Cole. Esther enters the story at the start of the third chapter where her entrance is, like much of her role in the narrative, coupled with Robin Telford, who enters the story at the same time. Robin Telford, it ought to be noted, is “a Public Servant”³¹⁹ who works first for the Fadden Government, then the Curtin Government and ultimately the Mahony regime, and then presumably for the Americans who take over at the end of the war Telford’s proximity to the upper echelons of Australian power motivates Esther Cole to contact him, yet she is not given any lines of dialogue during her first appearance in the novel and is instead only seen “standing in the doorway of another office”³²⁰ and not again until the fourth chapter where she introduces herself with a “gloved

³¹⁶ Scott, *N*, 294-295.

³¹⁷ *ibid*, 309.

³¹⁸ *ibid*, 345.

³¹⁹ *ibid*, 136.

³²⁰ *ibid*, 137.

hand.”³²¹ Esther Cole explains her reason for contacting Telford: “I’ve come about my husband... You see, I don’t believe he died in a pool of water. Not for one minute...”³²²

From the start, Telford is infatuated with Esther Cole.³²³ The feelings appear mutual and together they take a romantic excursion to Hanging Rock, a geological marvel in central Victoria famous for many reasons, most notably for its “starring role” in Joan Lindsay’s novel *Picnic at Hanging Rock* published in 1967 and adapted into the 1975 Peter Weir film of the same name. Both the novel and the film revolve around a group of schoolgirls who venture up Hanging Rock only to disappear, never to be seen again. The missing schoolgirls are however *heard*—albeit faintly—by both Esther Cole and Robin Telford who claim to “hear the laughter of young girls... quite clearly.”³²⁴ Prior to this, both Esther Cole and Robin Telford fall asleep whilst hiking on the rock, just as the characters in the Joan Lindsay novel fall asleep only to wake up to find a “timepiece had stopped,” which is a plot point incorporated into both *N* and the creative narrative that accompanies this research.³²⁵

Esther’s role in *N* is complex, yet somewhat specific: she launches the detective narrative subplot that proves crucial to the alternate history inherent to this Uchronic novel. Esther Cole is similar to Missy Cunningham, and not just in terms of physical appearance; both women serve separate functions in the narrative: Missy provides a first person point of view while Esther Cole introduces a subplot that is vital to revealing the circumstances surrounding the point of historic divergence.

In contrast to *N*, the primary characters in *The Bush Soldiers* are all men, with fifty pages passing before any woman enters the narrative. Even then, women are described as if part of the scenery.³²⁶ The main woman in *The Bush Soldiers* is Geoffrey Sawtell’s wife, Marcia, who enters the narrative in Chapter Six, a flashback chapter that takes place in 1925. What follows is a courtship of sorts between Marcia and Geoffrey that stretches over twenty pages until a single paragraph provides a summary of their personal history:

³²¹ Scott, *N*, 199.

³²² *ibid*, 204.

³²³ *ibid*, 220: “And I once again [was] so intoxicated by her presence that I thought for a moment she might close that distance and kiss me.” (Esther Cole and Robin Telford eventually do kiss and embrace thirty-four pages later on page 254).

³²⁴ *ibid*, 256.

³²⁵ Part Three of the creative narrative that accompanies this research also includes a scene where wristwatches cease to function as well as other lines and scenes adapted from Joan Lindsay’s *Picnic at Hanging Rock* in a manner not totally dissimilar to John A. Scott’s *N*.

³²⁶ Hooker, *The Bush Soldiers*, 50.

Marcia and Geoffrey were married on 21 January 1926. They were married in the Registry Office and Mary Sawtell did not attend. Marcia's father was ill and could not go, but Geoffrey's father went with Jack Hanrahan and some mates from Mountain View. They spent their honeymoon at the seaside town of Queenscliff and stayed in an old rambling hotel by the sea. The weather was hot and clear; they swam, sailed a clinker-built dinghy, played golf and tennis and went on moonlit cruises in a steam boat across the Bay. It was a good time, and the summer seemed it would never end.³²⁷

During those twenty pages of courtship, the author reveals key characteristics about Marcia. For instance, when she asks Geoffrey "What would she [Mary, Geoffrey's mother] think of me?" Geoffrey replies with a question:

'Do you believe in God?'
'I'm a free thinker, so is my father.'
'You would disturb her.'³²⁸

It should be noted that Mary, Geoffrey's mother, is depicted as a pious, church-going wife and mother described twice as a good cook.³²⁹ Marcia, Geoffrey's wife, is depicted differently. In the 1930s in Australia, women were not permitted to drink with men at the bar in pubs. Instead, women were relegated to "Ladies Lounges" where they could drink separately from the men.³³⁰ This gender-based segregation is raised as a grievance by Marcia:

'That's not the point: they should let women in pubs.'
'They do.'
'Not the lousy cat bar, the main bar. You know, in all the years I've known you, I've never set foot in the Mountain View.'
'Let's not get on to that again,' Geoffrey said.
'It's true. Why can't I drink with you in the main bar of the Mountain View?'
Marcia stood beside him and warmed her backside by the fire. 'What do you talk about in there?'³³¹

³²⁷ Hooker, *The Bush Soldiers*, 121.

³²⁸ *ibid*, 109.

³²⁹ *ibid*, 109 and 119.

³³⁰ In the creative narrative that accompanies this research, Mindi MacCallum Ricklesby storms into the Original Plenty Soak pub at the start of Part Three, where she mistakes the "Ladies Lounge" for the women's loo.

³³¹ Hooker, *The Bush Soldiers*, 203.

Marcia Sawtell is depicted as independent and politically-motivated. To put it simply, John Hooker has provided a type of feminist in the image of “big-boned,” “strong woman” Marcia Sawtell. This strong-willed feminist stands alone in *The Bush Soldiers*; Mary Sawtell, the mother of Geoffrey, is depicted as the antipodean opposite of Marcia. She finds Marcia “unnatural” because of her involvement in politics, which she considers “men’s business.”³³² To further indicate the differences between Geoffrey’s mother and Geoffrey’s wife, Marcia tells her husband “I’ve thought of having an abortion” just a few short breaths after telling him “I’m pregnant.”³³³ Though she decides to “get on with it” and to have the baby, she also reveals and without prompting that she’s been unfaithful to her husband:

“Yes, Geoffrey, I’ve been carrying on behind your back... [and] ...I’m going to leave you.”

“For this man?”

“Not just for him, for myself.”³³⁴

The image of women in *The Bush Soldiers* is limited in that there are only two women in the novel, both of whom are depicted in opposition to one another. For the most part, the subplot that is Geoffrey and Marcia’s courtship, marriage and divorce could be excised from the narrative without much damage to the plot. Women are not characters in the main part of the story, but are referred to—that is to say remembered—years after the fact or, in minor instances, relegated to the backdrop as they are in Chapter Five. This contrasts to *N* where the two women characters—Missy Cunningham and Esther Cole—provide various functions in the narrative in a way that is not similar to Marcia and Mary in *The Bush Soldiers*.

The Political Agenda in *The Bush Soldiers* and *N*

In terms of the political or, for that matter, personal agenda in writing *The Bush Soldiers*, there are certain things that ought to be considered about this author and about this Uchronic novel; for example, its timing: *The Bush Soldiers* was published in 1984 but the story takes place

³³² Hooker, *The Bush Soldiers*, 207: ‘You know, Geoffrey, that I’ve never approved of her and I very much doubt if she approves of me. We’ve only met a dozen or so times in the last eight years and they’ve not been what you might call a success.’

‘You wish I’d married someone else, don’t you?’

³³³ *ibid*, 209.

³³⁴ *ibid*, 249-252.

in August 1943. John Hooker was an expatriate who moved from New Zealand to Melbourne in 1963 where he lived until his death in 2008. By the time *The Bush Soldiers* was published, John Hooker had been living in the Victorian capital for twenty-one years and, based on the narrative content of *The Bush Soldiers*, it is obvious the author understood various aspects of culture specific to Melbourne—Australian Rules Football, known colloquially as “footy,” and the rivalry between Melbourne and Sydney, for example—which is most evident in the Melbourne-based back story for the Geoffrey Sawtell character.

Australia can be described as a country of regions dominated by “eleven cities.”³³⁵ Evidence of this regionalism, in particular the Victoria/New South Wales—Melbourne/Sydney rivalry, can be found in Chapter Four: “The Chaplain was one of the New South Wales ruling class and had never heard of St Stephen’s, Richmond. It takes all sorts.”³³⁶ This, in turn, exacerbates the Catholic/Protestant divide within Australian society which also, in another turn, confounds the English/Australian dynamic, adding an extra layer of complication in relation to the Irish/English—Catholic/Protestant split, a motif that appears numerous times throughout the novel starting in Chapter Three:

Counihan wondered if they had Catholic priests in the English Army, but decided not. This man [Sergius Donaldson] must be Protestant.

[...]

‘...The Australians,’ St John Jackson laughed. ‘You know what they’re like. We fought with them once before.’

Sergius Donaldson paused at St John Jackson’s front door.

Counihan is a Roman Catholic, obviously.’³³⁷

Chapter Eight of *The Bush Soldiers* revolves around the Catholic/Protestant divide and around various diametrical oppositions such as English versus Australia as well as Christian versus secular atheism.³³⁸ References to these differences highlight a recurrent *cliché* throughout Australian literature: the uneasy and sometimes sprawling tension between fine English

³³⁵ Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1964), 43-88: Those eleven cities are Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Hobart, Newcastle, Wollongong, Canberra, Darwin and Broken Hill, as discussed in Chapter Three: Senses of Difference.

³³⁶ Hooker, *The Bush Soldiers*, 61.

³³⁷ *ibid.*, 46-47, 123-124.

³³⁸ *ibid.*, 221: These divisions, as they are, **include** dietary differences are mentioned in the eleventh chapter: “But mostly the Australians preferred to eat mutton, day after day, and St John Jackson and Sergius Donaldson could not understand this.”

sensibilities on the one hand—in this case as represented by the English Major St John Jackson and the Anglican missionary Sergius Donaldson—and the harsh nature of the Australian landscape as epitomised by characters Geoffrey Sawtell and Frank Counihan on the other.³³⁹

Though differences of religion and nationality exist among the bush soldiers, the desire for alcohol seems to bridge the gaps between them:

‘Tell me, Mr Sawtell, do you believe in God?’
‘No, sir, I do not. My mother did, but I do not.’
‘And Mr Counihan?’
‘He’s a Roman Catholic like young O’Donohue.’ His mother had said the Holy Romans always reverted to form, that being a Catholic was easy.
‘And you, Major?’
‘Belief in God is essential.’ St John Jackson rose from the table. ‘This list does not include liquor, which I should have thought is also essential.’
‘The rum for the other ranks and whisky for the officers. Sawtell smiled and said: ‘I agree, Major, and so would Frank Counihan, and so, I think, would Padre Donaldson.’
‘That liquor is essential.’
‘[...]’
‘That, Mr Sawtell, is one thing we have in common.’³⁴⁰

Australians are, by and large, thirsty³⁴¹ and there are at least 150 references to alcohol or to the consumption of alcohol in this Uchronic novel; in the words of character Sawtell: ‘We Australians drink anything, you know that.’³⁴² On some level, one could argue that the main objective of the bush soldiers in *The Bush Soldiers* is to scour the outback of Japanese-occupied Australia firstly in search of booze, liquor or cigarettes while hoping to secondly pinprick the

³³⁹ Sobocinka, *Visiting the Neighbours: Australians in Asia*, 27: “In the early decades of the 20th century, Australian nationhood was commonly defined in relation to England, and the prevalent ‘colonial cringe’ attests to the fact that Australians were not accustomed to thinking of themselves as top dogs in the imperial binary.” This tension is recurrent throughout *The Bush Soldiers* and can also be seen and felt across several other notable Australian novels such as *Voss* and *The Twyborn Affair* by Patrick White, *Remembering Babylon* by David Malouf, *We of the Never Never* by Jeannie Gunn, both *Capricornia* and *Poor Fellow My Country* by Xavier Herbert, *To the Islands* by Randolph Stow and, perhaps most famously, *Picnic at Hanging Rock* by Joan Lindsay, to name but a few. This tension, it should be noted, has been incorporated into Part Three of the creative narrative that accompanies this research in the characterisation of Mindi MacCallum Ricklesby, an English woman ineptly combing the Australian outback in a mad quest to find diamonds.

³⁴⁰ Hooker, *The Bush Soldiers*, 127.

³⁴¹ “A brief history of alcohol consumption in Australia”, accessed March 18, 2016. www.theconversation.com/a-brief-history-of-alcohol-consumption-in-australia: “There’s little doubt that alcohol is an important part of Australian culture”;

“4307.055.001 – Apparent Consumption of Alcohol, Australia, 2013-14”, accessed on March 18, 2016. www.abs.gov: “On a per capita basis there were 9.7 litres of pure alcohol available for consumption per person 2013-14”; “Alcohol and health in Australia”, accessed on March 18, 2016. www.nhmrc.gov.au: “Alcohol is responsible for a considerable burden of death, disease and injury in Australia... Most Australians have tried alcohol at some point in their lives.”

³⁴² Hooker, *The Bush Soldiers*, 127.

Japanese-occupiers through large-scale domestic sabotage inflicted upon them from behind.³⁴³ The bush soldiers finally discover “twelve Imperials quarts of Bundaberg rum” in Chapter Nine, opting to “drink in civilised fashion... outside in God’s pure air under the stars.” Until this point in *The Bush Soldiers*, there have been general references to whisky, scotch, beer, rum, port and claret; the only brand of alcohol mentioned prior to Chapter Nine is Johnnie Walker, perhaps the most iconic brand of blended scotch whisky on Earth, yet author John Hooker no doubt chose Bundaberg rum as a direct and overt reference to a brand that is, unlike Johnnie Walker, a famous icon of Australia.

Another aspect of Australian culture, and one that permeates all aspects of daily life for many Australians, is the ongoing dissonance between white settler Australia and Aboriginal people. *The Bush Soldiers* was published at a time when both the nation and the culture were starting to talk about—at least in terms of national rhetoric and discourse—the concept of “[facing] up to our colonial past,” in particular white Australia’s poor treatment of Aboriginal people.³⁴⁴ At that moment in Australia, many producers of culture, writers among them, began to question and challenge long-held myths about the “discovery” and foundation of modern Australia, focusing on white Australia’s mistreatment of Aboriginal people throughout Australian history.

It was mentioned earlier that the image of Aboriginal people in *The Bush Soldiers* is largely unchanged from actual history, which saw many Aboriginal people massacred by settlers or decimated by diseases while many more were driven from their traditional lands at the behest and benefit of white people. Chapter Nine highlights the casual disregard white Australia has toward the native Indigenous peoples; when they catch a “black boy” “going through [their] gear,” Sawtell breaks his jaw with the butt of a rifle, leaving him injured and bloodied at the foot of a war memorial in a small country town. In another scene, the bush soldiers destroy a well and a bore, leaving local Aboriginal people literally high and dry. The bush soldiers finally face retribution in the last chapter of *The Bush Soldiers* with the sudden entrance of a “young blackfellow” who is armed with a gun, putting everyone ill at ease, and for good reason: a few pages later, this “young blackfellow” shoots three characters before he is shot “squarely between

³⁴³ Hooker, *The Bush Soldiers*, 127.

³⁴⁴ Murray Waldren, “John Hooker,” *The Weekend Australian*, 1998.

the shoulders.”³⁴⁵ From then on, the remaining bush soldiers wander through the red deserts of Australia, some of them dropping dead along the way until the last page of the narrative when “at last, Sawtell went to sleep with the Padre.”³⁴⁶

Why did John Hooker include references to tensions between Australia and England, English versus Irish as well as Catholic versus Protestant, coupled with a local penchant for booze and the bush soldiers’ general maltreatment of “blackfellows”?

As a Uchronic novel, *The Bush Soldiers* critiques the attitudes and assumptions long held by white Australia toward Asians, women and the Indigenous. As stated earlier, John Hooker was a Kiwi expatriate who lived in Australia for many years. Prior to life in Melbourne, he was “a bookseller with writerly aspirations” who “wrote as rebellion against the culture [of his native New Zealand].”³⁴⁷ Hooker later worked at Penguin for ten years, becoming the “wild man” of Australian publishing according to an article written about the author for *The Weekend Australian* in 1998:

"Their rigor attracts me, the hard-drinking male thing that is - probably deservedly - so out of fashion these days," [John Hooker] says. "But one exists on a catechism of memories, and mine encompass this tough school."³⁴⁸

Perhaps that explains the superfluous references to alcohol, but as far as the tensions between Australia and England, which encompasses both the Irish/Catholic and the English/Protestant divide as well as the general disparity between black and white Australia, what is known about John Hooker is his motivation in relocating to Australia in 1969:

I went [to Australia] when the social agenda was driven by the desire to get [Labor party leader] Gough Whitlam in, to get censorship out and to get the pubs open until 10pm. It was my luck to be working for a radically-based publishing house of world stature. The old order was falling apart, Australian writing was coming of age [and] there was a sense of destiny.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁵ Hooker, *The Bush Soldiers*, 420.

³⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 439.

³⁴⁷ Waldren, “John Hooker”.

³⁴⁸ *ibid.*

³⁴⁹ *ibid.*

Though this may be speculative, it appears that with *The Bush Soldiers*, author John Hooker was attempting to depict various aspects of Australia and Australian culture as he sought to frame them, even if various parts of the narrative appear to be satirising the very nation and culture of Australia. Hooker said *The Bush Soldiers* is “about the masculine colonial values of my father’s era, whose hero is really based on him.” Of his father, Hooker added “we never got on very well – he stood for all that I hated... racism [and] conservatism.”³⁵⁰

By placing his novel in the same Uchronic world as *The Bush Soldiers*, John A. Scott is likely taking similar critiques of racism and conservatism a step further in *N* by commenting, both at beginning and at the end of the novel, on “the last decade or so of Australian political history.”³⁵¹ *N*, for example, “opens... with a scene from a meeting of Prime Minister Arthur Fadden’s war council in September 1941 debating the issue of asylum for a group of Jewish child refugees fleeing [Nazi] Europe aboard the *Ville de Nancy*,”³⁵² which is followed by the “decision by... Fadden... to send them packing.”³⁵³ Later, the novel “ends with SIEV 4 and the ‘children overboard’ scandal,” a political controversy that dominated the Australian federal election in 2001. These images suggest that *N*, in a manner similar to *The Bush Soldiers*, “never loses sight of the questions with which it wants to interrogate”³⁵⁴ Australia for its historic and political aversion to immigrants—in particular Asian immigrants—refugees, asylum seekers and the Indigenous.

In the final chapter of *The Bush Soldiers*, Frank Counihan and English Major St John Jackson get their comeuppance at the hands of a young Aboriginal man who wants to correct the wrongs inflicted upon his relations at the hands of these white men. Hooker remembers walking “many years ago in the autumnal hills outside Canberra with Manning Clark, [a noted Australian historian] who suddenly said: ‘We have no business being here.’ He meant we, as Europeans, are in the wrong place. It was an undercurrent in his histories, and it's echoed [by] Henry Reynolds [a noted expert on the black struggle against white colonization in Australia]... that our presence

³⁵⁰ : Waldren, “John Hooker”: ‘Among his close confidants were cartoonist Bruce Petty [...]: “John’s mythology is full of surrounding apocryphal stories, most of which are true. He was known for enlivening the odd dinner party with outrageous propositions, but it was done from a sense of mischief - he’s a genuinely funny fellow, passionate about writing and words.”

³⁵¹ Aashish Kaul, “The Red of the Rust: On John A. Scott, ‘N,’” *Academia.com* 2014: accessed June 2, 2016, http://www.academia.edu/12868199/The_Red_of_the_Rust_On_John_A._Scott_N

³⁵² Kaul, “The Red of the Rust: On John A. Scott, ‘N,’”.

³⁵³ David Brooks, “John A. Scott chats to David Brooks about *N*,” *Readings.com.au* 2014.

³⁵⁴ Kaul, “The Red of the Rust: On John A. Scott, ‘N,’”.

here is morally defective. And I... believe that... until we face up to our colonial past, we are never going to get it right.”³⁵⁵

In Uchronic fiction, the image of Indigenous people is often reconfigured. Though *N* and *The Bush Soldiers* do not elevate the image of Aboriginal Australians, and despite the lack of Indigenous characters or references to Indigeneity in the other Uchronic novels under review for this genre study, there is in fact a precedent within the Uchronic genre for this aspect of the framework. As stated in the introduction, this feature of Uchronic fiction is particularly relevant in two categories of Uchronic narratives outside the scope of this genre study: those premised on different outcomes to the American Civil War and Uchronic narratives based on Muslim-centric worlds; these types of “what if” scenarios customarily offer examples of reconfigured images of Indigenous peoples, the most compelling of which are *How Few Remain* by Harry Turtledove and Kim Stanley Robinson’s *The Years of Rice and Salt*.

Following these examples, the creative narrative that accompanies this research significantly alters the historical depiction of Aboriginal Australians in a way never seen previously in Australian literature. Part of the creative narrative focuses on an Aboriginal character who self-identifies as “half-Doolbung.” The Doolbung, also spelled Doolboong, is the name of an Aboriginal group in the East Kimberley. At the commencement of this research, very little was known about the Doolbung; information was limited and scattered, presenting a unique dilemma for the Uchronics of the creative narrative: if a feature of Uchronic fiction is to depict an alternate history that is credible and plausible, then the Uchronic fiction author ought to acquaint himself with the particulars regarding the actual history surrounding this “what if” scenario.³⁵⁶ Yet how does one do this if the actual history—the history of the Doolboong, for example—is limited, scattered or incorrect? This issue will be specifically addressed in the second addendum to this thesis, following an application of the thematic framework to the creative narrative that accompanies this research.

³⁵⁵ Kaul, “The Red of the Rust: On John A. Scott, ‘N’,”.

³⁵⁶ The use of the male pronoun is not coincidental: most writers of Uchronic fiction tend to be men.

THE CREATIVE NARRATIVE

The creative narrative that accompanies this research is a new Uchronic novel about Jews, “blackfellas”, diamonds, lizards and cricket—the sport, not the insect—and, toward the end, there are a series of cyclones.³⁵⁷ This Uchronic novel is premised on the success of the Kimberley Plan and, as a result, presents an alternate version of Australia. In an effort to maintain a level of credible plausibility and verisimilitude, various aspects of the historical record were examined in search of a viable point of historic divergence, the central feature of Uchronic fiction.

The Point of Historic Divergence in the Creative Narrative

Like all Uchronic novels, the creative narrative contains a point of historic divergence that appears early in the narrative, two of them, in fact. The first point of historic divergence appears in Part One: the premature death of Joseph Carrodus, the then-Secretary of the Department of the Interior, who is trampled to death by a horse.³⁵⁸ As both the research and the creative narrative exhibit, Joseph Carrodus—in his capacity as Secretary of the Department of the Interior—was against the idea of a large-scale Jewish settlement in the East Kimberley.³⁵⁹ Joseph Carrodus was in communication with Sir Samuel Cohen, who spoke out against the Kimberley Plan.³⁶⁰ Joseph Carrodus also chaired the Interdepartmental Committee that investigated the proposal, where he thwarted any possibility of its implementation.³⁶¹ By eliminating Joseph Carrodus from the discussion, the Kimberley Plan becomes a reality in the creative narrative when, instead of John Curtin rejecting the plan in 1944, Robert Menzies approves the plan with “Terms of Settlement” some time prior to the start of World War Two.

³⁵⁷ Perhaps in an effort to court controversy, in *The Jew Lizard Suite: A Uchronic Novel in Six Parts*, the phrase used is the colloquial “blackfellas” as opposed to the term “blackfellows” seen in John Hooker’s *The Bush Soldiers*.

³⁵⁸ David Muller, *The Jew Lizard Suite: A Uchronic Novel in Six Parts*: Manuscript, page 187.

³⁵⁹ This was mentioned earlier in connection to the untimely death of Anthony Dimond in Michael Chabon’s *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*.

³⁶⁰ The role of Joseph Carrodus in the demise of the Kimberley Plan is detailed in the addendum that follows this section of this thesis.

³⁶¹ Anne Andgel, *Fifty Years of Caring: the History of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society* (Sydney: Australian Jewish Welfare Society and the Australian Jewish Historical Society, 1988), 93, 95; Blakeney, *Australia and the Jewish Refugees 1933-1948*, 113; Gettler, *An Unpromised Land*, 129; Australian Archives record: AA: 446 68/71049.

While the death of Joseph Carrodus serves as the primary point of historic divergence, it is not the only point of historic divergence.

During Professor Lochlin MacAlistair's "farewell lecture" in Part One, a primordial point of historic divergence, for lack of a better term, is revealed: the migration of the Eastern Bearded Dragon, also known as "the Jew lizard," across the top end of Australia from far north Queensland "along the edge of the Gulf of Carpentaria through Arnhem Land, Kakadu and the Katherine until finally" the East Kimberley region of northeastern Western Australia.³⁶² This biological anomaly enhances the point of historic divergence; once the Jew lizard migrates to the East Kimberley and once Joseph Carrodus is removed from the governmental discussion regarding the Kimberley Plan, an alternate version of Australian history follows, which leads into the next feature of Uchronic fiction.

The Elliptical Revelation of an Alternate World History in the Creative Narrative

As has been mentioned in previous categories of the genre study, there are many ways an author of Uchronic fiction can elliptically reveal an alternate world history. In the creative narrative that accompanies this research, the first such revelation appears in the form of "outdated [newspaper] headlines":

*"Britain detonates A-Bomb over Potsdam—city leveled—Yanks drop H-Bomb on Nuremberg."*³⁶³

This headline indicates that both the United States and Great Britain used weapons of mass destruction against Nazi Germany in the climax of World War Two, which stands in sharp contrast to actual history whilst resonating with Michael Chabon's *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* where Berlin is destroyed by an American atom bomb in 1946. The fact that the two cities nuked, so to speak, are central to the post-World War Two geopolitical structure signifies that this version of that era is different than it was in actual history. A few lines later, it is revealed through the context of a newspaper article that Robert Menzies has been the Prime Minister of

³⁶² Muller, 202.

³⁶³ *ibid*, 188.

Australia for seven consecutive and uninterrupted years by 1946, which also stands in contrast to actual history. Keeping Menzies in office without interruption throughout the Second World War was a strategic decision for the creative narrative, as there are some vague indications that Robert Menzies was a philo-Semite³⁶⁴ or, at the very least, not complicit in any type of overt or incipient anti-Semitism, thereby suggesting he was potentially more likely to approve of the Kimberley Plan upon first proposal rather than reject it, as did his successor, John Curtin.³⁶⁵ Based on this, the point of historic divergence can be simplified: had Joseph Carrodus been removed from the discussion and had Robert Menzies never left office in 1941, the Kimberley Plan might have been implemented.³⁶⁶

Toward the end of Part One, it is elliptically revealed—again through the context of a “farewell lecture”—that there are at least four major population centres in the East Kimberley, two of which are named at this point: Wyndham and Durack City.³⁶⁷ This “cluster of highly urbanized suburbs... are growing at an enormous rate... that is likely to result in the development of a full-scale megapolis... far outpacing both Sydney and Melbourne combined;”³⁶⁸ this elliptical revelation has implications regarding the population of Australia. In actual history, Australia in 1951 was home to just over eight million people, but as Aaron Patkin’s “diatribe” in Part One indicates, there are “estimates” that the Jewish population in the East Kimberley is “as high as three million” by 1946, putting this Uchronic version of Australia on a course to nearly double its population at some point during the early 1950s. At the same time, the notion that as many as three million European Jews relocate to Australia with an “estimated half million currently living at various transit centres scattered across the Indian

³⁶⁴ Letter from Isaac Steinberg to Robert Menzies, 24 October, 1939; AW Martin and Patsy Hardy, ed., *Dark and Hurrying Days: Menzies' 1941 Diary* (Canberra: National Library of Australia/Goanna Press, 1993), 30; Gettler, *An Unpromised Land*, 107-108; and in Australian Archives: CRS A433 44/2/50, as cited in Gettler. It is, however, a matter of course, as well as poetic license, that this point of historic divergence overlooks the fact that a reinstated Menzies Cabinet, upon Menzies' return to office as prime minister in 1949, rejected Steinberg's proposal a second time on 15 March 1950, as cited in “A Land of Milk and Honey? A Jewish Settlement Proposal in the Kimberley,” Brian Wimborne, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, accessed 3 March 2016, <http://abd.anu.edu.au/essay/9/text29488>. On the one hand, Bob Menzies appeared to be more receptive to the Kimberley Plan but, on the other hand, his cabinet in 1950 rejected Steinberg's proposal a second time on 15 March 1950.

³⁶⁵ This historic fact is detailed in the Kimberley Plan addendum that follows this section of this thesis.

³⁶⁶ This stands in contrast to actual history, where John Curtin rejected the Kimberley Plan in 1944. Other elliptical revelations include Mauritius and the Seychelles as islands of transport en route from Europe to the East Kimberley and, perhaps more importantly, that some Jews—Aaron Patkin and Sir Samuel Cohen among them—were very much *against* the Kimberley Plan, a historic fact that remains unchanged *for the sake* of the Uchronic novel.

³⁶⁷ Other geographical features that appear in the creative narrative include “Blossom,” one of the four major population centres in the East Kimberley, as well as “Ivanhoe” and “South Carlton”, two suburbs of Durack City. Also, the “Freeland League” is the name of an expressway linking Wyndham to Durack City.

³⁶⁸ Muller, 200-201.

Ocean” implies that the detrimental effects of the Holocaust are significantly downgraded.³⁶⁹ In fact, one character, Shmendrik, makes a quip to another character, Shtulik, in Part One: “They say we lost a couple million that way.”³⁷⁰ An estimated six million Jews perished at the hands of the Nazis during the Holocaust; in the creative narrative, an estimated four million leave Europe, bypassing the Holocaust altogether while nearly doubling the Australian population in the process.³⁷¹

There are few elliptical revelations of an alternate world history in Part Two of the creative narrative. Though scarce, these revelations provide details about Russia, which is referred to as “Soviet” during the Second World War and as “Red” in 1955. In Part Three, more details of an alternate world history are revealed through a comical tongue-in-cheek glimpse into our world:

At the bar inside the Original Plenty Soak, Ben Prindy sat hunched over a local newspaper, the *Durack City Register*. “You see this?” He nudged his mate, “Some writer won a contest. Wrote a book starts with a plane crash and then some drunkard Prime Minister taking over during the war.”

Felix downed the pint and belched. “*Nu?*”

“Story says all you Jews would be in America if that’d happened.”

[...]

“Says the story ends with a red-headed lady as prime minister and some black guy as president of America in fifty some odd years.”

“Sounds like a load of horseshit to me.”³⁷²

In a specific yet arcane nod to Part Four, which revolves around the elliptical revelation of an alternate world history, the excerpt above is meant to highlight *four* aspects of actual history as they appear as alternate history in this Uchronic novel, first among them the 1940 Canberra air disaster which saw the death of three key Menzies-era Cabinet ministers and the eventual collapse of the Menzies government in 1941. The second aspect is the ascension of John Curtin as “some drunkard Prime Minister,” while the third and fourth aspects are thinly-veiled

³⁶⁹ Muller, 189.

³⁷⁰ *ibid*, 189.

³⁷¹ Muller, 236, 387 (appendices): It is revealed through character-to-character dialogue that “the Nazis expelled the Jews from Germany,” but not when. In terms of population, it is revealed elliptically in Part Four, which takes place in the late 1970s, that “Durack is almost twice the size of Sydney” in Part Four.

³⁷² *ibid*, 275. This is another glimpse into our world.

'winks' to Julia Gillard as "a red-headed lady" and to Barack Obama as "some black guy as president of America."

As is often the case in Uchronic fiction, the alternate history can overlap with the actual, and this happens many times in the creative narrative. For example in Part Three, a billfold is "slapped... down" on to "the bar," revealing "an ornate portrait of Edmund Barton,"³⁷³ the first Prime Minister of Australia whose picture appeared at the time on a 100 pound note. This detail reveals that in both the creative narrative and actual history, Edmund Barton is the first Prime Minister of Australia and that the currency of Australia prior to 1964 was the Australian pound. Other elliptical revelations of an alternate world history in Part Three include but are not limited to the Uchronic fact that New York City has "at least half a dozen boroughs" instead of five, that there is an East and West Berlin in 1964³⁷⁴ and, later, that "them Jews" in Israel are "always fightin' wars."³⁷⁵ It is also revealed through inner monologue attributed to the character of Baron Freedel that both Italy and Russia "switched sides... during the war,"³⁷⁶ implying that the Soviet Union was defeated and conquered by Nazi Germany who installed a Vichy-like puppet government that forced the USSR to "switch sides."³⁷⁷ More elliptical revelations follow soon after in Part Four, appearing in the form of newspaper headlines:

"Holt Bolts! Hasluck Deposed! Fairhall Installed!"
*"Hashemite Forces Reclaim Temple Mount"*³⁷⁸

The first of these two headlines reveal a key "fact" about this Uchronic version of Australia: Harold Holt, the seventeenth Prime Minister of Australia, does not disappear—presumed drowned—in 1967 but instead remains active in Australian politics well into the 1970s. The other two names mentioned in that first headline, Hasluck and Fairhall, are prominent names associated with the Australian Liberal Party, yet what remains unclear is from what Harold Holt bolts, why and from what is Paul Hasluck deposed, and in what capacity is Allen Fairhall installed; it is not meant to be clear whether Holt is prime minister in this Uchronic

³⁷³ Muller, 277.

³⁷⁴ Muller, 281 (appendices).

³⁷⁵ *ibid*, 294 (appendices).

³⁷⁶ *ibid*, 329 (appendices).

³⁷⁷ *ibid*, 329 (appendices).

³⁷⁸ *ibid*, 339 (appendices).

version of Australia in 1978. For the sake of discussion, that first headline could be in reference to an internal Liberal Party leadership spill, thereby implying the Liberal Party is out of office in 1978, but these details are intentionally ambiguous, leaving the reader ample room for speculation, especially considering that no other clues are provided one way or the other at any other point in the creative narrative. This is why, for example, “the wife of the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia” is not named in Part Four, robbing the reader of any clues as to which political party is running the country in 1975.³⁷⁹

The second headline is slightly less ambiguous. In Part Three, it is stated that “them Jews” in Israel are “always fightin’ wars.”³⁸⁰ The extension of that is complicated by this second headline from Part Four which announces Israel has lost Jerusalem at some point during the 1970s, a city they captured from Jordan—also known as the Hashemite Kingdom—during the Six Day War in 1967. This headline is connected to another elliptical revelation that occurs in Part Four of the creative narrative, chief among them the introduction of “a thin Sephardi woman originally called Sigal”³⁸¹ and, perhaps more ominously, in the headline that appears about forty pages later: “*Details Emerge About the Disappearance of Egypt’s 3rd Army.*”³⁸²

Part Four is also notable for the introduction of Celia Corres-Patkin, a print journalist working for Kerry Packer’s *Australian Women’s Weekly* who is tapped to cover a Royal Commission for Packer’s Channel Nine television news and, later, for the Packer Sports News network, also known as “PSN.” An important Uchronic fact regarding the alternate history inherent to the creative narrative is elliptically revealed when Celia is promoted by Packer; at that moment, Celia is covering a garden party for American First Lady Joanne Woodward Vidal, whose husband—the US President—Kerry Packer derides as “a pansy.”³⁸³ Though it may take an act of deduction on the part of the reader, it ought to be eventually realised that the President of the United States in this alternate version of the world in 1976 is none other than Gore Vidal,

³⁷⁹ As the creative narrative progresses into Parts Five and Six, it becomes evident that this Uchronic version of Australia is governed by frequent elections that are won by a series of short-lived and sometimes hung parliaments void of majorities and dominated by fractured political coalitions.

³⁸⁰ Muller, 294 (appendices).

³⁸¹ *ibid*, 373 (appendices): Though there is a three year time lapse between the “*Reclaim Temple Mount*” headline and the introduction of this “thin white Sephardi woman,” it is understood that “Siggy” is Israeli and Jewish.

³⁸² *ibid*, 378 (appendices).

³⁸³ *ibid*, 354 (appendices).

the social and political gadfly responsible for novels like *Burr*, *Hollywood*, *Myra Breckenridge* and *Live from Golgotha: the Gospel According to Gore Vidal*.³⁸⁴

Another major reveal precedes Kerry Packer's derisive "pansy" comment:

You don't think your readers will want to know what the First Lady of the United States has to say about the Civil Rights Act her husband reluctantly signed into law at the end of last year?

This statement, made by Celia Corres-Patkin in the year of 1976, indicates the Civil Rights Act "was signed into law" in 1975, eleven years later than actual history, revealing elliptically that the United States—indeed the world—is much different in the creative narrative than in actual history. This is furthered a few pages later when Celia Corres-Patkin spots a protest near the American Embassy in Canberra which, in an overt reference to the role of history in Uchronic fiction, sits atop "a grassy knoll."³⁸⁵ Riding in a taxi, Celia asks the driver: "What are they protesting, the US in Cuba?" This question reveals that the United States has been "in Cuba" for some reason or other, but the creative narrative remains reticent about *what* the US is doing or has done there. Instead, the elliptical revelations in this section of Part Four revert to a decidedly *British* focus: those protestors are not in front of the American Embassy but in front of the High Commission for the British Raj where they continue to protest the in-prison death of a man Celia Corres-Patkin has, in this version of 1976, never heard of: Gandhi. Though they were alluded to earlier, particularly in the first mention of the Duckworth's cricket team in Part Four, two very important details are revealed in Part Four regarding the Uchronic world inherent to the creative narrative: first, that Gandhi died in jail in 1944 as he nearly did in actual history, and—second—that, as a result, India is not fully independent in 1976. The fact that there is a High Commission for the British Raj in lieu of an Indian Embassy epitomises this aspect of the alternate history.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁴ Later in Part Four, there is an overt and specific reference to "US President Gore Vidal" who touches "down... in Taipei for talks with the People's Republic [of China] about improving inter-Pacific relations between America, Japan and the Philippines." What this news headline additionally indicates is the notion that the People's Republic of China includes Taiwan.

³⁸⁵ Muller, 356 (appendices)

³⁸⁶ In a nod to verisimilitude, the geographical locations of the embassies mentioned at this point in the narrative—the American, Swedish, Thai and Indian embassies—are in fact actually located in and around Arkana Street in Canberra. Other aspects of the alternate world history are revealed through the context of newspaper headlines: "*PM May Call Snap Election; Internal Spill, MP Speculate*" and "*Greek Monarch Survives Domestic Referendum*." The second headline stands in contrast to

Part Four revolves around the elliptical revelation of an alternate world history whilst also revolving around a cheating and bribery scandal in a large and cumbersome global sports body known as “International Super Test Cricket.” Not once at any point during the first five parts of the creative narrative is an explanation provided which details when, where and how International Super Test Cricket came into existence as a large and cumbersome global sports body, but what is known is its division into four leagues: the Britannia League, also known as “the Premiers”, which includes all teams based in the United Kingdom; the Dominion League, which includes teams from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa (all former Dominions of the British Empire); the Crown League, which includes teams from former Crown Colonies such as India, Singapore, Malay and Hong Kong, and last but certainly not least, the Imperial League, which includes teams from obscure corners of Britain’s once vast colonial empire, such as Malta, Zanzibar, Bermuda, Zimbabwe, the Bahamas and Belmopan, a sort of cricket powerhouse from Belize, a small country in Central America once called British Honduras.

The purpose of this cumbersome global sports body is meant to indicate many things: first, that the British Empire, in an official sense, still exists in some form in the mid- to late-1970s and has not been dismantled into the Commonwealth of Nations and, second, that certain parts of the British Empire are not fully independent from the United Kingdom by 1975. The existence of a global sports body wherein every major *and* minor part of the British Empire compete against each other buttresses the notion of British “soft power” as a method through which the United Kingdom maintains some sort of cultural and well as political if not colonial grip on their international territories both large and small. This is the particular implication for India, which gained independence from Britain in 1947. In the Uchronic world of the creative narrative, Gandhi dies in jail in 1944, relegating him to footnote status in this alternate history. As a result, “India” does not exist as an independent country separate from Britain but is instead known as “the British Raj.” As this official title implies, India is *not* fully independent from a Britain that uses atomic weapons alongside the United States to hasten the end of World War Two.³⁸⁷

actual history where the monarchy of Greece was abolished as the result of a national referendum in 1973 and then again in 1974.

³⁸⁷ This implication for India also appears likely for South Africa, though this is also never clarified at any point in the narrative. In terms of the use of atomic weapons, it is also vaguely implied via character-to-character dialogue in Part Three that more

In Part Three, a reference to “Sir Barnaby” is made. As the character of Baron Freedel reveals through dialogue, Sir Barnaby is a “private benefactor of atomic research.”³⁸⁸ In Part Four, it is revealed that Baron Freedel—ten years after the events of Part Three—is working at the nuclear science centre for the Kimberley Institute of Science and Agriculture. It is also revealed in Part Four that nuclear technology is used in the East Kimberley as a method through which diamonds and other precious minerals are extracted from deposits deep below the mantle of the earth. Felix Morose—the “Kimberley-based diamond magnate”—uses low yield nuclear devices for drilling and strip mining, nuclear technology that could be weaponised. At one point, Felix Morose is accused by the Royal Commission of illegally selling nuclear technology to the State of Israel who, as one of the headlines in Part Four indicates, has lost control of Jerusalem, the most fought over city in human history. Felix Morose, through a proxy-like bagman named Mordecai Vanunu, bribes the international sport of cricket and then bets accordingly in an effort to launder the profits of that illegal sale back into the Australian economy.³⁸⁹ Israel, in the meantime, is speculated to have used “low yield, tactical nuclear devices” against Egypt’s Third Army, causing its “disappearance,” while an unnamed Prime Minister of Australia calls a sudden “snap election” by dissolving both houses of Federal Parliament in Canberra. These are some, but certainly not all, of the details of an alternate world history that are revealed elliptically through the context of Part Four.

The Reconfigured Image of Indigenous People in the Creative Narrative

The first image of Indigenous people—indeed the first image in the creative narrative—is of “‘Mary,’ a young Aboriginal woman long assumed to be secretly embittered against the whites.”³⁹⁰ In that scene, Mary is stripped naked at the behest of white settlers, one of whom she curses, and flogged by an “Aboriginal tracker... certainly not from her country, nor any country

than two atomic bombs were dropped on Imperial Japan during the Second World War, though no specific clarification for this is provided at any point during the narrative.

³⁸⁸ Muller, 331 (appendices).

³⁸⁹ Some authors of Uchronic fiction will recast well-known historical figures, giving them entirely new roles that could have happened had things turned out differently. Harry Turtledove, a preeminent author of alternate history, recasts several well-known historical figures in his alternate history of the American Civil War, *How Few Remain*. This recasting of historical figures has been adapted for the creative narrative that accompanies this research. Mordecai Vanunu, the turncoat Israeli nuclear technician largely known for his subversive revelations regarding the nuclear threshold of the Jewish State, has been recast in the creative narrative as Felix Morose’s multi-aliased bagman.

³⁹⁰ Muller, 177.

nearby.”³⁹¹ These images are not *per se* inconsistent with the historic record, though this opening scene is a work of fiction. Most of Part One of the creative narrative does not reconfigure or uplift the image of Indigenous people who are depicted as third-class non-citizens by white Australians. Not only do the white people beat “a young Aboriginal woman,” they’ve also turned Aboriginal persons against one another, as is evidenced by the aforementioned Aboriginal tracker who flogs Mary. Throughout Part One, Aboriginal people are either abused, beaten, disrespected or lusted after, or are depicted in league with white people; none of these images alter or reconfigure the historical treatment of Aboriginal people during the era Part One depicts, quite the opposite. Part One satirizes white Australia by depicting various British settlers, whether in the city or in the bush, as racist brutes indifferent to the suffering of others, especially if those others are black.³⁹²

The image of Indigenous people, or perhaps more specifically the interaction between white Australia and Indigenous culture, changes in the last scene of Part One as the narrative shifts to a farewell lecture taking place in 1951. Professor Lochlin MacAlistair cites “songlines belonging to several different Aboriginal groups” as “evidence [from] across a number of disciplines, not just the biological, that suggest the Jew lizard was somehow imported” to the East Kimberley region of Western Australia.³⁹³ Though Aboriginal songlines were not unknown in 1951, they did not, and do not, play a major role at the tertiary academic level in Australia, at least not in terms of para-biological evidence related to reptilian migration and especially not in the early 1950s as depicted in Part One. This elevation of Aboriginal knowledge into the scientific realm of Australian academia signals the notion that the alternate version of Australia depicted in this Uchronic novel is a much different Australia, particularly as it relates to Indigeneity.

Part Two opens at an Anglican missionary school in 1953. The students are black, Aboriginal and badly behaved while the white teachers are depicted as either ineffective or as abusive. It ought to come as no surprise when one of these black students—Prendergrast Percival Percy—bolts from the “Anglican compound,” cutting across the road where he climbs up the

³⁹¹ Muller, 180.

³⁹² The grotesquerie of this indifference is Aaron Patkin’s “diatribe” in Part One of the creative narrative, which follows after the scene in which Sir Samuel Cohen—the esteemed president of the Great Synagogue of Sydney— declares his strong objection to the Kimberley Plan to Joseph Carrodus, the then Secretary of the Department of the Interior, whom it can be recalled was also against the idea of large-scale Jewish settlement.

³⁹³ Muller, 202.

back of a synagogue, eventually crashing through a skylight and into a rabbi's study, subsequently opening the door both literally and figuratively for a black-Jewish dynamic that will be one of the major pillars of the creative narrative. Prendergrast Percival Percy, also and mostly known as "Prindy" or "Ben Prindy," is theoretically based on the character of a similar name as he appears in Xavier Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country*. As such, he is depicted as an intelligent and adaptable child who moves seamlessly between his native Aboriginal culture and the Jewish community he appears taken in by. Unlike Herbert's Prindy, the Prindy depicted in the creative narrative experiences a completely different story arc that sees him become one of the wealthiest men in Australia as a result of the events in Part Three, enabling him in Part Four to influence the course of national events—most notably the outcome of the Royal Commission into allegations of cheating in International Super Test Cricket—which stands in sharp contrast to actual history and to Xavier Herbert's Prindy.³⁹⁴

At the end of Part Three, Baron Freedel, a redheaded Kimberley Jew, reveals to Felix Morose and Ben Prindy that he is engaged to a black Jewish convert named "Miriyam." This stands in contrast to actual history where, to date, there have been few, if any, black Aboriginal converts to Judaism.³⁹⁵ Though Miriyam is seen briefly in Part Three, the depth of her characterisation, which emblematises the concept of the reconfigured image of Indigenous people in Uchronic fiction, becomes conspicuously apparent in Part Four where she is reintroduced as a Jewish wife and mother who is not only rich but also, as her depiction suggests, a woman of leisure with refined tastes. As the lady of the house, Miriyam Freedel employs several servants—an *au pair* and a cook among them—some of who appear to be white, (the *au pair* is an Israeli refugee while the cook's skin colour is never explicitly revealed, though her apparent resentment during her one-off appearance in the narrative suggests she, like the *au pair*, is also white). Again, Part Four starts in 1975, but the scene that depicts Miriyam Freedel as a wealthy Jewish wife and mother ordering around a platoon of white servants takes place in 1978; this image of a black woman in Western Australia in the late-1970s stands in sharp contrast to the historical record of that era where, for instance, there were not any black Aboriginal converts to Judaism in the East Kimberley.

³⁹⁴ Part Four takes place starting in 1975; at that time in Australia, there was not a wealthy Aboriginal person able to directly influence the course of national events.

³⁹⁵ Lisa Jackson Pulver of the University of New South Wales, and other Koories—Aboriginal people from New South Wales—have converted to Judaism in notable, yet small numbers.

As an Aboriginal convert to Judaism, “Miri,” along with her husband, is raising mixed race children. The creative narrative indicates that the children are being raised in the tradition of Jewish Orthodoxy—the fact that Miri maintains *shomer negiyah* and that Baron and Miri’s second child, Devorah, has a tutor for *Lashon HaKodesh*, demonstrate this—yet as the scene around the breakfast table in Part Four suggests, these half-Aboriginal, half-Jewish children are aware of and interact with their Indigenous heritage and language. This is seen when Devorah speaks in an Aboriginal tongue, insulting her younger brother “using a word forbidden to her in *Language*,” causing her full-blooded Aboriginal mother to respond “from the lofty plateau of parental elder.”³⁹⁶ This narrative sequence is meant to demonstrate the existence of some type of synthetic amalgamation between Jewish and Aboriginal cultures. Though the Freedel children are Jews—some might call them “new Jews”—they are aware of their Indigenous heritage and appear to have a functional understanding of their mother’s Aboriginal *Language* which has further resonances with the role of gender in some Aboriginal as well as Jewish cultural processes. In terms of the image of Indigenous people as it relates to actual history in Australia in the late 1970s, there is—simply put—no parallel and, in this respect, what is happening on the pages of Part Four of the creative narrative has *never* happened before, whether it be in actual history or, for that matter, across the pages of Australian fiction and literature, though some Xavier Herbert *aficionados* might disagree.

The Image of Women in the Creative Narrative

There are three groups of women in the creative narrative: Aboriginal women, Jewish women and Australian women (i.e. women who are not Jewish, nor Aboriginal). The Aboriginal women are all named “Mary” but this changes in Part Three where one of the women named “Mary” becomes “Miriya” as part of her conversion to Judaism. Miri then gives birth to two daughters—Rifkah and Devorah—thereby shunning the settler-imposed and arbitrary name of “Mary.” It was a common feature of British colonisation the world over to substitute English names like Mary for native-language names that were difficult for colonialists to pronounce.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁶ Muller, 375 (appendices): This synthetic amalgamation moves in other directions as well; in Part Two, the rabbi of the story—Rabbi Jacob Esau Stintston—is seen by the Vicar calling out to black children “in *Language*.”

³⁹⁷ This concept of a “colonial name change” appears in other works of Australian fiction, most notably in Kim Scott’s 2011 Miles Franklin Award-winning novel, *That Deadman Dance*.

This is particularly the case for Indigenous Australians not just in the historical record but also in the scope of Australian literature and film. The name, for instance, of “King George” is applied to the elder of a local Indigenous community in both Xavier Herbert’s *Poor Fellow My Country* and in Baz Luhrmann’s *Australia*, substituting an individual’s name whilst simultaneously obscuring his role within his culture by using the misnomer title “king.” Women’s names such as “Queenie” or “Mary” are likewise arbitrary and commonly bestowed upon Indigenous women not just in Australia but in other parts of the colonial world; both Janine Burke’s *Lullaby* as well as Xavier Herbert’s *Poor Fellow My Country*, to name only two, feature black women named Queenie.³⁹⁸

It is important to note that there are at least six different women named Mary throughout the creative narrative. These women are not meant to characterise one single woman reappearing throughout the story but are, in most cases, separate women, each burdened with the same arbitrary English-language first name. The fact that these women were all given the same name is meant to further satirise white Australians who, as the Vicar in Part One reveals, “called all the black women Mary.”³⁹⁹ Of these six women—one of whom rescues a Jew lizard hiding among some leafy vegetables—three are shown as mothers or as mothers-to-be, one is shown “*en flagrante*” with an Afghan cameleer, while another is seen working as a nurse in 1975. The image that is meant to stand out among these is the black nurse in 1975, which is a contrast to the status of Aboriginal woman in Western Australia at that time in actual history: in 1975 in Australia, Aboriginal women were not working as nurses and there are many reasons for this, yet the creative narrative changes this by depicting an Aboriginal woman as highly educated, employed and accomplished. Miriyam Freedel is an extension of this diametrical difference between actual history and the Uchronic world inherent to the creative narrative, though Miri is a few steps up on the socio-economic scale and not part of the working classes. The upward trajectory of Indigenous women is a primary focus for the creative narrative, providing motivational thrust to this feature of Uchronic fiction as it relates to the both the image of women and to the reconfigured image of Indigenous people.

³⁹⁸ The Jews who come to Australia in the creative narrative are not spared this crucial aspect of British colonisation. As Rabbi Stintston laments, many Jews—himself included—were forced to change their names as an attempt to overtly Anglicise an otherwise Judeo-European-sounding name.

³⁹⁹ Muller, 203.

A question regarding the use of the name “Mary” to identify various Aboriginal women depicted in the creative narrative was raised: “When is renaming aboriginal [*sic*] people with Western names such as ‘Mary’ demeaning and when is it not demeaning? Are the Jewish names of Miriyam and her two daughters demeaning or not, given that she is aborigine [*sic*]?”⁴⁰⁰

First, the issue of the name “Mary”: the fact that all the Aboriginal women in *The Jew Lizard Suite* are named Mary prior to Parts Three and Four highlights the notion that arbitrarily changing someone’s Indigenous name for an English one could be viewed as a demeaning form of colonization; the Vicar’s flippant remark toward the end of Part One—“they called all the black women ‘Mary’”—is certainly meant to indicate that.⁴⁰¹ The Vicar is, after all, depicted lusting over a black woman in that scene and that black woman—so the Vicar’s flippancy suggests—is no doubt indistinguishable to him from any other black woman. This scene was included in the creative narrative in an effort to maintain an element of consistency with Australian history in a way that simultaneously satirizes this particular aspect of British colonization in Australia.

In regards to the name “Miriya” and whether or not this name change is demeaning; the short answer is no, it is not demeaning: “Mary” likely chose the name “Miri” on her own volition as part of her decision to convert to the Jewish religion sometime prior to her initial appearance in Part Three. In modern Jewish culture, when someone who is decidedly not Jewish—an Aboriginal woman arbitrarily named “Mary”, for example—chooses to convert to Judaism, it is quite common for the convert to choose a Hebrew name as part of their conversion process.⁴⁰² A Jewish convert originally named Geraldine might, upon her conversion to Judaism, select the Hebrew name Gila or Gilda to indicate her transition from non-Jew to Jew.⁴⁰³ The precedence for a name change of this sort is derived from that iconic moment in Genesis where God changes Jacob’s name to Israel; today many Jewish converts, in a similar vein, also change their names, often retaining similar letters from one language to the next in a manner similar to “Miri” who, it ought to be imagined, is motivated to convert to Judaism for many reasons, one of which is the desire on Baron’s part to marry a Jewish woman.

⁴⁰⁰ This question is taken from the examiner’s report from Professor Chris Palmer of Latrobe University in Bundoora.

⁴⁰¹ Muller, 203.

⁴⁰² Alfred J. Kolatch. *The Second Jewish Book of Why* (New York: Jonathan David, 2000).

⁴⁰³ This in fact what the author’s mother—Gerri Muller—did when she converted to Judaism prior to marrying my Jewish father, Steven Muller.

The Jewish women depicted in the creative narrative are Liesel Freedel, Risa Morose, Lydia Shlepkoff and Freycha Dubecheck. Two of these women are mothers, one of whom lied for years regarding her son's paternity, the third is depicted as incompetent and "air-headed", while the fourth boasts about home-wrecking "a loveless marriage."⁴⁰⁴ Liesel Freedel is arguably the most pathetic of these three Jewish women. Burdened by guilt, Liesel blames herself for the loss of her first-born son, a loss she is unable to get over. Though the circumstances of her demise are not explicitly revealed, she grows increasingly despondent until she disappears from the narrative some time after Part Three. In Part Four, Liesel Freedel's second-eldest son, Baron, mentions a slow mental decline on her part (at one point during Part Three he refers to Liesel as "his crazy old loon of a mother" within the context of inner monologue). This is reminiscent of the penchant in Australian literature for women to lose track of their mental faculties when relocated to the Australian bush, particularly in the stories and vignettes of Henry Lawson. In the case of Liesel Freedel, a compelling back story provides some context as to *why* she experiences emotional distress that would, in turn, be exacerbated by the realities of life in a new and different geographical setting.

One of Liesel Freedel's contemporaries is Risa Morose, mother of Felix Morose. Risa is the neglected and abused wife of Maxim Morose. She does not occupy a large part in the creative narrative, yet her lingering impression is that of a woman who, in her husband's words, "slept" her way across the Ukrainian frontier and on to the boats en route to Australia via Mauritius.⁴⁰⁵ Despite this limited role, Risa has a purpose: to muddy up—for lack of a better term—the depth of Felix Morose's Jewish patriarchal roots. This is important, as it can be argued that Felix Morose is a less-than-honourable person and "not a *mensh*."⁴⁰⁶ Some doubt about Felix's patriarchal link to Judaism is necessary to further complicate his genealogical—that is to say Judaic—back story. Risa Morose is cast into the role of woman ready and eager to get pregnant to gain "priority status" at the boats leaving for Australia only to then lie to her husband for over a decade about his role in fathering someone else's child. The scene in which Risa admits this to her husband in Part Two is dramatic but, after that, Risa Morose is only seen once again before she disappears from the narrative ahead of Part Three.

⁴⁰⁴ Muller, 386 (appendices).

⁴⁰⁵ Muller, 237.

⁴⁰⁶ *ibid*, 214.

Lydia Shlepkoff, another Jewish woman, is one of many witnesses called to testify at the Royal Commission in Part Four. The four commissioners—Gresley Drummond Clarkson, John Angus Limmo, Trevor Worland and Vincent Bennett—were expecting her, and this is indicated by the fact that they refer to their notes and to previous testimony through which she has been implicated. Many of the questions posed to her by the members of the Royal Commission are prepared in advance, but what is *not* expected are Lydia's responses; sometimes she answers "yes" to questions that the commissioners, who act like prosecutors, expect her to say "no" to, creating a sense of confusion among the justices. Lydia Shlepkoff is depicted as a flighty, "air-headed" woman yet she serves a purpose: to cast doubt on the validity of some of the evidence and accusations leveled against Felix Morose as part of the Royal Commission in Part Four. Felix Morose later orders his attorney, Ruben Spike, to "come at her" from "the angle" of "disgruntled former employee," insisting he wants "her discredited. Make it look like she's a compulsive, pathological liar who was bad at her shitty little job."⁴⁰⁷ She is not a credible witness and her testimony in Part Four is meant to be comical but, more importantly, she also enables a shred of doubt, though not a reasonable one, to cloud over the accusations leveled against Felix Morose.⁴⁰⁸

Freycha Dubecheck, on the other hand, is a slovenly mistress, a "whore" in the words of Rabbi Stintston, who boasts about breaking up "an otherwise unhappy and loveless marriage."⁴⁰⁹ Her name itself is indicative of her characterisation: the name "Freycha" (i.e. "פֿרֶיכאַ") is a transliteration of a Hebrew moniker for a female "bogan," to use a term from Australian slang, while her surname, "Dubecheck", is an Anglicised version of a presumably more Jewish and European-sounding name of—and here's the pun—*dubious* origin. "Dubecheck" sounds similar to "dubious," as is her claim that "she was the other woman in Felix Morose's life."⁴¹⁰

The images of Jewish women in the creative narrative are diverse: one Jewish woman loses her child only to collapse emotionally, another lies to her husband about the paternity of

⁴⁰⁷ Muller, 372 (appendices).

⁴⁰⁸ A brief note on the surname "Shlepkoff": the first half of Lydia's surname is taken from the Yiddish word "*to schlep*" as in "Lydia *schlepped* a bag of money over to the Durack City Airport Hilton." There are four Royal Commissioners in Part Four. Two of these four Royal Commissioners—Gresley Drummond Clarkson and John Angus Limmo—were actual Royal Commissioners active in the late 1970s. The other two Royal Commissioners portrayed in Part Four—Trevor Worland and Vincent Bennett—are fictional characters.

⁴⁰⁹ Muller, 386 (appendices).

⁴¹⁰ *ibid*, 386 (appendices).

her son, a third is depicted as incompetent while the fourth boasts about committing adultery with another woman's husband. As knotty as these images may be, they are not as negative as some of the depictions of non-Jewish and non-Aboriginal women in the creative narrative.

The first Australian woman—that is to say non-Aboriginal and non-Jewish woman—appears in the first scene of Part One: “the Missus” who is “no different from all the other white people.”⁴¹¹ In short, “the Missus” stands by as Mary is stripped and flogged by an Aboriginal tracker at the behest of white pastoralists. The Missus notices “the thin weight of Mary... [and] also the subtle bulge in her lower abdomen,”⁴¹² which implies that Mary—the first Aboriginal woman depicted in the creative narrative—is in fact pregnant despite denials from various stockmen Mary claims have “put [her] with child.”⁴¹³

The next non-Jewish and non-Aboriginal women to appear are Miss Louise and Miss Apple.⁴¹⁴ Miss Louise is depicted as ineffective but kind while Miss Apple, “grey and balding,” is shown as irate, angry and at times verbally if not physically abusive. The image so far of white, non-Jewish, non-Aboriginal women in the creative narrative is not Uchronic. Despite their largely superficial nature, the roles these white women portray are not at all inconsistent with the actual historical record. Many Christian missionaries were abusive towards Aboriginal children in much the same way as depicted in Part Two.⁴¹⁵

A major non-Jewish and non-Aboriginal woman character appears in Part Three. Mindi MacCallum Ricklesby, a “Geologist-cum-Geoscientist-cum-diamond prospector extraordinaire,”⁴¹⁶ is an Englishwoman who has ventured to the East Kimberley in search of diamonds. The name “Mindi MacCallum Ricklesby” is similar to the name “Maureen Muggeridge” who is, according to actual history, the geologist who “led the team that discovered the largest known diamond deposit—the Argyle diamond deposit—in the remote north of Western Australia.”⁴¹⁷ This is the reason this Mindi character has two Ms in her name: *Mindi*

⁴¹¹ Muller, 177.

⁴¹² *ibid*, 180.

⁴¹³ *ibid*, 178.

⁴¹⁴ A note on the names: once upon a time, the author of the creative narrative lived in the Red Centre of Australia to teach at an Aboriginal school; one of the teachers at that school in the Red Centre was named Louise. The “Apple” in “Miss Apple” is derived from the name of a physically abusive rabbi the author once met in North Carolina back in the 1980s.

⁴¹⁵ Today in Australia, many teachers working in schools in remote and rural Australia are regarded by many as “ineffective,” but that’s a topic for a different PhD.

⁴¹⁶ Muller, 292 (appendices).

⁴¹⁷ “Geologist left no stone unturned in quest for glittering **prize**”, *The Telegraph* in London/*Sydney Morning Herald*, November 26, 2010.

MacCallum Ricklesby. The surname “Ricklesby” was added for a couple of reasons: “Ricklesby” sounds English and, more notable to Part Three—where the number three is meant to recur—her name appears in a sort of “three-count.” The name “MacCallum”, in the middle there, is a direct and reverential nod to the esteemed Sir Mungo MacCallum who is part of a well-known family of Australian historians who have written extensively on Australian politics and history (indeed some of their titles are listed in the bibliography for this project).⁴¹⁸

There are some major differences between Maureen Muggeridge, who “died [in 2010] after suffering a stroke while sampling for diamonds in Napier Downs, Western Australia,”⁴¹⁹ and the Mindi character. The first difference is timing: Maureen Muggeridge first discovered “indicator minerals” in the East Kimberley region in 1976; in the creative narrative, Mindi MacCallum Ricklesby, along with Ben Prindy and Felix Morose, locates indicator minerals twelve years earlier in 1964. Based on all available information, it can be assumed that the real-life Maureen Muggeridge was a competent geologist. Mindi MacCallum Ricklesby, on the other hand, is not as competent and this depiction is a reaction and, to some degree, extension of the Barbara Barga character seen in Len Deighton’s *SS-GB*, one of the three novels discussed in the Axis Exalted category of the genre study. As mentioned previously, Barbara Barga is a poorly-developed, trite character with insipid and contradictory lines of dialogue whose death at the hands of Nazis inspires little, if any, emotional reaction from the other characters of the novel. Mindi MacCallum Ricklesby is linked to Barbara Barga in a way that intentionally problematises Mindi’s general characterisation as a somewhat haughty and inept “*British*” woman interacting with the harsh realities of the rural west Australian landscape.⁴²⁰

That interaction between British and/or English sensibilities on the one hand and the red hot continent of black Australia on the other is a recurrent theme across Australian literature—some might call it a tension—and was discussed briefly in relation to John Hooker’s *The Bush Soldiers*. In an effort to further exhibit the fecund nature of this dynamic, many iconic texts prominent in Australian literature were incorporated into the narrative sequence of Part Three, most notably *Picnic at Hanging Rock* by Joan Lindsay, *Poor Fellow My Country* by Xavier

⁴¹⁸ Gettler, *An Unpromised Land*, 113: According to Gettler, Sir Mungo MacCallum was in favour of the Kimberley Plan.

⁴¹⁹ “Geologist left no stone unturned in quest for glittering prize”, *The Telegraph* in London/*Sydney Morning Herald*, November 26, 2010.

⁴²⁰ Mindi MacCallum Ricklesby also finds a counterpart in the form of Lydia Lindbrook-Esk, one of the many women in Xavier Herbert’s *Poor Fellow My Country*.

Herbert, *Riders in the Chariot* and *Voss* by Patrick White, and *Wake in Fright* by Kenneth Cook. Excerpts and tropes from these novels were adapted into the dialogue, characterisation and settings of Part Three. As such, Mindi is depicted as condescending, racist, lustful and, like the characters in *The Bush Soldiers*, thirsty.⁴²¹ There are also several indications throughout Part Three that imply some type of sexual congress between Mindi and the two other characters who accompany her to the desert in search for diamonds. This further corrupts Mindi's characterisation, yet these potentially erotic inferences are meant to be opaque and repressed, much like the Sapphic undertones cryptically pervasive in Joan Lindsay's *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

Despite these issues, Mindi MacCallum Ricklesby is paradoxically ahead of her time. Australia in 1964, particularly remote Western Australia, had many gender barriers in place that kept women separated from men, and this is evident in the opening scenes of Part Three. In this instance, Mindi MacCallum Ricklesby charges into a pub—the Original Plenty Soak—demanding a drink from the bar. At that time in Australia, women were not allowed to drink with men at the bar and were relegated to the “Ladies Lounge,” which Mindi mistakes for “the loo” (a similar grievance is raised by the Marcia Sawtell character in *The Bush Soldiers*). She nevertheless storms across well-demarcated gender lines, later reiterating a desire on her part to skirt gender roles during the course of dialogue:

“... You see, Ben, I'm a different kind of woman now.” She locked eyes with Felix. “I'm not a woman who wishes to burden herself with the holy bonds of matrimony. Not for now, anyway. Not anymore.”⁴²²

Charging across various barriers of gender is ultimately what gets Mindi killed. In a manner similar to the Aboriginal Laws broken by the Savitra character in the climax of Xavier Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country*, Mindi enters a type of ringed arena where, according to local Aboriginal custom, women are likely not permitted and where the penalty for trespassing is death or, at the very least, bodily injury that could be fatal over time. Mindi vanishes from the creative narrative two-thirds of the way through Part Three and the trio of characters—Mindi, Prindy and Felix—is disrupted until replaced by another trio—Prindy, Felix and Baron—before

⁴²¹ There are over twenty references to alcohol or the consumption of alcohol in Part Three alone.

⁴²² Muller, 282 (appendices).

moving on to Part Four where the recurrent motif of the number three is replaced by the recurrent motif of the number four.

Mindi MacCallum Ricklesby is not meant to be a polarising character in the creative narrative; though tragically comic—some might call her depiction farcical—she is meant to inspire dislike in the reader, who is not supposed to be sad to see her go, the only question that lingers after her sudden disappearance: “Well, what ever happened to her?” She is, for the most part, an obnoxious woman who exacerbates the tension between England and Australia, black and white, Jew and Christian, while providing sufficient doubt regarding her geological faculties and academic-based intelligence. Her characterization intentionally suggests a contradiction akin to the type of character contradictions prevalent in the aforementioned category of Axis Exalted.

In a sharp contrast to Mindi in Part Three, Part Four introduces a woman character who was conceived as Mindi’s capable and respectable opposite. Celia Corres-Patkin is a print journalist working for *Australian Women’s Weekly* in Canberra where she covers the women’s side of Australian politics. She is tapped by her boss, the formidable Kerry Packer, to cover the Royal Commission looking into allegations of cheating in International Super Test Cricket for his Channel Nine television news and later for his twenty-four hour Packer Sports News network, also known as “PSN.”⁴²³

Before that, Celia is first seen preoccupied with the stitching of her white glove. According to Paul Barry, the author of *The Rise and Rise of Kerry Packer Uncut*, the *Australian Women’s Weekly* magazine was launched in 1933 by Kerry Packer’s father, Sir Frank Packer.⁴²⁴ Sir Frank “installed” Alice Jackson as the editor of the *Australian Women’s Weekly* in December 1934 and together they “always insisted that [Alice’s gals] wear hats, gloves and, of course, stockings when they were out on assignment.”⁴²⁵ In the Uchronic world of the creative narrative, Kerry Packer maintains this hat and glove policy, which Celia takes umbrage to and ignores, much to Kerry Packer’s flirtatious and expletive-laced chagrin. The point of this trivial conflict over the white gloves is to depict a highly-accomplished and well-regarded professional woman quite capable of holding her own in the face of a man widely remembered for his powerful, foul-

⁴²³ In this Uchronic novel, Kerry Packer is roughly three years ahead of Ted Turner’s Cable News Network, also known as CNN, which was brought into existence in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1980. It is also intentional that “sports” appears ahead of “news”: Australians are known to care more about sport than about news, so says Donald Horne on page 28 of *The Lucky Country*: “Sport to many Australians is life and the rest a shadow.”

⁴²⁴ Paul Barry, *The Rise and Rise of Kerry Packer Uncut* (Sydney: Bantam, 2007), 33.

⁴²⁵ *ibid*, 34.

mouthed, and larger-than-life personality. Celia Corres-Patkin is meant to be a strong woman equally as formidable to her boss as her boss is to others.

It is worth digressing briefly to discuss the name “Celia Corres-Patkin”; the surname “Corres-Patkin” was not chosen at random but was put together for two reasons: first, “Corres-Patkin” sounds similar to “correspondent”, which is reflective of Celia’s role in Part Four. Second, the “Patkin” half of the hyphenated surname is similar to the surname of Aaron Patkin, a prominent “Australian Zionist Scholar” who founded the Mount Scopus College in Melbourne in 1948.⁴²⁶ Aaron Patkin, it ought to be recalled, writes a “diatribe” that appears as an op-ed article in a newspaper in Part One of the creative narrative. As actual history relates, Patkin, a prominent and well known Jewish Zionist, was firmly against the Kimberley Plan⁴²⁷ and the content of his article in Part One reflects this, but what is not explained is how or why or, for that matter, even *if* Celia—in Part Four—is related to him aside from a similarity in surname, leaving the reader ample space for speculation regarding this connection or lack thereof.⁴²⁸

As a character, Celia Corres-Patkin also provides a type of narration of the intricate cricket-bribery-and-betting-scandal at the heart of the Royal Commission in Part Four, which is precisely the function of her role as it pertains to the brief two-page sequence taking place in the Australian Capital Territory in 1977.⁴²⁹ She later travels to Durack City to interview people claiming to know “the mysterious Felix Morose.”⁴³⁰ While on location, Celia meets with and interviews Rabbi Jacob Esau Stintston, who was last seen in the narrative twenty-odd years earlier in Part Two. Rabbi Stintston reveals various aspects of the local alternate history inherent to the creative narrative. For example, the Stolen Generations—wherein the Government of Australia sanctioned the forced removal of part-Aboriginal children—is aired as a grievance by the Rabbi during his television interview.⁴³¹ The Rabbi further implies that once the Jews took over, they put a stop to that practice; by 1975, for instance, the half-Aboriginal half-Jewish offspring of Baron and Miri Freedel—Rifkah, Devorah, Daniel and Little Kurt—are *not* forcibly

⁴²⁶ “Dr Aaron Patkin, Australian Zionist Scholar, Dies in Melbourne, was 76,” *The JTA- Jewish Telegraph Agency*, 2012: “Dr Aaron Patkin, Australian Zionist Scholar, Dies in Melbourne, was 76.” JS Levi, adb.anu.edu.au (The Australian Dictionary of Biography), accessed December 1, 2013 (but dated November 16, 1950).

⁴²⁷ Aaron Patkin, “Jewish Immigration to Australia: Its Obvious Problems and Its Equally Obvious Difficulties,” *Australian Jewish Herald*, March 24, 1938, pages 6-7.

⁴²⁸ As for the first name “Celia,” the author has a good friend named Celia and thus borrowed the name “from New York”

⁴²⁹ Muller, 357-358 (appendices).

⁴³⁰ *ibid*, 386 (appendices).

⁴³¹ An “*averah*”, in the rabbi’s Judaic words, is a transgression or sin against other people and/or God.

removed from their home to be raised as wards of the state, which indicates a disruption of forced removals; that is to say, the Stolen Generations *stop* in the East Kimberley region sometime well before the 1970s (though it is implied in the first vignette of Part Five that this is not the case in other parts of Australia). Though much of the Rabbi's interview is a drunken invective, several details of the alternate history as it pertains to local history are revealed and it is Celia Corres-Patkin, the television news "correspondent," who enables these revelations. Independent, professional, strong, capable and competent, the characterisation of Celia Corres-Patkin is all of these and more, yet those attributes are theoretically undermined by "the Rabbi's parting shot":

"Actually, sir," now she got up, "I'm not married."
"I know, and at this rate," the Rabbi leered at her, "I don't think you ever will be."
Celia Corres-Patkin was stung by this statement and she fell instantly into a mild, but finite state of shock.

This "parting shot," and Celia's reaction to it, are meant to complicate but not problematise her image as an independent, professional, strong and competent woman.⁴³² The largesse of Celia's role is that of a correspondent reporting on the events as they happen, albeit with a capable personality buttressed by a prominent back story that includes a famous Australian: Kerry Packer.

The Info-Dump and the Detective Narrative Format in the Creative Narrative

In the previous category of Israel Endangered, the direct revelation of an alternate world history was discussed in relation to Michael Chabon's *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, in particular the scene in Chapter Five where the status of the State of Israel is directly revealed in the back story of a somewhat minor, though not unimportant character. In comparison, the creative narrative that accompanies this research avoids the direct revelation, also known as the "info-dump," of an alternate world history at all costs, though this might change as the narrative develops.*

⁴³² Incidentally, it is later revealed elliptically that Celia Corres-Patkin gets married; she marries her cameraman and becomes "Celia Mansfield" somewhere between Parts Four and Five.

* Indeed it did change with the development of Part Six in Atlanta during the northern summer of 2016.

For the genre study, the creative narrative that accompanies this research could be placed in the same category as *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* but in contrast to Chabon's entry, the creative narrative does not involve any sort of detective narrative, though one could argue that some elements of the detective narrative format—mainly the process of discovery—are factors in some sections of Part Four. There is a nuanced question attributable to the Israel Endangered category that can similarly be applied to the creative narrative: what happens to Israel?

As stated previously, there is speculation in Part Four that Israel used “low yield tactical nuclear devices” to make the Egyptian Third Army “disappear” in the wake of losing Jerusalem to the Jordanians sometime in the mid- to late-1970s. The character of “Siggy”, the *au pair* of Sephardic origin in Part Four, indicates that some Israelis are living and working in Australia as refugees, which implies Israel's ability to win wars against her Arab neighbours from 1967 onwards is not as formidable in this Uchronic version of history, yet specific details regarding this particular alteration of actual history are not revealed at any point during the narrative.

The Political Agenda in the Creative Narrative

As a Uchronic novel, the creative narrative not only interacts with Australian history by reversing Australia's failure to implement Dr I.N. Steinberg's Kimberley Plan, thereby depicting an alternate, Uchronic history of Australia, but also with Australian literature, politics, culture and sport. For instance, though the creative narrative is an original work of fiction, various story elements contain allusions to canonical works of Australian literature in order to highlight and emphasize the important role Australian literature can play in terms of the cultural formation of an Australian national identity.⁴³³ The plausibility with which certain aspects of Australia are presented provides a platform for changing some but not all of these aspects for the sake of a new, Uchronic narrative. The demonstration of this is the alternate version of Australia revealed elliptically in the Uchronic narrative that accompanies this research.

The creative narrative is primarily focused on a different outcome to the Kimberley Plan.

⁴³³ Including but certainly not limited to *The Children's Bach* by Helen Garner, *Power Without Glory* by Frank Hardy, *That Deadman Dance* by Kim Scott, *Carpentaria* by Alexis Wright, *The Twyborn Affair* by Patrick White, *And the Ass Saw the Angel* by Nick Cave, *Remembering Babylon* by David Malouf, *My Place* by Sally Morgan, *Jasper Jones* by Craig Silvey, *The Secret River* by Kate Grenville, *To the Islands* by Randolph Stow, *A Fraction of the Whole* by Steve Toltz, *The Drover's Wife and Other Stories* by Henry Lawson as well as Nevil Shute's *In the Wet*, *A Town Called Alice*, *On the Beach* and *Beyond the Black Stump*, among many others.

For this reason, the creative narrative depicts a Uchronic world in which the generationally detrimental effects of the Holocaust are significantly downgraded in a manner similar to *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* by Michael Chabon. For example, instead of six million Jews, only two million perish at the hands of the Nazis, leaving the remaining four million to scatter across the globe with the vast majority of them coming to the East Kimberley region of Western Australia. The author of the creative narrative is both Jewish and Israeli—but *not* Australian—and it is not uncommon for some Jewish writers to imagine without lamentation or romantic sentimentality what the world could have been like had the Holocaust been prevented or mitigated. In that regard, the creative narrative is a Uchronic novel that envisions such a world, but this in and of itself is *not* a political agenda.

In order to reverse the history of Australia's failure to implement Dr I.N. Steinberg's Kimberley Plan, actual history was critically studied to determine the reasons for its rejection, focusing on the potential role of anti-Semitism, latent or otherwise, in the demise of that scheme. It is possible to argue, for example, that anti-Semitism played a small and possible role in the demise of the Kimberley Plan. The creative narrative also reconfigures the image of Indigenous Australians native to the East Kimberley region in keeping with this particular feature of the Uchronic genre. In reconfiguring the image of the Doolboong people, the process of research and discovery has since produced the largely undocumented oral history of the Doolboong which is, of course, altered completely for the creative narrative. The sudden influx of European Jewry in the creative narrative, for instance, not only changes the trajectory of local Aboriginal people in the East Kimberley region, but also places both Jews and Aboriginal Australians at the forefront of economic development as it relates to mineral exploration and mining, which is emblematic of the reconfigured image of Indigenous people, an important feature of Uchronic fiction and a vital component of the creative narrative that accompanies this research.

These two seemingly discordant topics—the failure of the Kimberley Plan and the reconfigured image of Indigenous Australia—are brought together in the creative narrative. The Uchronic narrative presents a version of Aboriginal Australia that prospers as a direct result of the influx of European Jewry during the 1940s and 1950s. This reconfigured image of Indigenous Australia includes the depiction of Aboriginal women working as nurses in the East

Kimberley region as early as 1975, which is, in turn, an indirect extension of the cessation of forced removals of part-Aboriginal children earlier in the narrative. The Doolboong in particular, the Aboriginal group located near Wyndham in Western Australia, are, in the creative narrative, many things—including wealthy and healthy—but certainly not extinct.⁴³⁴ These types of depictions reconfigure the image of Indigenous Australians in the East Kimberley region in comparison to their current status.

Finally, this research and the discussion surrounding these different topics is meant to prepare the reader for the creative narrative, a new Uchronic novel that depicts an alternate history of the Kimberley Plan which, in turn, presents both an alternate history of Aboriginal people in that region as well as an alternate history of Australia in general. Part One of the creative narrative, for example, envisions a primary point of historic divergence—the sudden and untimely death of Joseph Carrodus—which in turn results in a completely different version of Australia from that which actually exists. This Uchronic version of Australia's failure to implement Dr I.N. Steinberg's Kimberley Plan is, as a result, wholly different from, yet not necessarily any better or worse than actual reality. For instance, notions of stability in Australian federal politics are addressed in this alternate version of Australia: “hung parliaments” are truly rare in Australia at the federal level, (there have only been two hung parliaments in Australian federal history, the first in 1940, the second in 2010⁴³⁵) but in Part Four of the creative narrative, it is suggested that hung parliaments are instead normal and frequent.⁴³⁶

This alternate history also implicates the concept of Australia's identity as an immigrant nation: though Australia is a multi-cultural society, several additional ethnic groups—Sephardic Israeli Jews, people from Macau as well as “mixed-race Afghanis, Greeks, Turks, Melanesians, Polynesians, Pashtuns, Gujaratis and Levantines,”⁴³⁷ among several others—are depicted throughout the creative narrative as immigrants to Australia, particularly in Parts Four and Five, thereby envisioning a more inclusive version of Australia that is home to a wider array of immigrants following what is presumably a precedent-setting decision to approve the Kimberley Plan in the 1940s, which takes place “off the page”, so to speak, during Part One. The important

⁴³⁴ It is important to remember that extensive research as undertaken to determine the current status of the Doolboong today and is discussed in the addendum.

⁴³⁵ Matthew Liddy. “Australia's hung Parliament explained,” ABC News online, updated November 17, 2011. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-08-23/australias-hung-parliament-explained/954880>

⁴³⁶ Muller, 422 (appendices).

⁴³⁷ Muller, Part Five (not included in appendices).

cultural role of sport in Australia is likewise altered in the creative narrative and is, as Part Four indicates, linked to the reconfigured image of Indigenous people in Uchronic fiction. Though some might dismiss this Uchronic version of Australia as a speculative and useless “parlour game,”⁴³⁸ the fact is “the business of imaging such counterfactuals is a vital part of the way in which we learn.”⁴³⁹

Genre Study Conclusion

The objective of this research has been to address the following questions: why was the Kimberley Plan rejected; what could Australia have looked like had the Australian government approved the plan and, in terms of creative writing, to explore and demonstrate the recurrent features of a Uchronic, alternate history novel, the “poetics”, in other words, that define this particular genre. As noted by Chapman and Yoke, these “poetics” have never been satisfactorily developed nor defined prior to this research. As a result, this thesis defines the Uchronic genre by, first and foremost, naming it and by exploring the recurrent features of the genre according to story-based themes. This exploration has influenced the development of the creative narrative that accompanies this research, which is an emblematic demonstration of the framework used to discuss the Uchronic genre. While this thesis is meant to acquaint any newcomer to the genre with the recurrent features of Uchronic fiction in preparation for reading the creative narrative, it is important to again note that these features are, as mentioned earlier, recurrent and not solid or fixed.

It has been raised as a concern that the thematic framework driving this research cherry-picks various trends and features recurrent to the Uchronic genre. There is of course the “perception... that anything may represent everything as long as [it is framed within] a suitable interpretive context.”⁴⁴⁰ “The problem with finding patterns,” writes Jodie Archer and Matthew L. Jockers in *The Bestselling Code: Anatomy of a Blockbuster Novel*, “is that if you want to find them you very often will.”⁴⁴¹ According to Claude Bermond, author of “Concept and Theme,”

⁴³⁸ E.H. Carr, *What Is History?*, New York: 1961, page 127, (Chapter Four): “One can always play a parlour game with the might-have-beens of history.”

⁴³⁹ Ferguson, *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals*, 2.

⁴⁴⁰ Menachem Brinker, “Theme and Interpretation,” in *The Return of Thematic Criticism*, edited by Werner Sollors (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 33.

⁴⁴¹ Archer, Jodie, and Matthew L. Jockers, *The Bestseller Code*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 2016), 148.

“literary critics... have received from the gods the... mesmerizing... power to make every text they lay their hands on channel the... message they want to hear. Our gaze,” in other words, changes “texts into what we desire them to be,”⁴⁴² yet the “quest for... themes... is always a quest for something that is not unique to [a] specific work.”⁴⁴³ After all, “we frequently wish to sort or classify documents according to their similarity”⁴⁴⁴ and “we often group together texts... according to their themes with different aims in mind.”⁴⁴⁵ In this case, the aims are clearly explained: to define the recurrent features—the poetics—of the Uchronic genre exemplified across key Uchronic texts and to illuminate “the creative process... by analyzing [those works]... by placing [them] into a chain of texts”⁴⁴⁶ This thematic framework then demonstrates the creative use of these poetics in crafting a new Uchronic novel premised on a different outcome to the Kimberley Plan. This thematic framework, coupled with the historic discussions appearing in the addendum, provides an “infrastructure” to both the presentation of the research and to the “story” taking place in the creative narrative that follows.⁴⁴⁷

In terms of the thematic framework utilized here to discuss the various features of Uchronic fiction, it is first of all a given that “the audience need[s] to understand numerous things [regarding the] connection” between actual history and the alternate history depicted in a Uchronic novel “in order to respond... to its reversals and recognitions.”⁴⁴⁸ Uchronic alternate history narratives “set in imaginary... worlds in which history has taken a broadly different course are quite demanding both for the author and reader... [as] they require... some familiarity with actual history.”⁴⁴⁹ In regards to Uchronic fiction and the hitherto undefined poetics of the genre, previous scholarship into alternate history narratives has as a starting point—a ground zero, so to speak—the point of historic divergence.⁴⁵⁰ From then on, the poetics for the alternate history genre are undetermined, yet if one examines a large scope of alternate history novels, one

⁴⁴² Thomas Pavel, “Thematics and Historical Evidence,” in *The Return of Thematic Criticism*, edited by Werner Sollors (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 121.

⁴⁴³ Brinker, “Theme and Interpretation,” 21.

⁴⁴⁴ Archer and Jockers, *The Bestseller Code*, 25.

⁴⁴⁵ Brinker, “Theme and Interpretation,” 21.

⁴⁴⁶ Raymond Trousson, “Reflections of *Stoffgeschichte*,” in *The Return of Thematic Criticism*, edited by Werner Sollors (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 290.

⁴⁴⁷ Brinker, “Theme and Interpretation,” 23.

⁴⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 30.

⁴⁴⁹ William Gibson, “Introduction,” in *The Alteration* by Kingsley Amis (New York: New York Review Books, 1976), viii.

⁴⁵⁰ As stated on page 6 of this thesis, previous alternate history scholars such as Steven Silver, Karen Hellekson along with Andrew Roberts, Edgar Chapman, Carl Yoke, Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, and Edgar Vernon McKnight, have consistently referred to the point of historic divergence as “the point of divergence,” omitting the word “historic.”

will see a series of recurrent features that in one way or another appear in some form or other across different Uchronic texts depicting different Uchronic scenarios. Although it is “an impressive novelty” for “literary texts [to] obey... conventions... described in abstract terms,” this thesis demonstrates that the Uchronic narratives discussed here do in fact “obey... conventions... described in abstract terms” according to a framework that “group[s] together”⁴⁵¹ “models of ... thematic interpretations.”⁴⁵² When these conventions—features—are subsequently itemized and extrapolated empirically and out of immediate narrative context, a set of poetics for the genre soon emerges. These poetics, in turn, enable a definition for the Uchronic genre that is, as a result, broadly applicable to any Uchronic alternate history narrative.

The academic research included in this dissertation identifies for the first time many of the Uchronic features inherent to the creative narrative whilst also critically examining some of the reasons why the Australian government rejected the Kimberley Plan, which is itself a footnote in Australian history. This research also establishes for the first time the little known and largely undocumented oral history of the Doolboong people, an Aboriginal group in the East Kimberley region previously and erroneously believed to be extinct. Most importantly, and in specific regard to creative writing, this thesis develops a set of “poetics” that defines the Uchronic, alternate history genre. This definition is embodied in the new six part Uchronic novel that follows this thesis.

This research began with a genre study that discussed the recurrent features of Uchronic fiction according to different Uchronic narratives. Serving as an introduction, the first category of the genre study, *Axis Exalted*, utilized a specific framework which itemized the recurrent features of the Uchronic genre as they appeared in alternate history narratives based on a Nazi triumph during World War Two. Terms such as the point of historic divergence, the elliptical or direct revelation of an alternate world history, the detective narrative format, the rectification of history, the reconfigured image of Indigenous peoples as well as the image of women and the political agenda in writing Uchronic fiction, were introduced in this category of the genre study and defined according to where and how they were depicted in different narratives linked together by theme. Also discussed in this category, and in all subsequent categories of the genre

⁴⁵¹ Brinker, “Theme and Introduction,” 22.

⁴⁵² *ibid*, 30.

study, was where and how these Uchronic examples influenced the development of the creative narrative that accompanies this research.

The second category of the genre study, *Israel Endangered*, focused on Uchronic narratives premised on different outcomes for the Jewish people in the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. This category provided specific examples that exhibit the difference between the elliptical revelation of an alternate world history in contrast to the direct as well as the occasional role the rectification of history can sometimes play in Uchronic fiction. Though only mentioned briefly in the introduction, this second category expands the discussion regarding the reconfigured image of Indigenous people, which is an important part of Uchronic fiction and, as a result, a central aspect of the creative narrative that accompanies this research.

The final category of the genre study focused on Uchronic narratives depicting alternate histories of Australia, two of which were based on Australia's fixation regarding Asian Invasion. This category is followed by two addenda, the first of which critically examines Australia's failure to implement Dr I.N. Steinberg's Kimberley Plan by focusing on the biographies of various government officials and also on the published reactions of various Jewish community leaders in Australia in an attempt to determine the potential role of anti-Semitism in the demise of that scheme. The second addendum reveals the largely unknown oral history of the Doolboong people, which is important due to the fact that the creative narrative reconfigures the image of the Doolboong in a manner somewhat inconsistent with their current and presumed status as an "extinct" people.

Both this research and the creative narrative tell a story by interacting with history and, as Toni Morrison states in her novel *Jazz*, sometimes history is something "you have to figure in before you can figure it out."⁴⁵³ This is precisely what this research has attempted to provide: a set of "poetics" for the Uchronic alternate history genre that is now "in use," so to speak, in the creative narrative that accompanies this research. This thesis seeks to define by way of example the undeveloped poetics of the Uchronic genre whilst also providing additional information about Australia's failure to implement Dr I.N. Steinberg's Kimberley Plan and, by extension, the status of the Doolbong people as it relates to this example of Uchronic fiction.

⁴⁵³ Toni Morrison, *Jazz* (London: Vintage, 2005), 228.

The Jew Lizard Suite: A Uchronic Novel in Six Parts is episodic, yet cumulative. The narrative begins with Part One: The Jew Lizard. Covering a sixteen year period from 1935 to 1951, Part One contains the primary point of historic divergence: the sudden and untimely death of Joseph Carrodus, who is trampled to death by a horse early in the narrative. A secondary point of historic divergence is also revealed in Part One: the migration of the Eastern Bearded Dragon—also known as the Jew lizard—across the Top End from Cape York Peninsula in Queensland to the Kimberley region in Western Australia. Part One not only depicts a primary point of historic divergence, but also the immediate, short-term effects of that break from actual history, which leads into Part Two. Incidentally, as the title of the creative narrative indicates, the image of the Jew lizard recurs throughout *all* sections of the novel.

Part Two covers a three year period starting in 1953. In this part of the creative narrative, the main characters—main in the sense that their interactions as children have major impacts on later storylines—are introduced. Part Two also includes an elaborate initiation/circumcision scene, which is interspersed with the imagery of a Jewish *bar mitzvah* ceremony. An aspect of the framing element is the basic notion of a generic similarity between two wildly different belief systems: Jewish Law and Aboriginal Law. The narrative sequence in Part Two is meant to depict the development of a naturally-occurring accommodation between two very diverse groups as it starts on a very small, local level.

Part Three: Diamonds! takes place in the mid-1960s. A motif of Part Three is in fact the number three, which is hidden within that section of the novel. Part Three, in short, develops some of the storylines lingering after Part Two, injecting—by way of the aforementioned Mindi MacCallum Ricklesby character—a seminal dose of tension that appears to remain unresolved, despite the implications this casts over the rest of the novel. Part Three also includes a steamy dream sequence that borrows heavily from the written works of Xavier Herbert, Joan Lindsay and Kenneth Cook, among others.

Part Four: Once Upon A Time, A Cricket Match is devoted to the elliptical revelation of an alternate world history and to the reconfigured image of Indigenous people. To summarize, parts of the alternate world history elliptically revealed in Part Four include an alternate version of a British Empire that uses atomic weapons against Germany during the Second World War and retains, in some capacity, some type of cultural and political control over its non-

independent colonies. Part Four is also notable because it depicts a reconfigured image of Indigenous people, especially the portrayal of black women, as evidenced by the Miriyam Freedel character and the half-Jewish, half-Aboriginal household she leads as wife and mother.

Part Five: God-Fearing Sabbath-Keepers borrows heavily from David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* and from the Hebrew Bible, particularly the Book of Judges, and from the pre-messianic saga of Elijah. Taking the form of five, interconnected vignettes, Part Five also contains various tropes typically found in pre-Biblical, somewhat archetypal Hebrew mythology, which is exhibited in the overlap between the ominous presence of a "Leviathan" and similar though different concepts of the Rainbow Serpent in some, but not all, Aboriginal belief systems. Put another way, Part Five—which begins in 1986—shows how and where Aboriginal cosmology intersects with diasporic Judaism.

Part Six: The Cyclones and Batsheva, is currently in production in Atlanta. Intended as the climax of the novel, Part Six will bring together the various story threads presented in earlier sections by focusing on the character of Batsheva, a mixed-race, Jewish-Aboriginal girl who, in her latent youth, plays an important role in the overall physical health of another character with far-reaching and potentially controversial implications not only for the Aboriginal community but also for the Jewish world as well. Part Six will also address issues of urbanization and the effects this has on climate change and the local, East Kimberley flora and fauna. More importantly, Part Six will make a serious and direct attempt at resolving previously unresolved storylines stemming from earlier parts of the narrative. Part Six begins in 1997 and will continue right through to the current era and beyond, thereby depicting, to some degree, the "future" or, as some Jews prefer to call it, "*Ha'Olam Ha'Bah*"—"the World to Come"—however, this present "future," as it were, may not necessarily be any better or worse than our current era in actual history.

The creative narrative that accompanies this research follows the addenda. The first two parts of the creative narrative—Part One: The Jew Lizard and Part Two: Across the Road—are included in this dissertation. Part Three: Diamonds! appears in appendices, along with Part Four: Once Upon A Time, A Cricket Match. The reason for this split is two-fold: first, word count limitations prevent the inclusion of the entire novel and, second, this gives the examiner the option to continue reading the creative narrative beyond the bound copy of the dissertation. The

last two parts of the novel—Part Five: God-Fearing Sabbath-Keepers and Part Six: The Cyclones and Batsheva—are currently in production in Atlanta and, for that reason, not included in this set of appendices. On the advice of one of the two PhD examiners, a type of epilogue was drafted in Atlanta. This epilogue has been written alongside the ongoing development of Part Six: The Cyclones and Batsheva, the concluding section of the creative narrative that accompanies this research.⁴⁵⁴

“The Apocrypha” is in general an homage to the “Afterword: October 2001” epilogue at the end of John A Scott’s *N*, which takes a giant leap forward from 1945 to 2001 in the span of a single page. “The Apocrypha”, which could be placed at either the end of Part Two, where it might seem overly cryptic at best, or at the end of Part Three, the author’s preference, takes a similar leap forward from either 1957 to 1997 if placed at the end of Part Two, or from 1965 to 1997 if placed at the end of Part Three.⁴⁵⁵ Like Scott’s “Afterword” in *N*, “The Apocrypha” is intentionally esoteric, yet the ten odd pages of “The Prologue to Part Six” in one way or another reference some of the major plot points taking place throughout Parts Three, Four, Five and Six of *The Jew Lizard Suite*. “The Apocrypha”, by definition, also leaves out large swaths of creative narrative. The nature of the relationship between Dingo and Batsheva, for example, is not entirely clear as depicted in this epilogue, nor is it meant to be; this relationship is instead thoroughly explored in Part Six of the creative narrative. On that note, the final moment in “The Apocrypha” is deliberately reflective of a similar scene depicted in a type of dreamtime dream sequence appearing in Part Six. This lends credence to the notion that “The Apocrypha” is, on one hand, a prologue to events mostly taking place in Parts Six but also, on the other hand, a short companion piece to *The Jew Lizard Suite* in general and Part Six in particular. When placed at the end of Part Two, as was suggested, or at the end of Part Three, as preferred by the author, “The Prologue to Part Six” can also, on some level, function as an abrupt epilogue to an otherwise sprawling narrative.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁴ At the moment, “The Apocrypha: The Prologue to Part Six” appears at the end of Part Two: Across the Road ahead of the appendices. It is not known yet if this “Prologue” will be part of the final novel. Maybe this “Prologue”, for the sake of discussion, will be placed at the start of the novel ahead of Part One; who knows? The suggestion was a great idea!

⁴⁵⁵ “The Apocrypha” within itself also takes a leap forward from 1997 to 2015.

⁴⁵⁶ A brief scene was added to the end of Part Four.

The Kimberley Plan – Why was it rejected?

“Dear Dr. Steinberg,

“I refer to previous correspondence and to your personal representations in regards to the proposed Jewish settlement in the East Kimberleys...

“As previously intimated, the Government sympathises with the serious plight of your people in Europe...

“After mature consideration of all the circumstances which had to be taken into account, however, the Government is unable to see its way to depart from the long-established policy in regard to alien settlement in Australia, and therefore cannot entertain the proposal for a group settlement of the exclusive type contemplated by the Freeland League.

“Yours truly,

“John Curtin.”⁴⁵⁷

On 15 July 1944, John Curtin, the fourteenth Prime Minister of Australia, rejected the Kimberley Plan. In his letter to Steinberg, Curtin cited an inability “to depart from... long-established policy in regard to alien settlement in Australia” as the basis for this rejection.⁴⁵⁸ Despite this, the Kimberley Plan enjoyed widespread support from many sectors of the Australian public and was widely and, in the adapted words of John Curtin, “maturedly” discussed and promoted by several well-known public opinion-makers in Australia.

In 1948, Dr Isaac Nachman Steinberg published an autobiographical account of his efforts to generate both political and public support for the Kimberley Plan. Entitled *Australia – the Unpromised Land* and written four years after Curtin’s rejection, Steinberg recalls receiving support and encouragement for the Kimberley Plan from the Durack family of Western Australia (an important development, as the Duracks were eager to sell their pastoral land to the Freeland League, thereby providing the organisation with actual territory upon which to establish a Jewish colony). Support also came from author Henrietta Drake-Brockman and from Charles Venn Pilcher, a leading Anglican bishop, as well as from the Catholic Archdioceses of every capital city, among them Daniel Mannix, the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne.⁴⁵⁹ Sir Mungo MacCallum, the patriarch of the famous MacCallum family of Australian historians, as well as

⁴⁵⁷ Isaac N Steinberg, *Australia- The Unpromised Land, In Search of a Home* (London: Victor Gollancz), 166.

⁴⁵⁸ Steinberg, *Australia- The Unpromised Land, In Search of a Home*, 166.

⁴⁵⁹ “A Land of Milk and Honey? A Jewish Settlement Proposal in the Kimberley,” Brian Wimborne, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, accessed 3 March 2016, <http://abd.anu.edu.au/essay/9/text29488>.

the *Argus*, a leading newspaper at the time, were both in favour of the Kimberley Plan, which was also endorsed by Archbishop Henry Le Fanu, the Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Perth, and Dr Howard Mowll, the Anglican Archbishop of Sydney.⁴⁶⁰ Support for the Kimberley Plan also came from Herbert Lambert, the editor of the *West Australian* newspaper, which “feted” Steinberg at a luncheon on 10 July 1939.⁴⁶¹ Steinberg also received support from John Cramsie, the head of the Australian Meat Council, and from Percy Clarey, the then-president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, “a peak union body representing almost two million Australian workers and their families.”⁴⁶² Professor Walter Murdoch, a noted Australian literary historian, was also in favour of the Kimberley Plan, claiming a large-scale Jewish colony was “Australia’s opportunity” and that “Australia would gain economically and strategically from the scheme.”⁴⁶³ In fact, so well known was the Kimberley Plan and so widespread the support it received that at one point the enthusiasm for a Jewish colony extended beyond the Australian mainland to Tasmania; both Steinberg and Leon Gettler, the author of *An Unpromised Land*, which details the history and contexts of the Kimberley Plan, tell how Sir Robert Cosgrove, the then-Premier of Tasmania, was so enamored by the idea of a large-scale Jewish colony in the East Kimberley that he approached Steinberg in person during a “conference of Premiers... in Canberra” in 1940 to declare that “Tasmania.... [is]... also interested in... a Jewish settlement.”⁴⁶⁴

The encouragement, enthusiasm and support for the Kimberley Plan seemed bountiful coming, as it did, from various Catholics, Anglicans, trade unions and intellectuals as well as

⁴⁶⁰ Gettler, Leon, Interview with Rachel Kohn, “The Kimberley Plan,” ABC National Radio, 15 January 2006; www.abc.net.au, accessed on March 19, 2016; Gettler: “You had his Anglican counterpart, Dr Howard Mowll, in Sydney, urging the government to sanction the [Kimberley Plan].”

⁴⁶¹ *ibid*, 81.

⁴⁶² *ibid* 103; and “About the ACTU,” actu.org.au, accessed March 20, 2012.

⁴⁶³ Steinberg also sought encouragement and support from the realm of Australian politics. Steinberg devotes over ten pages to his discussions with Sir Thomas Bavin, the then premier of New South Wales, wherein he swayed Sir Thomas to support the Kimberley Plan. Additional support came from Frank Wise, the Western Australian Minister for Lands, and from Aubrey Coverley, the Western Australian Minister for the North-West, both of whom served under John Willcock who, at the time, was the premier of Western Australia and was also swayed by Steinberg to support the plan, though with some notable reluctance. Charles Latham, the then-leader of the Country Party which was, at the time, the opposition in the Western Australian Legislative Assembly, also came out in favour of the scheme, as did the Australian Governor-General, Alexander Hore-Ruthven, the First Earl of Gowrie, among many notable others, as cited in Steinberg, *Australia - The Unpromised Land, In Search of a Home*, 35-37; Gettler, *An Unpromised Land*, 81-82; Dashiel Lawrence, “The Kimberley Scheme—An Unpromised Land”, (Honours Thesis, University of Melbourne, 2008), 1; Michael Astour, *History of the Freeland League* (New York: Freeland League, 1967) 429; and there is a letter from Willcock to Steinberg dated August 25, 1939, file A433, 1944/2/50, National Archives of Australia, Canberra.

⁴⁶⁴ Steinberg, *Australia- The Unpromised Land, In Search of a Home*, 128.

from a variety of state and federal politicians, yet this support was not universal. Though the Kimberley Plan received widespread support from various Australian opinion-makers, it was also met with hostility and derision by others. William Dartnell Johnson, the Western Australia Legislative Assembly member for Guildford-Midland, opposed it on humanitarian grounds while many others, “Australia’s security service” and the Postmaster-General HVC Thornby among them, were concerned with the potential security risk in allowing “refuJews” from Germany to settle in Australia while the Commonwealth, along with Britain and the Allies, was simultaneously at war with the Third Reich.⁴⁶⁵ Adolphus Peter Elkin, the famed anthropologist, was similarly opposed to the Kimberley Plan, citing a concern for the impact a Jewish settlement would have on hastening the extinction of local Aboriginal groups, which he believed was a foregone conclusion as per the government’s “smoothing the dying pillow” edicts of the day.⁴⁶⁶ As stated previously, AP Elkin is unique in that he was the only individual involved in the discussion surrounding the plan to voice concern for local Indigenous people in the East Kimberley.⁴⁶⁷ AP Elkin is doubly unique in this opposition: his father, Reuben Elkin, served as a rabbi in Auckland, New Zealand, until his parents divorced in 1901. Reuben Elkin then left New Zealand, and “Peter never saw his father again.”⁴⁶⁸ His mother died a year later and, as the Australian Dictionary of Biography indicates, Elkin was “raised as an Anglican by his maternal grandparents.”⁴⁶⁹ The fact that Elkin’s father was a rabbi who left his wife and son problematises his opposition to the Kimberley Plan, especially when set against the backdrop of the Australian Jewish response to the issue.

The Australian Jewish Response to the Kimberley Plan

According to Dashiell Lawrence, author of *The Kimberley Scheme—An Unpromised Land*, “though it was not said explicitly, a large segment of the [Australian Jewish] community and its leadership did not want *Ostjuden*, Jews from Eastern Europe” in Australia as they

⁴⁶⁵ Gettler, *An Unpromised Land*, 139: “An isolated colony of aliens in the north-west also would have been perceived as a security risk because of suspicions about aliens at the time. Nobody wanted a Nazi cell being established in the North.”

⁴⁶⁶ Isaac N. Steinberg, “What an Outrage,” *Australian Jewish Forum*, February 1945, pages 9-11; G.C. Bolton, “Aborigines in Social History: An Overview,” in *Aboriginal Sites, Rights and Resource Development*, ed. Ronald M. Berendt (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1982), 59.

⁴⁶⁷ Blakeney, *Australia and the Jewish Refugees 1933-1948*, 273.

⁴⁶⁸ Steinberg, “What an Outrage,”; Tigger Wise, “Adolphus Peter Elkin,” Australian Dictionary of Biography, accessed May 2, 2012. www.adb.anu.au/biography/elkin-adolphus-peter-10109

⁴⁶⁹ Wise, “Adolphus Peter Elkin”, Australian Dictionary of Biography.

appeared “overtly Jewish... [and were] unskilled, less affluent, less educated and more religious” than most Australian Jews and “likely to populate a large proportion of the Kimberley scheme.”⁴⁷⁰ Many other Australian Jews spoke out against the scheme publicly, pouring “scorn” on the Kimberley Plan with disdain and derision.⁴⁷¹ Two prominent Australian Jews of the era, Sir Samuel Cohen, the president of the Great Synagogue of Sydney as well as the Australian Jewish Welfare Society, and Aaron Patkin, a prominent Australian Jewish Zionist based in Melbourne, published op-ed pieces in *Truth* and the *Australian Jewish Herald* advising readers to dismiss the Kimberley Plan in light of various economic concerns and “the absorptive capacities of Australia for new immigrants.”⁴⁷²

In an article titled “Jewish Migration to Australia: Its Obvious Problems and Its Equally Obvious Difficulties,” Patkin claimed that “if the [northern part of Australia] had the climate and soils for a normal agricultural production, [then] the neighboring peoples of the Asiatic archipelago would have colonized it centuries ago.” Patkin further stated that the Kimberley Plan would “never have the support of the Australian Jewish community,” adding in a memorable quip that “the agricultural industry [of] Australia... does not require more people.”⁴⁷³ In short, “many Australian Jewish leaders were reluctant to help Jews trapped in Europe”⁴⁷⁴ with “the most outspoken critics of the Kimberley scheme... drawn from within the Australian Jewish community” where many “were suspicious of an alien colony in their midst.”⁴⁷⁵

The Jews and the Australian Government

Though “it is unclear how the [Australian Jewish community, as represented by the Australian Jewish Welfare] society... shaped Canberra’s response [to the Kimberley Plan]... there is evidence to show it at least had the ear of the Government.”⁴⁷⁶ One of the first

⁴⁷⁰ Lawrence, “The Kimberley Scheme—An Unpromised Land”, 20, 23: To say the least, the Australian Jewish response to the Kimberley Plan was perplexing and diverse with strong opinions running for and against the “scheme.” On one hand, there were Australian Jews “who were willing to stop at nothing until the safety of their European [Jewish] brethren was guaranteed,” while many others were “stubborn... weak... [or] self-interested... [forming] a ‘united front of passivity.’” Additional citation: *Australian Jewish Forum*, February 1941, 6, (as cited in Dashiell Lawrence).

⁴⁷¹ Gettler, *An Unpromised Land*, 98.

⁴⁷² Aaron Patkin, “Jewish Immigration to Australia: Its Obvious Problems and Its Equally Obvious Difficulties,” *Australian Jewish Herald*, March 24, 1938, 6-7; Gettler, *An Unpromised Land*, 95; Blakeney, *Australia and the Jewish Refugees 1933-1948*, 153.

⁴⁷³ *ibid*, 6.

⁴⁷⁴ Gettler, *An Unpromised Land*, 94.

⁴⁷⁵ Lawrence, *The Kimberley Scheme – An Unpromised Land*, 19.

⁴⁷⁶ Gettler, *An Unpromised Land*, 95.

indications of a dynamic between the Australian Jewish Establishment and the Australian Government—in particular the Secretary of the Department of the Interior—in regard to Jewish immigration to Australia dates back to “a seven page letter, written by Paul Cohen to the Department of the Interior... [which] was met with the approval of the Secretary of the Department, [Joseph] A Carrodus.”⁴⁷⁷ It is important to note that Paul Cohen was, at the time, the Honorary Co-Secretary of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society and, more importantly, the son of Sir Samuel Cohen.⁴⁷⁸

As the Australian Archives in Canberra indicate, “the Jewish establishment’s charity arm, the Australian Jewish Welfare Society,” contacted Carrodus on 27 February 1939 to demand as “a condition of entry that all refugees... become naturalized [citizens of Australia] within the requisite time.”⁴⁷⁹ That same month, the Australian Jewish Welfare Society “arranged a conference” between the “representatives of the [Australian Jewish] Welfare Committees” and Joseph Carrodus, and though the discussion was not related to the Kimberley Plan,⁴⁸⁰ what this contact indicates is a dynamic between the Australian Jewish establishment and the Secretary of the Department of the Interior. This dynamic was solidified on 1 March 1939 when “Carrodus noted that his Department should not deal with ‘any Jewish Society unless it is... approved by the [Australian] Jewish Welfare Society’” whose then-President, it bears mentioning once again, was none other than Sir Samuel Cohen.⁴⁸¹ “Post-war commentators have since claimed that Australian... Zionist leaders launched an extensive and carefully orchestrated campaign against Steinberg and his scheme.”⁴⁸² These efforts appeared successful when, in 1940 and in his capacity as Secretary of the Department of the Interior, Joseph Carrodus “sent a brief note” to the Honourable Harry Foll who, at the time, was the Minister of the Interior under Prime Minister Robert Menzies, warning him “that Steinberg had come to Australia to investigate the

⁴⁷⁷ Anne Andgel, *Fifty Years of Caring: the Australian Jewish Welfare Society 1936-1986* (Sydney: AJWS and Australian Jewish Historical Society, 1988), 28.

⁴⁷⁸ *ibid*, 4.

⁴⁷⁹ Gettler, *An Unpromised Land*, 93; and a memorandum from Joseph Carrodus dated March 1, 1939: AA: CRS A433 43/2/46, as cited in Gettler.

⁴⁸⁰ Andgel, *Fifty Years of Caring: the History of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society 1936-1986*, 31: The discussion revolved around an “increase [to] the number of [landing] permits [to be] granted directly to the [Australian Jewish Welfare] Society and, as such, had little to do with the Kimberley Plan.

⁴⁸¹ Gettler, *An Unpromised Land*, 95; and on a Joseph Carrodus memorandum dated March 1, 1939: AA: CRS 433 44/2/50, as cited in Gettler.

⁴⁸² *ibid*, 97.

Kimberley, and not to rally... the nation behind him.” This “brief note” also cited “earlier warnings... that [Dr Isaac Nachman] Steinberg was a brilliant ‘propagandist.’”⁴⁸³

While there were many people opposed to the Kimberley Plan, many of them Jewish, Steinberg nevertheless drafted his proposal, dispatching it in August of 1940 in a memorandum sent to the Australian Prime Minister at the time, Robert Menzies but, “owing to the critical stage of the European War at that moment, official decision had to be postponed.”⁴⁸⁴ The Menzies Government collapsed a year later as John Curtin, the leader of the Labor Party, swept into office. Japan declared war on the Allies in December of 1941, forcing the Curtin Government to focus their attentions on the Pacific War. Steinberg’s proposal would not be again entertained at the governmental level until 1943 when, on 28 October, “Curtin informed Steinberg that the Kimberley project had to be put in the context of post war reconstruction and that the Government had established an interdepartmental committee to examine this particular issue.”⁴⁸⁵

Nearly five months later, on 22 March 1944, the Interdepartmental Committee on Migration, which was chaired by Joseph Carrodus, the Secretary for the Department of the Interior, “began examining the proposals” where, as Gettler reports, “Carrodus... expressed doubts about the [Kimberley] scheme.”⁴⁸⁶ Carrodus, as previously indicated, corresponded with Sir Samuel Cohen, the president of both the Great Synagogue of Sydney as well as the Australian Jewish Welfare Society. Both Carrodus and Cohen were against the Kimberley Plan, Sir Samuel going so far as to pen an article entitled “Jewish Influx” to warn the readers of *Truth*, a tabloid newspaper with separate sister publications in both Melbourne and Sydney, “against any influx of a rabble of dispossessed European peoples” and to oppose any plan that would “allow hordes of refugee European peoples to flock into [Australia].”⁴⁸⁷ In such concert with prominent Australian Jews of the day, and in the words of Leon Gettler, “the role of Joseph Carrodus cannot be under-estimated”:

As the permanent head of the Department of the Interior, [Joseph Carrodus] was able to shape Government policy in areas [of] immigration.... Canberra’s refusal to accept...

⁴⁸³ Gettler, *An Unpromised Land*, 119; and a Department of the Interior memorandum, dated May 10, 1940, AA: CRS A433 44/2/50, as cited in Gettler.

⁴⁸⁴ Steinberg, *Australia- An Unpromised Land, In Search of a Home*, 154.

⁴⁸⁵ Gettler, *An Unpromised Land*, 129; AA: A433 42/2/50, as cited in Gettler.

⁴⁸⁶ *ibid*, 129.

⁴⁸⁷ Samuel Cohen, “Jewish Influx,” *Truth*, August 7, 1938.

Jewish refugees between 1936 and the end of the Second World War has been... attributed to Carrodus' unwavering stance to refuse entry.⁴⁸⁸

[Carrodus] was just as instrumental in the failure of Australian Governments, both conservative and Labor, to endorse the Kimberley scheme. From the start, Carrodus had told prime ministers and his own ministers that Steinberg's plans were unacceptable.⁴⁸⁹

In his role "as chairman of the interdepartmental committee into migration, [Carrodus] made sure the proposals were taken off the political agenda once and for all."⁴⁹⁰ As a result, "the [interdepartmental] committee rejected the [the Kimberley Plan],"⁴⁹¹ yet it took another four months for the Prime Minister to send an official letter to Steinberg rejecting the Freeland League's proposal. At the time Isaac Steinberg received this letter of rejection, John Curtin had been in office for approximately three years and eight months, yet for the sake of *this* discussion, the question must be asked: who was John Curtin?

John Curtin – Fourteenth Prime Minister of Australia

John Curtin was the fourteenth Prime Minister of Australia and is, to date, the only Australian Prime Minister to die in office; these facts are part of the known historical record.⁴⁹² John Curtin is also a revered figure in Australian history most famous for his American pivot away from Great Britain during the Second World War that, many argue, saved Australia from foreign invasion.⁴⁹³

⁴⁸⁸ Lyn Anne Redditt, "Joseph Aloysius Carrodus," Australian Dictionary of Biography, accessed May 22, 2012.

www.adb.anu.au/biography/elkin-adolphus-peter-10109: "Consolidating his position as an administrator and government adviser, [Joseph Carrodus] played a major role in developing policies on Aboriginal affairs in the Northern Territory and on the growth of the Australian Capital Territory, and was influential on immigration issues. The failure of successive federal governments to accept a large number of Jewish refugees in 1936-45 reflected Carrodus's persistent advice to refuse them entry, as much as it did the wishes of politicians. In his attitude to Jews suffering persecution in Europe, he showed a clear understanding of their circumstances, but shared the common indifference to their needs."

⁴⁸⁹ Gettler, *An Unpromised Land*, 139: According to the minutes of the Interdepartmental Committee on Migration, Joseph Carrodus believed the Kimberley Plan was "doomed to economic failure" and that this "alien" colony of Jews would "likely... develop into a new political entity which would inevitably be non-Australian in outlook"

⁴⁹⁰ *ibid*, 139; Minutes of Interdepartmental Committee on Migration, March 22, 1944, AA: A446 68/71049, as cited in Gettler.

⁴⁹¹ *ibid*, 129.

⁴⁹² Mungo MacCallum, *The Good, the Bad and the Unlikely: Australia's Prime Ministers* (Collingwood: Black Ink Press, 2012), 101.

⁴⁹³ MacCallum, *The Good, the Bad and the Unlikely: Australia's Prime Ministers*, 101; David Day, *John Curtin: A Life* (Sydney: HarperCollins Australia, 1999), 1: It is important to note that, since then, Australia has participated alongside the United States in every major American-led conflict including Vietnam, both Gulf Wars as well as the current fight against the Islamic State "death cult." (Death cult references: James Glenday, "Tony Abbott labels Islamic State a 'death cult,'" ABC Online – abc.net.au, September 1, 2014, <http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2014/s4078629.htm>; Jennifer Rajca, "Tony Abbott says Islamic State is an 'apocalyptic death cult,'" News Corp Australia, September 30, 2014, <http://www.news.com.au/national/tony-abbott-says->

Prior to becoming prime minister, the historical record indicates that John Curtin started working as a teenager in an effort to support his family after his father fell ill,⁴⁹⁴ landing a “well-paid position as an estimates clerk at the Titan Manufacturing Company in South Melbourne” in 1903.⁴⁹⁵ In 1911, John Curtin “left Titan to become secretary of the Timber Workers’ Union,” and though Curtin did “not seem to have taken an active interest in union deliberations... he marched with the union on Eight Hours Day.”⁴⁹⁶ According to David Day, author of *John Curtin: A Life*, Curtin, as “a lowly worker in a variety of jobs that he never seemed able to stick at... [Curtin] was able to witness at first hand... the oppressive working of unfettered capitalism.”⁴⁹⁷ Thusly, “it was not long before Curtin was drawn into... politics.”⁴⁹⁸

John Curtin’s life took its inevitable turn at a meeting in “a small hall in [the] East Brunswick [suburb of Melbourne during] the 1902 federal election campaign.”⁴⁹⁹ The meeting had been convened by Frank Anstey, “the Victorian State Parliament member for Bourke”⁵⁰⁰ who was, at that moment, standing as a federal Labor candidate for Brunswick.⁵⁰¹ Up until now, the seventeen-year old John “Jack” Curtin had never met the Labor candidate for Brunswick, but that all changed when Frank Anstey watched “a long-legged youth”⁵⁰² rise up to propose “the customary vote of thanks at... Anstey’s public meeting,” (though “another story has it that Curtin first came to Anstey’s notice at a meeting of the Brunswick Football Club”).⁵⁰³ Either way, that meeting “was... the beginning of the long friendship between [Frank] Anstey and [John] Curtin.”⁵⁰⁴ Anstey was “the man of the moment... [and] Curtin soon came under Anstey’s sway.”⁵⁰⁵ Irene Dowsing, author of *Curtin of Australia*, mentions “a sense of kinship” between

[islamic-state-is-an-apocalyptic-death-cult/story-fncynjr2-1227075281992](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/30/tony-abbott-intensifies-rhetoric-about-isis-calling-it-an-apocalyptic-death-cult); Daniel Hurst, “Tony Abbott intensifies rhetoric about Isis, calling it an ‘apocalyptic death cult,’” *Guardian*, September 30, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/30/tony-abbott-intensifies-rhetoric-about-isis-calling-it-an-apocalyptic-death-cult>).

⁴⁹⁴ Day, *John Curtin: A Life*, 202.

⁴⁹⁵ *ibid*, 72.

⁴⁹⁶ Day, *John Curtin: A Life*, 58; Page 9, Ross, *John Curtin: A Biography*, 9.

⁴⁹⁷ Day, *John Curtin: A Life*, 61-63

⁴⁹⁸ *ibid*, 63

⁴⁹⁹ Ross, *John Curtin: A Biography*, 12

⁵⁰⁰ *ibid*, 12

⁵⁰¹ *ibid*, 63

⁵⁰² *ibid*, 12

⁵⁰³ Day, *John Curtin: A Life*, 63-63; and the Lloyd Ross Papers, as cited in David Day.

⁵⁰⁴ *ibid*, 12

⁵⁰⁵ *ibid*, 64, 103: As a matter of course, every major biography about John Curtin as well as every reputable book focused on the history of the Australian Labor Party explicitly cites John Curtin’s relationship with Frank Anstey as a type of foundational bedrock upon which Curtin’s revered legacy blooms; Irene Dowsing, Mungo MacCallum, Michael Blakeney, Arthur Calwell,

Curtin and Anstey, while Michael Blakeney, the author of *Australia and the Jewish Refugees 1933-1948*, uses the phrase “profound influence” to describe the dynamic, adding that “the mercurial Anstey would remain central to Curtin’s life for more than three decades.”⁵⁰⁶

The question then arises: who was Frank Anstey?

Who was Frank Anstey?

“Firebrand politician” Frank Anstey is—first and foremost—principally remembered today as John Curtin’s influential personal and political mentor. Described by Lloyd Ross in *John Curtin: A Biography* as “a bizarre, gnome-like figure... [with the] stature [of] a hunchback,” Frank Anstey is defined by David Day as the “hard-drinking, hard-swearing voice of the people,” with Ross further contending Anstey “retained the outward characteristics of an illiterate seamen... he swore and got drunk,” he “hated snobbery... temperance... Puritanism... bankers, monopolists, the rich[,] the Church of Rome and the British Monarchy.”⁵⁰⁷ According to Mungo MacCallum, the author of *The Good, the Bad and the Unlikely: Australia’s Prime Ministers*, Curtin was taken “under the wing... of Frank Anstey” early on “and, as a result, Curtin became a heavy drinker, a problem which was to continue for much of his career.”⁵⁰⁸

As such, “Anstey was often a drinking companion” as “Curtin came under the influence of drink.” With “Anstey’s support,” John Curtin “became the editor of the *Westralian Worker*,” a Labor-leaning newspaper based in Western Australia, in 1917.⁵⁰⁹ It appears that “Anstey’s intervention [in landing the editor position for Curtin] was crucial;” “Anstey lobbied hard for Curtin,” whose “reputation for drinking” was whispered “against him getting the job.”⁵¹⁰ Previous to these pulled strings in Perth, it is known that a younger John Curtin “repeated Anstey’s phrases and ideas” and that he “rewrote Anstey’s pamphlets.”⁵¹¹ It therefore must

Peter Love, Norman Lee and Kim Beazley—to name only a few—note this important detail about the life and political development of the fourteenth prime minister of Australia. Lloyd Ross and David Day have penned what are considered the authoritative biographies of John Curtin; David Day claims on page 65 that “[Anstey] also seems to have been almost a surrogate father for John [Curtin]” whose same named father, it can be recalled, was incapacitated due to advanced syphilis, further detailing “the close and personal connection between young [John Curtin] and his older mentor [Frank Anstey].”

⁵⁰⁶ Blakeney, *Australia and the Jewish Refugees*, 4; Day, *John Curtin: A Life*, 64.

⁵⁰⁷ Day, *John Curtin: A Life*, 65; Ross, *John Curtin: A Biography*, 11.

⁵⁰⁸ MacCallum, *The Good, the Bad and the Unlikely: Australia’s Prime Ministers*, 102.

⁵⁰⁹ MacCallum, *The Good, the Bad and the Unlikely: Australia’s Prime Ministers*; Day, *John Curtin: A Life*, 235.

⁵¹⁰ Day, *John Curtin: A Life*, 235, 237.

⁵¹¹ Ross, *John Curtin: A Biography*, 12.

appear somewhat natural that as “a loyal friend and comrade... [John Curtin] repeatedly offered the pages of *Westralian Worker* for the propagation of Frank Anstey’s views.”⁵¹²

For example, in 1917, shortly after taking position as editor of the *Westralian Worker*, John Curtin “began to serialize Frank Anstey’s antiwar tract, *The Kingdom of Shylock*,” a text that “blamed the [First World War] on what Anstey... called ‘the money power.’” *The Kingdom of Shylock* is, more importantly, notable for “its anti-Semitic overtones.”⁵¹³ In the words of Kim Beazley, the former leader of the Labor Party and author of *John Curtin: An Atypical Labor Leader*, “Anstey’s... *Kingdom of Shylock*... [and] its incipient anti-Semitism... might have found a place among milder Nazi publications.”⁵¹⁴ To put it bluntly: Frank Anstey, John Curtin’s influential mentor, was an anti-Semite and while the biographies and, for that matter, historic record remain reticent as to whether or not John Curtin maintained similar anti-Semitic views, what is known is that while the mentor produced anti-Semitic material, the protégé—in his capacity as editor of the *Westralian Worker*—enabled its distribution.⁵¹⁵ Add to this the extensive and well-documented account of “buddy drinking” between the two and it can be presumed that Anstey, at one point or another, shared his anti-Semitic views with the young “impressionable” Curtin who, it has been said, represented to Anstey “only malleable material.”⁵¹⁶ Lloyd Ross quotes the fourteenth prime minister of Australia directly: “...of all the men who have influenced me, [Frank Anstey] influenced me the most.”⁵¹⁷

Frank Anstey was largely absent from the discussions regarding the Kimberley Plan, (in fact there are indications that he and John Curtin had a falling out sometime in 1940),⁵¹⁸ yet Anstey nevertheless “exerted the greatest influence” over Curtin.⁵¹⁹ Arthur Calwell served in Curtin’s Cabinet as Minister of Information during World War Two. In 1972, Calwell published his memoirs, *Be Just and Fear Not*, devoting an entire chapter to Dr Isaac Nachman Steinberg’s Kimberley Plan, stating “the biggest objection [to Steinberg’s proposal] was [that] no part of Australia should ever be handed over to any one race or religion for the establishment of a

⁵¹² Ross, *John Curtin: A Biography*, 249.

⁵¹³ *ibid*, 249.

⁵¹⁴ Kim Beazley, *John Curtin: An Atypical Labor Leader*, 4.

⁵¹⁵ Peter Love, *Labor and the Money Power: Australian Labor Populism 1890-1950* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1984), 64: The “anti-Semitism in [Anstey’s] *The Kingdom of Shylock* [is] no aberration.

⁵¹⁶ Dowsing, *Curtin of Australia*, 9.

⁵¹⁷ Ross, *John Curtin: A Biography*, 12.

⁵¹⁸ Arthur A Calwell, *Be Just and Fear Not* (Hawthorn: Lloyd O’Neill, 1972), 45.

⁵¹⁹ Calwell, *Be Just and Fear Not*, 45.

completely separate entity from the rest of the nation.”⁵²⁰ According to Calwell, “Curtin had already made up his mind” against the Kimberley Plan as early as 24 October 1941, or as late as 31 March 1943;⁵²¹ both dates are well before Curtin commissioned the Interdepartmental Committee on Migration on 22 March 1944, which, it ought to be recalled, was chaired by Joseph Carrodus, the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, who was—as stated previously—in communication with various Jewish leaders who were, similar to Carrodus and Curtin, opposed to the Kimberley Plan. It would thus appear that Dr Isaac Nachman Steinberg’s proposal for a Jewish colony in the East Kimberley was not given “mature consideration” at the highest levels of government, as claimed by Curtin in his letter to Steinberg dated 15 July 1944, but was in fact deprived of a fair hearing right from the very start.

The Role of Anti-Semitism in the Failure of the Kimberley Plan

The myth of Australia as the land of egalitarianism, mateship and the fair-go proved, in the case of the Kimberley Plan, to be just that—a myth—and this lack of a fair go is due to many factors, the most prominent of which is the role anti-Semitism might have played in its rejection. To start with, “Curtin’s hostility to the idea” seems to be based on one particular issue: the government’s reluctance to “depart from... long-established policy in regard to alien settlement in Australia.”⁵²² Curtin did not cite “the influence of Frank Anstey,”⁵²³ nor did he reveal the minutes of the Interdepartmental Committee on Migration, which advised against the plan. Curtin only mentioned a strict adherence to “long-established policy,” which can be taken as an oblique yet direct reference to the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, the Commonwealth’s inaugural piece of legislation. Serving as the basis for the White Australia policy, the Immigration Restriction Act discouraged and, at times, barred immigration from anywhere other than Britain and Ireland in an attempt to preserve “Australia for the White Man.”⁵²⁴

Though the general Australian mindset at the time was to keep non-British immigrants out, that does not, in and of itself, imply anti-Semitism was afoot the day Curtin “made his mind

⁵²⁰ Calwell, *Be Just and Fear Not*, 112.

⁵²¹ *ibid*, 113.

⁵²² Steinberg, *Australia- The Unpromised Land, In Search of a Home*, 166.

⁵²³ Norman E Lee, *John Curtin: Saviour of Australia* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1983), 16.

⁵²⁴ “The Bulletin magazine axed,” ABC Online - *abc.net.au*, accessed February 29, 2016. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2008-01-24/the-bulletin-magazine-axed/1022254>: The magazine was founded by two Sydney journalists, JF Archibald and John Haynes, in 1880... The paper’s masthead slogan at the time was “Australia for the White Man.”

up” about the Kimberley Plan.⁵²⁵ Curtin understood “full well that it would not be long before... [Jews] from the [East Kimberley]... would... want to move to... the... state capitals... [causing]... anti-Semitism to grow” in Australia,⁵²⁶ thereby indicating that he was at least *aware* of anti-Semitism—some might say *wary* of it—as a reason to reject the Kimberley Plan. It is also evident that Curtin sought advice from other members of his government—from people like Joseph Carrodus—who were, in turn, influenced by various leaders of the local Jewish community who were, in yet another turn, outspoken in their opposition to the Kimberley Plan for different yet not altogether dissimilar reasons.

Where is the anti-Semitism? *Is* there anti-Semitism? Did anti-Semitism doom the Kimberley Plan? The short answer is opaque at best. For instance, an article warning Australians about “hordes of refugees” waiting to swarm the country could be considered anti-Semitic, especially given the article’s title—“Jewish Influx”—yet this notion is confounded when it is revealed the author of the article is not just Jewish, but was regarded at the time as *the* voice of Australian Jewry, (in this case Sir Samuel Cohen, the then-president of both the Australian Jewish Welfare Society and the Great Synagogue of Sydney). Given the “close personal and political connection between young John [Curtin] and his older mentor,”⁵²⁷ does this mean a charge of anti-Semitism can be laid at Frank Anstey and, perhaps to a lesser extent at his protégé, (or, for that matter, at AP Elkin, the anthropologist abandoned by his Jewish father), but *not* at Sir Samuel Cohen or Aaron Patkin simply because they were Jewish? Perhaps none of these people were anti-Semitic or, conversely, perhaps they all were?

The answers to these questions depend on point of view; anti-Semitism, like beauty, is in the eyes of the beholder, but in terms of the role it played in the rejection of the Kimberley Plan, it would appear that anti-Semitism was more than a faint ghost in the room at the time the scheme was gazetted. It appears that what ultimately thwarted the fruition of Dr Isaac Nachman Steinberg’s Kimberley Plan was a sort of sinister star alignment that included an Australian Jewish community hostile to the idea due to issues of self-interest and self-preservation along with a Secretary of the Department of the Interior evidently bent to their will, coupled with a prime minister adhering to the infamous White Australia policy and likely predisposed to—if not

⁵²⁵ Calwell, *Be Just and Fear Not*, 113.

⁵²⁶ *ibid*, 112.

⁵²⁷ Day, *John Curtin: A Life*, 103.

historically complicit in—his mentor’s “incipient anti-Semitism.”⁵²⁸ Add to this the afterthought that was AP Elkin’s objection to the Kimberley Plan: citing the impact a Jewish colony would have on the hastening of Aboriginal extinction, (an event he believed was inevitable but has never come to pass), Elkin’s negative response to the scheme might have been aided by a sense of paternal grievance, though this is speculative. Also, the role the White Australia policy played in the decision must not be overlooked; several other Australian Governments, including the governments of James Scullin as well as Robert Menzies,⁵²⁹ among others, had rejected similar proposals for large-scale settlements for non-British immigrants, yet none of these other schemes involved Jews under the rule of Nazis during the Second World War. One could argue a larger role for anti-Semitism in the demise of the Kimberley Plan, yet this research indicates something far less organised and perhaps inadvertent, at least in regards to the Australian Jewish negative response to the proposal, doomed the scheme’s fruition at a variety of levels.

The creative narrative that accompanies this research highlights the gap between the actual history of Dr I.N. Steinberg’s Kimberley Plan—as detailed above—and the Uchronic version of Australia presented in the six part, Uchronic novel following this thesis. It does so by reversing actual history through the point of historic divergence, which will be discussed in the next section utilising the thematic framework outlined in the introduction and in previous categories of the genre study. This research accomplishes several additional objectives as well: first and foremost, a group of Aboriginal people—the Doolboong—were discovered to be not extinct, as was implied by information currently available on the public record. Second, this research sheds additional light on why the Kimberley Plan was rejected by the Australian Government. Most importantly, and in terms of creative writing, this research establishes for the first time a set of “poetics” for the Uchronic, alternate history genre which, it can be recalled, has not yet been developed.⁵³⁰ This thesis, in concert with the creative narrative that accompanies this research, thereby defines what exactly constitutes a Uchronic novel whilst simultaneously advancing the discussion of an otherwise underrated and often overlooked genre of fiction.

⁵²⁸ Beazley, *John Curtin: An Atypical Labor Leader*, 4.

⁵²⁹ “A Land of Milk and Honey? A Jewish Settlement Proposal in the Kimberley,” Brian Wimborne, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, accessed 3 March 2016, <http://abd.anu.edu.au/essay/9/text29488>. On the one hand, Robert Menzies appeared to be more receptive to the Kimberley Plan but, on the other hand, his cabinet in 1950 rejected Steinberg’s proposal a second time on 15 March 1940.

⁵³⁰ Chapman and Yoke, ed., *Classic and Iconoclastic Alternate History Science Fiction*, 21.

The Doolboong

*“What about you, Ben, hmm? What about your parents?”
Prindy was succinct: “Dad’s Afghan.” He used a metal tong to flip the
lamb on the fire. “Mum’s Doolbung.”
“Doolbung? What the hell is that? The name of some black tribe long
since extinct or something? I’ve never heard of these people.”⁵³¹*

In the East Kimberley region of Western Australia, there are at least three different Aboriginal groups located in and around Lake Argyle, the Ord River and on the stretch of land extending north along the mudflats on the eastern flank of the Cambridge Gulf between Wyndham and Kununurra. The three different Aboriginal groups are the Mirriwoong, the Gadjerong and the Doolboong.⁵³² There are different ways to spell the names of these three different Aboriginal groups, in some instances a “G” can be spelled with a “K” and vice-versa, in other instances a “D” is swapped for “T.” The issue of how to spell the various languages relevant to the East Kimberley was raised in Federal Court during the Miriwoong-Gajerrong case in 1999:

In her evidence Ms [Frances] Kofod⁵³³ said that the word Duulngnari may have a similar meaning to Doolboong, “-ngarri” being a pan-Kimberley suffix sometimes attaching to language names, having an equivalent meaning in other languages to Miriwoong “-woong” or “-boong”.⁵³⁴

One of the more frequent spellings is “Doolboong,” with two sets of “double-O”s, which could be interpreted as the “white way” to spell the name of this group of people. Conversely, transcripts of interviews with Aboriginal people from this region default to Dulbung—with two “U”s, one ahead of the “L,” the other in front of the “-ng” suffix. At the core of the creative

⁵³¹ This scene was originally drafted for Part Two of the creative narrative. This dialogue appears with some variation in the draft following this thesis.

⁵³² The AIATSIS map of Aboriginal Australia, ABC Online - abc.net.au, initially accessed on April 15, 2012, www.abc.net.au/indigenous/map.

⁵³³ *Ward And Others (On Behalf Of The Miriwoong And Gajerrong People) And Others V State Of Western Australia And Others*. 1999. Federal Court of Australia: Frances Kofod is a cultural consultant in Kununurra, WA, a Project Linguist at the Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring, also known as the Mirima Languages and Cultural Centre, and the author of *A Miriwoong-English Dictionary*. She has worked extensively in the north of Australia following the work of the artists of the Kimberley region.

⁵³⁴ *Ward And Others (On Behalf Of The Miriwoong And Gajerrong People) And Others V State Of Western Australia And Others*. 1999. Federal Court of Australia. Page 548, Lines 21-26.

narrative is a synergy of sorts between white and black; the amalgamated spelling “Doolbung” in the creative narrative is meant to reflect this.

The Doolboong Language

As of 2013, the public record contains little about the Doolboong. Books devoted to Aboriginal language groups define Doolbung as part of the Jarrakan language group, the dominant language family in the East Kimberley, and claim it is “extinct.”⁵³⁵ This status is based on *The Language of the Kimberley, Western Australia* by John B. McGregor, who links the health of various languages in this region to the impact of white British settlement:

In some cases entire communities of speakers were decimated in massacres or as a result of introduced diseases, and their language may have passed directly from [Healthy Languages to Dead Languages] or at least to have skipped [to Weakening Languages].⁵³⁶

McGregor also states that the Doolbung language no longer exists:

These [languages] are no longer spoken fluently by anyone, though some older people may remember a number of words and phrases, and might even be able to construct simple sentences. Kimberley languages that fall into this category include... [the] Doolboong [language].⁵³⁷

The Doolboong language is “dead” according to Bulla Bilinggiin, as told to Dr Bruce Shaw during the 1999 Miriuwung-Gajerrong case,⁵³⁸ and it is a matter of public record that the Doolboong language was not recorded or documented and that no trace of it, aside from a presumed similarity to the Gadjerong language (Gajirrabeng) exists today, a point mentioned by McGregor⁵³⁹ that was later corroborated by Native Title testimony:

⁵³⁵ *Ward And Others (On Behalf Of The Miriuwung And Gajerrong People) And Others V State Of Western Australia And Others*. 1999. Federal Court of Australia. Print. Page 546, Lines 17-19: “According to the evidence presented, Doolboong is extinct as a separate Aboriginal community.”

⁵³⁶ McGregor, *The Languages of the Kimberley, Western Australia*, 75.

⁵³⁷ *ibid*, 74.

⁵³⁸ *Ward And Others (On Behalf Of The Miriuwung And Gajerrong People) And Others V State Of Western Australia And Others*. 1999. Federal Court of Australia. Print. Page 159.

⁵³⁹ McGregor, *The Languages of the Kimberley, Western Australia*, 40.

A language called Doolboong was apparently spoken on the coast of Cambridge Gulf, to the west of the Gajirrabeng. However, [there is] no information... available on this now extinct language... although speakers of Gajirrabeng and Miriwoong say it was like Gajirrabeng.⁵⁴⁰

That there was a similarity between the languages of Gajerrong and Doolboong and that today the Doolboong language is “dead” are two facts not in dispute, but where are the Doolboong and their descendants today?

The Doolboong - Geography

In terms of geography, the territory once attributed to the Doolboong is reasonably well-defined in a number of different contexts. Norman B. Tindale, the author of *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia*, describes the Doolboong in terms of territorial geography:

The Duulngari [Doolboong] who occupy the estuary of the Ord River, the eastern shores of Cambridge Gulf, and the coastal mangrove strip with many freshwater springs farther inland, as far east as Keep River...⁵⁴¹

In 1981, a local Gadjerong man, Grant Ngabidj, also mentioned the Doolboong in terms of geography:

...Duulngari, a language group located traditionally on the mangrove coastal flats between Wyndham and the Keep River... was essentially the same territory as that of the Gadjerong...⁵⁴²

Sheba Dignari, a plaintiff identified as one of the Miriuwung and Gajerrong peoples during the 1999 Miriuwung-Gajerrong case, stated in her testimony that “Doolboong country was west of... Goose Hill.” In his testimony, Grant Ngabidj added that Doolboong country was “below Goose Hill.”⁵⁴³

⁵⁴⁰ McGregor, *The Languages of the Kimberley, Western Australia*, 40.

⁵⁴¹ Norman B. Tindale, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974), 153.

⁵⁴² Grant Ngabidj, as told to Bruce Shaw, *My Country of the Pelican Dreaming; The Life of an Australian Aborigine of the Gadjerong* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1981), 75.

⁵⁴³ *Ward And Others (On Behalf Of The Miriuwung And Gajerrong People) And Others V State Of Western Australia And Others*. 1999. Federal Court of Australia. Print. Page 546, Line 16.

Suffice it to say, where the Doolboong existed is not at all in dispute, nor is the fact that they existed at some point in time. But what of the Doolboong people; can the same be said of the Doolboong? For decades, the Aboriginal people of Tasmania were presumed to be extinct as a result of white British colonization.⁵⁴⁴ In 2011, the Commonwealth of Australia conducted a national population census in which over 19,000 people in Tasmania identified as Aboriginal, negating the claim that the Aboriginal people of Tasmania were extinct.⁵⁴⁵ Could the same presumption about the Doolboong prove similar to that of Tasmanian Aboriginals?

This research used information from the public record in combination with a research trip to the region in a direct attempt to determine if there were people in the East Kimberley still indentifying as Doolboong and, if so, what is their hitherto undocumented history. The primary factor motivating this aspect of the research can be summed up in a name lifted from the pages of the creative narrative: Ben Prindy.

Ben Prindy is first introduced in Part Two: Across the Road. The very name of the character—Prendergast Percival Percy—is adapted from the pages of Xavier Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country*. He is one of the main characters in the creative narrative with starring roles in Parts Two, Three, Four, Five and Six, and can be quoted numerous times throughout the text:

“Dad’s Afghan. Mum’s Doolbung.”

Prindy is a fictional character who is half-Doolboong and, in terms of this research, it was imperative to demonstrate an understanding of the history of the Doolboong people, especially considering the reconfigured image of Indigenous peoples in Uchronic fiction. As the creative narrative will demonstrate, the image of the Doolboong, in the form of Ben Prindy, will be reconfigured in keeping with this feature of the Uchronic genre. As a result, the history of the

⁵⁴⁴ “2075.0 - Census of Population and Housing - Counts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2011,” Australian Bureau of Statistics, accessed August 1, 2014. <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2075.0main+features32011>

⁵⁴⁵ Richard Flanagan, “The Lost Tribe,” *The Guardian*, October 14, 2002, www.theguardian.com: “To the rest of the world it is merely baffling, for Tasmania is to this day frequently - and wrongly - cited as the site of the only successful genocide in history. On that strange, sorry island so far away, the antipode of the antipodes, it was said that a race of indigenous people had, within 80 years of the English invasion, disappeared from the face of the earth as surely as the dodo.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, online edition. “Tasmanian”, www.britannica.com/topic/Tasmanian, accessed on March 19, 2016: “Tasmanian, any member of the extinct Australoid population of Tasmania. The Tasmanians were an isolate population of Aboriginal Australians”

Doolboong will be altered—changed—for the sake of the creative narrative, a Uchronic novel based on the success of the Kimberley Plan rather than its failure.

Local Aboriginal History of the East Kimberley

In the area of Wyndham in the East Kimberley, the immediate effects of British white colonization and settlement proved to be the most devastating in terms of the detrimental impact these effects had on all Aboriginal groups in this region of Western Australia. British white colonization and settlement of the East Kimberley, in a manner consistent with the historic record of British colonization throughout the Australian continent, included the introduction of diseases for which local Aboriginal people had no previous exposure. As a direct result, diseases such as smallpox, measles, tuberculosis and syphilis quickly killed off large numbers of Aboriginal people throughout the East Kimberley. Any Aboriginal people fortunate to survive the introduction of “white” diseases were, by and large, subsequently displaced from their traditional territories by these same “white invaders” who often drove animals, such as cows and horses, across large tracts of land, thereby ruining previously fertile terrain that, in turn, led to high levels of starvation among Aboriginal people not already driven out by incoming British settlers.⁵⁴⁶

Many local Aboriginal people were later arrested and incarcerated by these “white invaders” and forcibly removed to pastoral stations such as Forrest River, also known as Oombulgurri, located west of the Cambridge Gulf, or to government facilities such as Moola Bulla near Halls Creek, a colonial “mass prison” that contained Aboriginal people from all over the East Kimberley.⁵⁴⁷ Finally, any Aboriginal people left behind and not yet killed off by disease, starvation, displacement or incarceration were, in many notable examples, massacred by “white invaders” and their inheriting “white” descendants, a hotly contested historical fact that rings true in nearly every region of Australia including the East Kimberley.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁶ *Ward And Others (On Behalf Of The Miriwung And Gajerrong People) And Others V State Of Western Australia And Others*. 1999. Federal Court of Australia. Print. Page 516, Lines 14-19.

⁵⁴⁷ *ibid*, 515- 516.

⁵⁴⁸ Francis Kofod, Interview with David Muller, (Kununurra, Western Australia, June 19, 2014); *Ward And Others (On Behalf Of The Miriwung And Gajerrong People) And Others V State Of Western Australia And Others*. 1999. Federal Court of Australia. Print. Page 515.

The Doolboong, the primary Aboriginal group this dissertation attempts to disambiguate, were similarly not immune to these effects, all of which were largely devastating and detrimental to each and every Aboriginal group in the country.⁵⁴⁹

The Doolboong – Native Title Testimony

In 1999, a case regarding Native Title was heard in Western Australia, the aforementioned Miriwung-Gajerrong case, shedding some light on the current status of the Doolboong people. A number of plaintiffs representing both the Miriwung and Gajerrong, among many others, named as defendants the State of Western Australia, the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority and the Aboriginal Land Trust, among many others, revealing through testimony information regarding the current status of the Doolbung:

“...a group described as Doolboong... no longer exist as... [the] Dulbung is finished. Everybody died...” and... that a number of Doolboong people lost their lives in the Forrest River massacre in 1926.⁵⁵⁰

What is apparent about the Doolboong in the East Kimberley today is that many local Aboriginal people consider the Doolboong “finished.” According to Grant Ngabidj, “a full-blooded Aboriginal man belonging to the Gadjerong language group, which was a ‘tribe’ located... on the northern seaboard of the East Kimberley,”⁵⁵¹ the Doolboong people “lost their lives” during the Forrest River massacre in 1926. This means it is part of the local assumption that the Doolboong, along with many other Aboriginal people from different Aboriginal groups in this region, were removed from their land and forced to live at stations like Forrest River. The massacres at Forrest River are well-known and well-documented⁵⁵² and, according to Grant Ngabidj, “a number of Doolboong” people, like many other Aboriginal people, met their demise at Forrest River, a point not lost nor absent from these proceedings:

⁵⁴⁹ Frank Chulung and Donald Chulung, Interview with David Muller, (Kununurra, Western Australia, June 24, 2014)

⁵⁵⁰ *Ward And Others (On Behalf Of The Miriwung And Gajerrong People) And Others V State Of Western Australia And Others*. 1999. Federal Court of Australia. Federal Court of Australia. Page 519.

⁵⁵¹ Ngabidj and Shaw, “Introduction”. *My Country of the Pelican Dreaming; The Life of an Australian Aborigine of the Gadjerong*.

⁵⁵² Neville Green, *Forrest River Massacre* (Freemantle: Freemantle Arts Centre Press, 1995).

At the Royal Commission in 1927 to inquire into the events at Forrest River, Dr Adams, a medical officer who had been stationed at Wyndham for ten years gave evidence as follows:

“I calculated that in the north during the last 50 years something like 10,000 natives had disappeared by devious means, not necessarily old age. Their natural game has been either exterminated or frightened away. Wherever a white man sets foot or uses firearms he frightened away the game. The native game being in diminished numbers their place taken by the flocks and herds of their white oppressors.”⁵⁵³

In the report *Historical Issues in the NE Kimberley 1882-1972*, Grant Ngabidj gave further testimony that the “degree of dislocation and decimation caused by the arrival of [white] settlers and miners in the East Kimberley in the 1880s and 1890s... cannot be underestimated. It has the effect of dispossessing Aboriginal inhabitants and fracturing their communities.”

It is on the public record that the Doolboong existed and where they existed. Also on the public record are some indications of what happened to some of the Doolboong people, however, as will be shown, “a number of Doolboong” is not all of the Doolboong.

The Doolboong – Names of the Public Record

There are other references on the public record that provide additional information regarding the current status of the Doolboong people as a result of federal court testimony. The first reference appears when Dodger Carlton is quoted mentioning Maggie Darrng, who is identified as one “of the relevant ancestors in [the Miriuwung Gajerrong]Native Title case”:

‘According to Dodger Carlton, Maggie Darrng spoke three languages [two of which were] Gajerrong and Doolbung[,] and her country, and her parents country, was an area along the north of the Ord River as it enters the Gulf above Goose Hill and Wyndham. Elsewhere in the evidence she [Maggie Darrng] was identified as the last of the Doolboong.’⁵⁵⁴

A more thorough examination of the testimony from this case yields three names of people who, at some point in recent times, have identified as Doolboong and were recognized by

⁵⁵³ *Ward And Others (On Behalf Of The Miriuwung And Gajerrong People) And Others V State Of Western Australia And Others*. 1999. Federal Court of Australia. Print. Pages 518-520.

⁵⁵⁴ *ibid*, 534, lines 35-38.

other local Aboriginal people as Doolboong: (1) Maggie Darrng, who is “identified as the last of the Doolboong,”⁵⁵⁵ (2) Frank Chulung and (3) the Gerrard family.⁵⁵⁶

‘Apart from Frank Chulung... there is no evidence that there was any Aboriginal person identifying as Doolboong...’⁵⁵⁷

Frank Chulung turned twenty-one in July of 1960, the same year he refused to apply for citizenship.⁵⁵⁸ In addition to carrying a small booklet detailing his legal rights in the event of arrest, Frank Chulung was deemed a troublemaker by local police, who kept a close eye on him as a result.⁵⁵⁹ He first came to attention as per this research in Fiona Skyring’s *Justice: A History of the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia*, which details this particular episode in his life. Until this point, the public record, coupled with a university-sponsored research trip to the East Kimberley, revealed the information described above. In terms of the process that is research and investigation, these revelations were suddenly enhanced, if not challenged, on 23 June 2014, when Frank Chulung, now aged seventy-five, appeared alongside his nephew, Donald “Duck” Chulung, in Kununurra, Western Australia.

Frank Chulung – Doolboong Elder

Frank Chulung was born on 24 July 1939, in Wyndham, Western Australia. Today he and his nephew, Donald “Duck” Chulung, and their families, are residents of Kununurra. The history of the Doolboong is linked to their family history. Indeed, the Chulung family are the last remaining people identifying as Doolboong; today there is one main family for the Doolboong and one main family elder, Frank Chulung, the oldest-living male relative who has, in turn, been identified and recognised by other local Aboriginal people as Doolboong, a point already

⁵⁵⁵ *Ward And Others (On Behalf Of The Miriuwung And Gajerrong People) And Others V State Of Western Australia And Others*. 1999. Federal Court of Australia. Print. Page 534, Lines 35-39.

⁵⁵⁶ *ibid*, 547: “Apart from Frank Chulung, who was not called to give evidence by the fifth respondents, there is no evidence that there was any Aboriginal person identifying as Doolboong...”

⁵⁵⁷ *ibid*, 547.

⁵⁵⁸ Fiona Skyring, *Justice: A History of the Aboriginal Legal Service of WA* (Crawley, WA: UWA Publishing 2011), 10.

⁵⁵⁹ Skyring, *Justice: A History of the Aboriginal Legal Service of WA*, 10, 51.

clarified previously through excerpts taken from Native Title court proceedings⁵⁶⁰ and from Fiona Skyring's book.⁵⁶¹

Frank Chulung recalls the following family history which, to some degree, serves as the history of the Doolboong people: the Doolboong were nearly wiped out with the arrival of white British settlers in the East Kimberley in the 1880s due to diseases, massacres, land displacement and the introduction of European livestock that turned once fertile "tribal" land barren. Many more Aboriginal people were arrested and incarcerated, (i.e. "rounded up" and "brought in"), and forced to live on stations or in Aboriginal reserves or camps that were, in some cases, located hundreds, if not thousands, of kilometers away from their traditional territories.

Gulingen, Frank Chulung's grandfather, was one of the many Aboriginal people throughout Australia to be removed from his traditional lands and forced to live in an Aboriginal camp which, in his case, was located in Wyndham, Western Australia. The local police, for some reason or other, decided to raid the Aboriginal camp in Wyndham, causing Gulingen to flee into the nearby hills where he was fatally shot by an Aboriginal tracker who might have also been his brother-in-law. Meanwhile, Frank Chulung's grandmother, fearful of this violence, grabbed her young child—Clement Chulung, Frank's father—to swim across "the narrows" of the Cambridge Gulf to the mission at Forrest River where she gave her son to Reverend Gribble to "grow up." In 1924, Clement Chulung, now of age, met an Aboriginal woman from Ord River station named Frida, whom he married that same year. They later had children—ten of them—the seventh of which is Frank Chulung.

Frank Chulung is a charismatic, youthful-looking man dressed on this occasion in a purple Hawaiian-style shirt topped off with a stylish and brightly-coloured fedora. Immensely personable and generous with his time, he was not at all shy mentioning that while he might not always remember exact dates beyond his birthday, he recalls the evacuation of Wyndham to Rosewood Station on the Duncan Highway just across the Northern Territory border during World War Two, an event he can recall in specific detail because he broke his arm during the journey. As a result, he was taken to Carlton Station near Halls Creek in Western Australia. By this point, many different Aboriginal groups from many different Aboriginal countries, the

⁵⁶⁰ *Ward And Others (On Behalf Of The Miriuwung And Gajerrong People) And Others V State Of Western Australia And Others*. 1999. Federal Court of Australia. Print. Page 546, Lines 17-19.

⁵⁶¹ Skyring, *Justice: A History of the Aboriginal Legal Service of WA*, 10.

Doolboong among them, were living at Carlton Station, some of them choosing to remain there rather than return to their traditional areas after the war.

Frank Chulung has been involved in Aboriginal Legal Services of Western Australia for over thirty years. He moved to Kununurra, where he still resides, in 1962 and founded the Kimberley Land Council in the 1970s, becoming its first chairman in 1978, thereby starting the momentum on Native Title in the East Kimberley.⁵⁶² Frank Chulung also campaigned for Ernie Bridge, the Labor-cum-Independent politician heralded as the first Aboriginal member of the Western Australian parliament

It is important to note that according to Frank Chulung and his nephew, Donald “Duck” Chulung, the Doolboong are one of two “tribes,” or sub-groups, within the Gajerrong group. This stands in contrast to the neighbouring Miriwoong people, who are divided into seven “tribes.”⁵⁶³ As such, the Doolboong people and their descendants consider themselves, and are considered as, separate from the Miriwong-Gajjerrong people.⁵⁶⁴ As a result, Donald Chulung is in the process of establishing the Doolboong Nation Aboriginal Corporation in an effort to differentiate the Doolboong from the efforts of the Miriwoong-Gajjerrong Corporation, “a leading indigenous... corporation [that] receives and manages the entitlements and benefits transferred under the Ord Final Agreement to the Miriwoong and Gajjerrong people... the native title holders of their traditional country in the East Kimberley.”⁵⁶⁵

Current Status of the Doolboong

According to both Frank Chulung and his nephew, Donald “Duck” Chulung, the Doolboong have always been a small group of people. Today, they estimate the number of Doolboong to be in the range of 300 to 400 persons, most of who live in and around Kununurra in Western Australia. In terms of the Doolboong language, both Frank and Donald agree that the Doolboong language—as an entity separate from the Miriwoong language—no longer exists, but Donald Chulung did explain “his language” is/was Gajirrabeng (i.e. Gadjerrong), adding further

⁵⁶² Skyring, *Justice: A History of the Aboriginal Legal Service of WA*, 10, 57; Chulung, Interview: In 1978, Frank Chulung traveled to Alaska and Canada to meet Native Americans and First Nations people to learn about Native Title issues, returning to start a similar process in Australia.

⁵⁶³ Frank Chulung, Interview.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ward And Others (On Behalf Of The Miriwoong And Gajjerrong People) And Others V State Of Western Australia And Others*. 1999. Federal Court of Australia. Print. Page 546, Lines 17-19.

⁵⁶⁵ “About the Miriwoong-Gajjerrong Corporation,” MGC Corp.com.au, accessed June 1, 2014. <http://mgcorp.com.au/>

that Doolboong territory sits on Gajirrabeng land. Aside from similarities between languages and the issue of territorial overlap, one thing is certain: the Doolboong people, unlike the Doolboong language, are not extinct, far from it; in 2013, the next generation of Doolboong, as represented by Thomas Chulung, the son of Donald “Duck” Chulung, recently met Tony Abbott, the then-Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, during a school visit to Canberra.⁵⁶⁶

The Doolboong in the Creative Narrative

In the creative narrative that accompanies this research, the fictional character Ben Prindy identifies himself as half-Doolbung, half-Afghan. This ethnic identity induces the following question: did any Doolboong intermarry with Afghanis? A brief digression: the historical record indicates that many Afghani cameleers either started or finished their overland camel journeys across the vast red continent of Australia in the area of Wyndham; evidence of this can be found on the outskirts of “new Wyndham” where tourists can visit a small Afghan cemetery. Beyond this morbid site, a steel silhouette constructed in the shape of an Afghani camel train has been erected on the left side of the Great Northern Highway leading into Wyndham in commemoration of these “imported pioneers” of the Australian “outback.” In short, Afghani cameleers were, for a time, common in this part of Australia and for this reason, the Afghan character of Peaboosh/Paraboosh was included, albeit via analepsis, in Part Two of the creative narrative.⁵⁶⁷ In terms of verisimilitude regarding any sort of interracial coupling between the Doolboong and Afghanis, Frank Chulung offered this remark:

Could be.⁵⁶⁸

(please see photo on next page)

⁵⁶⁶ Donald Chulung, Interview.

⁵⁶⁷ Keith Willey, *Boss Drover* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1971): The character of Peaboosh/Paraboosh is based on a similar character described in *Boss Drover*, as cited in Part Two of the creative narrative that accompanies this research.

⁵⁶⁸ Frank Chulung, Interview.



Left photo: The Afghan Cemetery in Wyndham, WA.

Right photo: The Afghan Camel Silhouette commemorating Afghani cameleers.

Part Two of the creative narrative also includes a prominent initiation/circumcision sequence that is based on information gleaned from the public record. In terms of the verisimilitude regarding the rights of initiation and male circumcision, Frank Chulung indicated that circumcision is/was part of traditional Doolboong culture, but Donald Chulung pointed out that though he himself had a skin name⁵⁶⁹—Jangala⁵⁷⁰—and though he knew much about Doolboong culture and history, he and his family do not “follow the Law”, (i.e. do not follow each aspect of Doolboong culture as it was practiced prior to the arrival of white British settlers). As a result of this highly personal revelation, no further questions regarding initiation ceremonies, Doolboong or otherwise, were asked.

⁵⁶⁹ “Kinship and Skin Names,” Central Land Council – [clc.org.au](http://www.clc.org.au) , accessed February 29, 2016.

<http://www.clc.org.au/articles/info/aboriginal-kinship>: A moiety system (i.e. division into two groups: ‘sun side’ and ‘shade side’) exists across the region. Most language groups also use a section or subsection system with four to eight ‘skin names’. An individual gains a ‘skin name’ upon birth based on the skin names of his or her parents, to indicate the section/subsection that he/she belongs to; “Indigenous Kinship,” Australians Together – AustraliansTogether.org.au, accessed February 29, 2016.

<http://www.australiantogether.org.au/stories/detail/kinship-and-skin-names>: Similar to a surname, a Skin Name indicates a person’s blood line. It also conveys information about how generations are linked and how they should interact. Unlike surnames, husbands and wives don’t share the same Skin Name, and children don’t share their parents’ name. Rather, it is a sequential system, so Skin Names are given based on the preceding name (the mother’s name in a matrilineal system or the father’s name in a patrilineal system) and its level in the naming cycle. Each nation has its own Skin Names and each name has a prefix or suffix to indicate gender; and Ros Moriarty, *Listening to Country: A Journey to the Heart of What it Means to Belong* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2010), 44: “‘Skin’ is a system of classifying people. Eight skin groups for men, and eight for women, stretch across... the Australian continent, linking people to land and ceremony. It embeds them in the comfort of family relationships of obligation and privilege: giving and receiving. Skin determines who can marry each other, a pragmatic necessity in earlier times when purity of bloodlines ensured healthy births among nomads who lived on the edge of survival Sociological mapping of skin in tribal times was a complex web, a sophisticated and highly successful way to bind families and people together.”

⁵⁷⁰ Donald Chulung, Interview: “Jangala” also happens to be the name of one of Donald Chulung’s companies.

Much of the discoveries made as part of the research into the status and history of the Doolboong are, in the creative narrative, bypassed as part of the reconfigured image of Indigenous peoples in Uchronic fiction. Donald “Duck” Chulung, for example, is a business owner, the CEO of a contracting-construction company based in Kununurra who earned more than a million dollars during the 2013 financial year. As further evidence of fiscal acumen, “Duck” points to a brand new John Deere tractor, valued at \$375,000, that he imported from America to till the fields north of Kununurra. In addition, “Duck”, along with his Uncle Frank, is spearheading a campaign to establish the Doolboong Nation Aboriginal Corporation, and while these facts are indicative of proprietary success and, some might say, affluence, these achievements—impressive as they are—pale in comparison to the financial windfall the Prindy character experiences as a result of events that take place in Part Three of the creative narrative that accompanies this research.⁵⁷¹ In furthering the reconfigured image of Indigenous people in Uchronic fiction, it is understood by the end of Part Four of the creative narrative that Ben Prindy is one of the wealthiest people in Australia. The image of the Doolboong is reconfigured in that, due to his sudden wealth and the connections it provides him, Prindy has the ability to influence the course of national events, albeit with some nudging from his non-Aboriginal friend, Felix Morose.

A dynamic between actual history and the alternate history revealed in narrative form exists in Uchronic fiction. This dynamic, as the creative narrative that accompanies this research indicates, can and often does occur at the local, regional level. The actual history of the Doolboong, as it is detailed by both Frank and Donald Chulung, is incorporated as an oblique background in the creative narrative, but is patently altered as part of the reconfigured image of Indigenous people, which is one of the recurrent features of Uchronic fiction. Instead of Frank’s mother swimming across “the narrows” of the Cambridge Gulf to hand her son over to Reverend Gribble at Forrest River, the creative narrative depicts the story of Benjamin Prindy, the half-Doolbung, half-Afghani boy who falls through the window of a *yeshiva*. Instead of Donald “Duck” Chulung, his contracting-construction business and his John Deere tractor, there is a

⁵⁷¹ It ought to be noted that the events of Part Three are meant to take place in and around the current location of the Argyle Diamond mine located just a few kilometers north of Limestone Creek on territory belonging to neither the Doolboong nor the Miriwoong but instead to the Kija people.

different Doolboong character with a different name and age who is successful in another field entirely.

These changes from actual history to the Uchronic are not an effort to minimize, marginalise or disrespect the history of the Doolboong as it became known during the excursion to the East Kimberley region, quite the contrary. The efforts made in terms of research, investigation and discovery into the history of the Doolboong are motivated by a notion best expressed by Niall Ferguson in his book, *Virtual History*:

“... the business of imaging such counterfactuals is a vital part of the way in which we learn.”⁵⁷²

This is a central concept inherent to the Uchronic genre. In respect to the Doolboong, this research establishes for the first time the hitherto unknown oral history of the Doolboong as related to the life experiences of Frank Chulung. Contrary to what many in Kununurra currently presume, the Doolboong people were not “killed off,” “wiped out.” or “finished.” Though small in number, the descendants of the Doolboong exist today and both Frank and Donald Chulung are recognized and acknowledged as Doolboong by others in the East Kimberley region.⁵⁷³

In discussing Uchronic fiction, Australian scholar Sean Scalmer used the phrase “counterfactual,”⁵⁷⁴ claiming that it—as an alternate history—is “parasitic” on actual history.⁵⁷⁵ The alternate history of the Doolboong presented in the creative narrative relies upon their actual history, which was largely unknown, or at least not centralized into one document until now. Unlike actual history, alternate history has become “the domain of the fiction writer,”⁵⁷⁶ and is “a realm of... creative invention [where] conventions can be... mocked... the tyrannical overthrown and,” in the case of Indigenous people in general and the Doolboong in particular, “the humble elevated.”⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷² Ferguson, *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals*, 2.

⁵⁷³ Teddy Carlton of MG Corporation, Interview with David Muller, (Kununurra, Western Australia, June 25, 2014): “The Chulungs are the descendants of the Doolboong.”

⁵⁷⁴ Stuart Macintyre and Sean Scalmer, eds., *What If? Australian History as it Might Have Been* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006), 2.

⁵⁷⁵ MacIntyre and Scalmer, *What If? Australian History as it Might Have Been*, 6.

⁵⁷⁶ *ibid*, 2.

⁵⁷⁷ *ibid*, 4.

This is also the case for the history of the Kimberley Plan. That history, as stated earlier, is well documented. What is not documented are the reasons it was rejected. An additional objective of this research is to examine the history of the Kimberley Plan and those involved in its discussion in an effort to disambiguate the reasons for its failure to win approval from the Australian Government. This is important for many reasons; first, “the question of ‘What if?’ is not only the stuff of daydream or regret... It can also be [a] method of... [striving] to understand the past. The key,” writes Scalmer, “is causation: what made things turn out this way?”⁵⁷⁸ Uchronic fiction can “help... trace the limits of the possible... [and] can suggest new sources of data.”⁵⁷⁹

This research has yielded the little known and largely undocumented oral history of an Indigenous group previously—and erroneously—believed to be extinct. Yet when Scalmer’s question of causation is applied to the Kimberley Plan, many questions arise, chief among them: why did it fail? In an effort “to understand how it actually was,”⁵⁸⁰ this research addressed some of the reasons the Kimberley Plan was rejected by the Australian Government. The creative narrative that soon follows this thesis, however, reverses that history, thereby depicting an alternate history of Australia that “actually wasn’t.”⁵⁸¹

⁵⁷⁸ MacIntyre and Scalmer, *What If? Australian History as it Might Have Been*, 1, 3.

⁵⁷⁹ *ibid*, 3, 4

⁵⁸⁰ Ferguson, *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals*, 87.

⁵⁸¹ *ibid*, 87.



Above photo from left to right: Frank Chulung, David Muller and Donald “Duck” Chulung



Above photo from left to right: Francis Kofod and David Muller



Above photo from left to right: His Excellency the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove, the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, and David Muller in Kununurra, Western Australia, 23 June 2014

EXTENDED BIBLIOGRAPHY

*Could've, Should've, But Didn't:
An Exploration of Uchronic Fiction and A Critical Study of Australia's Failure to
Implement Dr I.N. Steinberg's Kimberley Plan*

Aboriginal Australia

Andrew, David, et. al. *Aboriginal Australia and the Torres Strait Islands: Guide to Indigenous Australia*, Melbourne, VIC: Lonely Planet Publications, 2001.

Arthur, Bill, and Frances Morphy. *Macquarie Atlanta of Indigenous Australia*. South Yarra, VIC: Palgrave, 2006.

Ashley-Montagu, M.F. *Coming Into Being Among the Australian Aborigines*. London: Routledge, 1937.

Attwood, Bain. *Telling the Truth About Aboriginal History*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2005.

Berendt, Ronald M. *Aboriginal Sites, Rights and Resource Development*. Perth, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1982.

Blainey, Geoffrey. *Triumph of the Nomads*. South Melbourne, VIC: Macmillan, 1982.

Bolton, G.C. "Aborigines in Social History: An Overview." In *Aboriginal Sites, Rights and Resource Development*, edited by Ronald M Berendt, 59. Perth, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1982.

Bradley, John. *Singing Saltwater Country*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2010.

Burke, Janine. *Source: Nature's Healing Role in Art and Writing*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2009.

Casey, Maryrose. *Creating Frames: Contemporary Indigenous Theatre*. St Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press, 2004.

Charlesworth, Max, et. al. *Religion in Aboriginal Australia*. St Lucia, QLD, University of Queensland Press, 1984.

Chatwin, Bruce. *The Songlines*. London: Picador, 1987.

Crawford, Ian. *We Won the Victory: Aborigines and Outsiders on the North-West Coast of the Kimberley*. North Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Arts Centre, 2001.

Elder, Bruce. *Blood on the Wattle: Massacres and Maltreatment of Aboriginal Australians since 1788*. Chatswood, NSW: New Holland Publishers, 1988.

Elkin, A.P. *Aboriginal Men of High Degree*. St Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press, 1994.

Gray, Stephen. *The Protectors: A Journey through Whitefella Culture*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2011.

Green, Neville. *Forrest River Massacre*. Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1995.

Harrison, Neil. *Teaching and Learning in Aboriginal Education (2nd Edition)*. Sydney, NSW: Oxford University press, 2011.

Healy, J.J. *Literature and the Aborigine in Australia*. St Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press, 1989.

Heiss, Anita. *Am I Black Enough for You?* North Sydney, NSW: Bantam, 2012.

Hokari, Minoru. *Gurindji Journey: A Japanese Historian in the Outback*. Sydney, NSW: UNSW Press, 2011.

Keen, Ian. *Knowledge and Secrecy in an Aboriginal Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Levine, Lawrence. *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Long, Jeremy. *The Go-Betweens: Patrol Officers in Aboriginal Affairs Administration in the NT 1936-1974*. Darwin: State Library of the Northern Territory, 1992.

Maddison, Sarah. *Beyond White Guilt: The Real Challenge for Black-White Relations in Australia*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2011.

Maddison, Sarah. *Black Politics: Inside the Complexity of Aboriginal Political Culture*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2009.

Markus, Andrew. *Governing Savages*. North Sydney, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1990.

McGregor, John B., *The Languages of the Kimberley, Western Australia*. New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004.

Morgan, Sally. *My Place*. Freemantle, WA: Freemantle Arts Centre Press, 1987.

Moriarty, Ros. *Listening to Country: A Journey to the Heart of What it Means to Belong*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2010.

Moss, Rodd. *The Hard Light of Day*. St Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press, 2010.

Mudrooroo (also known as Colin Johnson). *Us Mob: History, Culture, Struggle: An Introduction to Indigenous Australia*. Sydney, NSW: Angus and Robertson, 1995.

Ngadbidj, Grant, and Bruce Shaw. *My Country of the Pelican Dreaming: The Life of an Australian Aborigine of the Gadjerong*. Canberra, ACT: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 191.

Reed, A.W. *Aboriginal Legends: Animal Tales*. Frenchs Forest, NSW: Reed Books, 1987.

Reed, A.W. *Aboriginal Myths: Tales of the Dreamtime*. Sydney, NSW: A.H. and A.W. Reed, 1978.

Reed, A.W. *Aboriginal Stories*. Chatswood, NSW: Reed Books, 1994.

Reynolds, Henry. *Dispossessed*. North Sydney, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1989.

Reynolds, Henry. *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia*. Ringwood, VIC: Penguin Books Australia, 1982.

Reynolds, Henry. *With the White People*. Ringwood, VIC: Penguin Books, Australia, 1990.

Rose, Deborah Bird. *Dingo Makes Us Human*. Melbourne, VIC: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Rose, Deborah Bird. *Reports from a Wild Country: Ethics for Decolonization*. Sydney, NSW: UNSW Press, 2004.

Ryan, Veronica. *From Digging Sticks to Writing Sticks: Stories of Kija Women as told to Veronica Ryan*. Leederville, WA: Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2001.

Shaw, Bruce. *When the Dust Come in Between: Aboriginal Viewpoints in the East Kimberley Prior to 1982*. Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1992.

Shaw, Bruce. *Banggaiyerri: The Story of Jack Sullivan as told to Bruce Shaw*. Canberra, ACT: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1983.

Shaw, Bruce. *Countrymen: The Life Histories of Four Aboriginal Men*. Canberra, ACT: National University Press, 1986.

Shaw, Paula. *Seven Seasons in Aurukun: My Unforgettable Time at a Remote Aboriginal School*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2009.

Skyring, Fiona. *Justice: A History of the Aboriginal Legal Service of WA*. Crawley, WA: UWA Publishing, 2011.

Stanner, W.E.H. *White Man Got No Dreaming*. Canberra, ACT: Australian National University Press, 1979.

Tindale, Norman B. *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia*. Canberra, ACT: Australian National University Press, 1974.

Willey, Keith. *Boss Drover*. Adelaide, South Australia: Rigby, 1971.

Alternate History Criticism and Scholarship

Alkon, Paul K. *Origins of Futuristic Fiction*. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1987.

Avnery, Uri. "Clever Idea that Does More Harm than Good," *Life*, February 21, 1969.

Berman, Paul. "The Plot Against America," *The New York Times*, October 3, 2004.

Bernet, Michael. "Book Review: *If Israel Lost the War*," *The New York Times*, March 2, 1969.

Blackford, Russell, and Van Ikin, Sean McMullen. *Strange Constellations: A History of Australian Science Fiction*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999.

Brooks, David. "John A. Scott chats to David Brooks about *N*," *Readings.com.au*, 2014.

Burgess, Anthony. "Britain Under Hitler," *Observer*, August 27, 1978, p. 22. In *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism*, Gavriel David Rosenfeld (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 69.

Cameron, James. "Damn Nearly Happened Here," *Guardian*, September 3, 1978, p. 22. In *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism*, Gavriel David Rosenfeld (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 69.

Chapman, Edgar L., and Carl B. Yoke. *Classic and Iconoclastic Alternate History Science Fiction*. Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003.

Cohen, Patricia. "The Frozen Chosen." *The New York Times*. April 29, 2007.

Csicery-Ronay, Jr., Istvan. *The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2008.

Dick, Anne. *Search for Philip K. Dick 1928-1982: A Memoir and Bibliography of the Science Fiction Writer*. Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995.

Ferguson, Niall, (editor). *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals*. New York: Basic Books, 1997.

Gibson, William. "Introduction." In *The Alteration* by Kingsley Amis, viii. New York: New York Review Books, 1976.

Gooblar, David. *The Major Phases of Philip Roth*. London: Continuum International Publishing, 2011.

Gorra, Michael. "A Kitchen Table in New York," *Times Literary Supplement*, October 6, 2004.

Guedalla, Philip, et. al. *If, or History Rewritten*. Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1964.

Gunn, James. *Alternate Worlds: The Illustrated History of Science Fiction*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1975.

Hasak-Lowy, Todd. "The Language Deep in Chabon's Ear." Jbooks.com, 2009.
www.jbooks.com/interviews/index/IP_HasakLowy_Chabon.htm

Hellekson, Karen. "Towards a Taxonomy of the Alternate History Genre," *Extrapolation*, 41.3 (Fall 2000).

Hellekson, Karen. *The Alternate History: Reconfiguring Historical Time*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State Press, 2001.

Hoagland, Ericka, and Reema Sarwal. *Science Fiction, Imperialism and the Third World: Essays on Postcolonial Literature and Film*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Co., 2010.

Kakutani, Michiko. "A Pro-Nazi President, A Family Feeling the Effects." *The New York Times*, September 21, 2004.

Kantor, MacKinlay. *If the South Had Won the Civil War*. New York: Tom Doherty and Associates, 1960.

Kaufman, Bill. "Heil to the Chief." *The American Conservative*. Accessed September 27, 2004.

Kaul, Aashish. "The Red of the Rust: On John A. Scott, 'N'." *Academia.com* 2014: accessed June 2, 2016..

Klein, Varda. "Propaganda and Implausible Nightmare Scenarios" in *Round Table on Ten Years of the Israeli-Egyptian Peace* (edited by Naftali Berg). Tel Aviv: 1988.

Lever, Susan A., "Artists Against Fascism," *Sydney Review of Books*, June 6, 2014.

Leiber, Joel. "Tel Aviv Occupied, Arabs Victorious," *The Saturday Review*, March 15, 1969.

Mackey, Douglas A., *Philip K. Dick*. Boston, Massachusetts: Twayne's United States Authors Series, 1988.

McKnight, Edgar Vernon. "Alternate History: the Development of a Literary Genre." PhD Dissertation, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1994.

Milward-Oliver, Edward. *The Len Deighton Companion*. London: Grafton, 1987.

Morrison, Blake. "The Relentless Unforseen," *The Guardian*, October 2, 2004.

Palmer, Chris. *Philip K. Dick: Exhilaration and the Terror of the Postmodern*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003.

Parrish, Timothy, (editor). *The Cambridge Companion to Philip Roth*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Pavel, Thomas G., *Fictional Worlds*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1986.

Pierpont, Claudia Roth. *Roth Unbound: A Writer and His Books*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013.

Posnock, Ross. *Philip Roth's Rude Truth: The Art of Immaturity*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Prucher, Jeff, (editor). *Brave New Worlds: The Oxford Dictionary of Science Fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Ransom, Roger L., *The Confederate States of America: What Might Have Been*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2005.

Roberts, Andrew. *What Might Have Been*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2004.

Robinson, Kim Stanley. *The Novels of Philip K. Dick*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Research Press, 1981.

Rosenfeld, Gavriel David. *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Rossi, Umberto. *The Twisted Worlds of Philip K. Dick*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Co., 2011.

Rovner, Adam. "Alternate History: The Case of Nava Semel's *IsraIsland* and Michael Chabon's *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*." *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, 9, 1, 2011.

Safer, Elaine B. *Mocking the Age: The Later Novels of Philip Roth*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2006.

Shostak, Debra, (editor). *Philip Roth: American Pastoral, The Human Stain, The Plot Against America*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011.

Siegel, Jason. "The Plot Against America: Philip Roth's Counter-Plot to American History," *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the US*, Volume 37, Number 1, 131-154, Spring 2012.

Stypczynski, Brett. "No Roads Lead to Rome: Alternate History and Second Worlds," *Extrapolation*, 46 (2005).

Sutin, Lawrence. *Divine Invasions: A Life of Philip K. Dick*. New York: Harmony Books, 1989.

Sutin, Lawrence. *The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1995.

Svin, Darko. *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics of History of a Literary Genre*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1979.

Teicholz, Tom. "Michael Chabon's Search for Authentic Expression," *Jewish Journal*, March 13, 2013.

Tsouras, Peter G. *Dixie Victorious: An Alternate History of the Civil War*. Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania: Greenhill Books, 2004.

Wiener, Jon. "Arctic Jews: An Interview with Michael Chabon." *Dissent: A Quarterly of Politics and Culture*, April 14, 2007.

Williams, Paul. *Only Apparently Real: The World of Philip K. Dick*. Gettysburg, Pennsylvania: Arbor House Publishing, 1986,

Wirth-Nesher, Hana. "Roth's Autobiographical Writings." In *The Cambridge Companion to Philip Roth*, ed. Timothy Parrish, 168. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Wisse, Ruth. "Slap Shtick: *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*." *Commentary Magazine*, July 1, 2007.

Alternate History Narratives

Barnes, Steven. *Lion's Blood: A Novel of Slavery and Freedom in an Alternate America*. New York: Warner Books, 2002.

Chabon, Michael. *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*. Sydney, NSW: Harper Collins Australia, 2007.

Chesnoff, Richard Z, Edward Klein and Robert Littell. *If Israel Lost the War*. New York: Coward-McCann, 1969.

Deighton, Len. *SS-GB*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1978.

Dick, Philip K. *The Man in the High Castle*. Camberwell, VIC: Penguin Books, 1962.

Dreyfuss, Richard, and Harry Turtledove. *The Two Georges: A Novel of an Alternate America*. New York: Tor Books, 1996.

DuBois, Brendan. *Resurrection Day*. New York: Jove Fiction, 1999.

Forstchen, William, and Newt Gingrich. *Gettysburg*. New York: St Martin's Paperbacks, 2005.

Harris, Robert. *Fatherland*. New York: HarperCollins, 1992.

Hooker, John. *The Bush Soldiers*. Sydney, NSW: Collins, 1984.

Macintyre, Stuart, and Sean Scalmer. *What If? Australian History as it Might Have Been*. Melbourne, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 2006.

MacLeod, Ken. *The Execution Channel*. New York: Tor Books, 2008.

Moore, Ward. *Bring the Jubilee*. London: Gollancz, 2001.

Roberts, Keith. *Pavane*. London: Gollancz, 2000.

Robinson, Kim Stanley. *The Years of Rice and Salt*. New York: Del Rey Bantam, 2003.

Roth, Philip. *The Plot Against America*. Sydney, NSW: Random House Australia, 2004.

Ruff, Matt. *The Mirage*. New York: Harper, 2012.

Scott, John A. N. Blackheath, NSW: Brandl and Schlesinger, 2014.

Turtledove, Harry. *How Few Remain*. London: Ballantine/Del Rey, 1998.

Australian Fiction and Literature

Alizadeh, Ali. *Transactions*. St Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press, 2013.

Barnes, John, (editor). *Henry Lawson: The Penguin Henry Lawson Short Stories*. Sydney, NSW: Penguin 1986.

Burke, Janine. *Lullaby*. Sydney, NSW: Picador, 1994.

Burke, Janine. *Second Sight*. Richmond, VIC: Greenhouse Publications, 1986.

Cave, Nick. *And the Ass Saw the Angel*. Melbourne, VIC: Penguin Group Australia, 1989.

Conigrave, Timothy. *Holding the Man*. Melbourne, VIC: Penguin Group Australia, 1995.

Cook, Kenneth. *Wake in Fright*. Sydney, NSW: Angus and Roberston, 1961.

Edelson, Phyllis Fahrie. *Australian Literature: An Anthology of Writing from Down Under*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1993.

Garner, Helen. *The Children's Bach*. Melbourne, VIC: Penguin Group Australia, 1984.

Garner, Helen. *Monkey Grip*. Melbourne, VIC: Penguin Group Australia, 1977.

Gelder, Ken, and Paul Salzman. *After the Celebration: Australian Fiction 1989-2007*. Melbourne, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 2009.

Grenville, Kate. *Searching for the Secret River*. Melbourne, VIC: Text Publishing, 200.

Grenville, Kate. *The Secret River*. Melbourne, VIC: Text Publishing, 2005.

Gunn, Jeannie. *We of the Never Never*. Melbourne, VIC: Hutchinson & Co., 1902.

Hardy, Frank. *Power Without Glory*. Gladesville, NSW: Lloyd O'Neil/Golden Press, 1950.

Hawke, John. *Australian Literature and the Symbolist Movement*. Sydney, NSW: University of Wollongong, 2009.

Herbert, Xavier. *Poor Fellow My Country*. Sydney, NSW: William Collins, 1975.

- Jose, Nicholas, et. al. *The Literature of Australia*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2010.
- Lawrence, D.H. *Kangaroo*. Melbourne, VIC: Penguin Group Australia, 1923.
- Lindsay, Joan. *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. Melbourne, VIC: F.W. Cheshire Publishing, 1967.
- Malouf, David. *Antipodes*. London: Chatto and Windus/Hogarth Press, 1985.
- Malouf, David. *Every Move You Make*. London: Vintage Books, 2008.
- Malouf, David. *Remembering Babylon*. New York: Vintage, 1994.
- McLaren, John. *Xavier Herbert's Capricornia and Poor Fellow My Country*. Melbourne, VIC: Shillington House, 1981.
- Monahan, Sean. *A Long and Winding Road: Xavier Herbert's Literary Journey*. Crawley, WA: UWA Publishing, 2003.
- Portus, G.V. *They Wanted to Rule the World: Studies of Six Dictators and Other Essays*. Sydney, NSW: Angus and Robertson, 1944.
- Rousseau, Yvonne. *The Secret of Hanging Rock: Joan Lindsay's Final Chapter*. North Ryde, NSW: Angus and Robertson, 1987.
- Scott, Kim. *That Deadman Dance*. Sydney, NSW: Picador, 2011.
- Shute, Nevil. *Beyond the Black Stump*. Melbourne, VIC: William Heinemann, 1956.
- Shute, Nevil. *In the Wet*. London: William Heinemann, 1953.
- Shute, Nevil. *On the Beach*. London: Heinemann, 1974.
- Shute, Nevil. *A Town Called Alice*. London: Mandarin, 1990.
- Silvey, Craig. *Jasper Jones*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2009.
- Stow, Randolph. *To the Islands*. London: Macdonald, 1958.
- Toltz, Steve. *A Fraction of the Whole*. New York: Spiegel and Grau, 2008.
- White, Patrick. *Riders in the Chariot*. New York: New York Book Review, 1961.
- White, Patrick. *The Twyborn Affair*. Tiptree, Essex: Anchor Press, 1979.
- White, Patrick. *Voss*. London: Penguin, 2009.

Wright, Alexis. *Carpentaria*. New York: Atria Books, 2010.

Zable, Arnold. *Café Scheherazade*. Melbourne, VIC: Text Publishing, 2001.

Australian Flora and Fauna

Burke, Janine. *Nest: The Art of Birds*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2012.

Burt, Jocelyn. *The Kimberley: Australia's Unique North-west*. Knoxfield, VIC: Houghton Mifflin Australia, 1989.

Cogger, Harold G. *Reptiles and Amphibians of Australia*. Wellington, New Zealand: AH & AW Reed, 1983.

Durack, Mary. *Kings in Grass Castles*. Sydney, NSW: Thomas C Lothian Pty. Ltd., 1961.

Laurie, Victoria. *The Kimberley: Australia's Last Great Wilderness*. Crawley, WA: UWA Publishing, 2010.

Roberts, Col. *Australa's Kimberley: A Vision of A Lasting Wilderness*. Broome, WA: Col and Karen Roberts, 1995.

Storr, G.M., L.A. Smith, R.E. Johnstone. *Lizards of Western Australia 2: Dragons and Monitors*. Perth, WA: Western Australian Museum, 1983.

Australian History and Politics

Anstey, Frank, *The Kingdom of Shylock*. Melbourne, VIC: Labor Call Print, 1917.

Anstey, Frank. *Money Power*. Melbourne, VIC: Fraser and Jenkins, 1921.

Barry, Paul. *The Rise and Rise of Kerry Packer Uncut*. Sydney, NSW: Bantam Books, 2007.

Beazley, Kim. *John Curtin: An Atypical Labor Leader*. Canberra, ACT: Australian National University Press, 1972.

Calwell, A.A. *Be Just and Fear Not*. Hawthorn, VIC: Lloyd O'Neil, 1972.

Day, David. *John Curtin: A Life*. Sydney, NSW: HarperCollins Australia, 1999.

Dowsing, Irene. *Curtin of Australia*. Melbourne, VIC: Acacia Press, 1969.

- Heenan, Tom. *From Traveller to Traitor: The Life of Wilfred Burchett*. Melbourne, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 2006.
- Horne, Donald. *The Lucky Country*. Sydney, NSW: Penguin, 2009.
- Lee, Norman E., *John Curtin: Saviour of Australia*. Melbourne, VIC: Longman Cheshire, 1983.
- Liddy, Matthew. "Australia's Hung Parliament Explained," *ABC News online*, November 17, 2011.
- Love, Peter. *Labour and the Money Power: Australian Labour Populism 1890-1950*. Melbourne, NSW: 1984.
- Lyons, Martyn, and Penny Russell. *Australia's History: Themes and Debates*. Sydney, NSW: UNSW Press, 2005.
- MacCallum, Mungo. *The Good, the Bad and the Unlikely: Australia's Prime Ministers*. Collingwood, VIC: Black Ink Press, 2012.
- MacCallum, Mungo. *Punch and Judy: The Double Disillusion Election of 2010*. Collingwood, VIC: Black Ink Press, 2010.
- Marshall, Debi. *The House of Hancock: The Rise and Rise of Gina Rinehart*. North Sydney, NSW: William Heinemann, 2012.
- Martin, A.W., and Patsy Hardy. *Dark and Hurrying Days: Menzies' 1941 Diary*. Canberra, ACT: National Library of Australia/Goanna Press, 1993.
- Peel, Mark, and Christina Twomey. *A History of Australia*. Basingstoke, WA: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011.
- Redditt, Lyn Anne. "Joseph Aloysius Carrodus." *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, accessed May 22, 2012.
- Ross, Lloyd. *John Curtin: A Biography*. South Melbourne, VIC: Macmillan, 1977.
- Sobocinska, Agnieszka. *Visiting the Neighbours: Australians in Asia*. Sydney, NSW: UNSW Press, 2014.
- Tink, Andrew. *Air Disaster Canberra: The Plane Crash that Destroyed a Government*. Sydney, NSW: UNSW Press, 2013.
- Webb, Janeen, and Andrew Enstice. *Aliens and Savages: Fiction, Politics and Prejudice in Australia*. Sydney, NSW: Harper Collins Australia, 1998.

Cricket

Browne, Frank. *Some of It Was Cricket*. Sydney, NSW: Murray, 1965.

Eastway, Robert. *Cricket Explained: From Grubber's to Googlies- A Beginner's Guide to the Great English Pastime*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1992.

Frith, David. *Bodyline Autopsy: The Full Story of the Most Sensational Test Cricket Series: Australia v England 1932-33*, London: Aurum Press, 2002.

Knight, Julian. *Cricket for Dummies*. Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons, Ltd., 2006.

Lee, Frank. *Cricket, Lovely Cricket*. London: Stanley Paul, 1960.

Wignall, Trevor. *Never A Dull Moment*. London: Hutchinson, 1941.

General Fiction and Literature

Bradbury, Ray. *The Martian Chronicles*. New York: Bantam, 1958.

Brasch, Walter M. *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus and the 'Cornfield Journalist': the Tale of Joel Chandler Harris*. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2000.

Brooks, Albert. *2030: The Real Story of What Happens to America*. New York: St Martin's Griffin, 2012.

Brooks, Geraldine. *The Secret Chord*. New York: Viking, 2015.

Burdett, John. *The Godfather of Kathmandu*. New York: Vintage, 2010.

Capote, Truman. *Answered Prayers*. New York: Vintage, 1994.

Capote, Truman. *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. New York: Random House, 1951.

Capote, Truman. *The Grass Harp and Other Stories*. New York: Vintage, 1993.

Capote, Truman. *In Cold Blood*. New York: Vintage 1994.

Capote, Truman. *Other Voices, Other Rooms*. New York: Vintage 1994.

Chandler, Raymond. *The Big Sleep*. London: Penguin Books, 1970.

Coetzee, J.M. *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life*. New York: Penguin, 1997.

Coetzee, J.M. *Disgrace*. New York: Penguin Books, 1999.

Conroy, Pat. *The Death of Santini: The Story of A Father and His Son*. New York: Nan A. Talese Doubleday, 2013.

Davidson, Rjurik. "The Interminable Suffering of Mysterious Dr. Wu." Accessed April 2, 2012.
www.locusmag.com/index/yr2005/t65.htm#A3449

Davidson, Rjurik. "Passing of the Minotaurs." Accessed April 1, 2012.
http://www.lexal.net/scifi/scifiction/originals/originals_archive/davidson/index.html

Dick, Philip K. *A Scanner Darkly*. London: Gollancz, 1977.

Dickens, Charles. *Bleak House*. Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1993.

Eliot, T.S. *The Waste Land*. New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922.

Flaubert, Gustave. *Madame Bovary*. New York: Signet Classics, 2013.

Gogol, Nikolai. *The Diary of a Mad Man and Other Stories*. New York: Signet Classics, 2005.

Harrison, Harry. *Make Room! Make Room!* New York: Orb Books, 1973.

Hemingway, Ernest. *A Farewell to Arms*. New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1969.

Isherwood, Christopher. *The Berlin Stories*. New York: New Directions, 1935.

Kafka, Franz. *Metamorphosis and Other Stories*. London: Penguin Books, 1992.

Lee, Harper. *Go Set A Watchman*. Scoresby, VIC: Random House Australia, 2015.

Lee, Harper. *To Kill A Mockingbird*. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2010.

Leonard, Elmore. *Cat Chaser*. New York: HarperCollins, 2003.

Martel, Yann. *Life of Pi*. New York: Mariner Books, 2001.

Mieville, China. *The City and the City*. London: Pan Books, 2009.

Mitchell, David. *Cloud Atlas*. New York: Random House, 2004.

Morrison, Toni. *Jazz*. London: Vintage, 2005.

Nabokov, Vladimir. *Lolita*. New York: Vintage, 1989.

O'Connor, Flannery. *A Good Man is Hard to Find and Other Stories*. San Diego, California: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977.

Ozick, Cynthia. *The Cannibal Galaxy*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1983.

Ozick, Cynthia. *The Messiah of Stockholm*. New York: Vintage Books, 1987.

Reichs, Tova. *One Hundred Philistine Foreskins*. Berkeley, California: Counterpoint Press, 2014.

Roth, Philip. *Operation Shylock: A Confession*. New York: Vintage International, 1993.

Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2007.

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2010.

Shakespeare, William. *The Merchant of Venice*. Melbourne, VIC: Penguin Group Australia, 1967.

Vidal, Gore. *The Best Man*. Boston, Massachusetts: Little, Brown, 1960.

Vidal, Gore, (writing as Edgar Box). *The City and the Pillar*. London: J. Lehmann, 1949.

Vidal, Gore. *Myra Breckenridge*. New York: Little, Brown, 1968.

Williams, John. *Stoner*. New York: New York Review Book Classics, 2006.

Williams, Tennessee. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. New York: Signet Classics, 1986.

Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Zola, Emile. *Therese Raquin*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Israel and the Jews

Apenszlak, Jacob, (editor). *The Black Book of Polish Jewry*. New York: Howard Fertig, 1982.

Browning, Christopher S. *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942*. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2004.

Flatow, Stephen M. "Jewish novelist Michael Chabon rails against fictional 'occupation.'" *Jewish News Service*, May 3, 2016.

Dwork, Deborah, and Robert Jan van Pelt. *Holocaust: A History*. New York: Norton, 2002.

Hirsch, Seymour. *The Samson Option: Israel's Nuclear Arsenal and American Foreign Policy*. New York: Random House, 1991.

Kizzia, Tom. "Sanctuary: Alaska, the Nazis and the Jews: the Forgotten Story of Alaska's Own Confrontation with the Holocaust." *Anchorage Daily News*, four-part series, May 16-19, 1999.

Jewish Australia

Andgel, Anne. *Fifty Years of Caring: The History of the Australia Jewish Welfare Society 1936-1986*. Sydney, NSW: AJWS and the Australian Jewish Historical Society, 1988.

Astour, Michael. *History and the Freeland League and the Territorialist Idea*. New York: Freeland League, 1967.

Bartrop, Paul. *Australia and the Holocaust 1933-45*. Melbourne, VIC: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1994.

Blakeney, Michael. *Australia and the Jewish Refugees 1933-1948*. Sydney, NSW: Croom Helm Australia, 1985.

Brahm Levey, Geoffrey, and Philip Mendes (editors). *Jews and Australian Politics*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Books, 2004.

Cohen, Samuel. "Jewish Influx." *Truth*. August 7, 1938.

Gettler, Leon. *An Unpromised Land*. South Freemantle, WA: Freemantle Arts Centre Press, 1993.

Levi, John S., *Rabbi Jacob Danglow: the Uncrowned Monarch of Australian Jews*. Melbourne, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 1995.

Patkin, Aaron. "Jewish Immigration to Australia: Its Obvious Problems and Its Equally Obvious Difficulties." *Australian Jewish Herald*, March 24, 1938.

Rubinstein, Hillary L., *Chosen: The Jews in Australia*. North Sydney, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1987.

Rubinstein, Hillary L. *The Jews in Australia: A Thematic History, Volume I 178-1945*. Port Melbourne, VIC: William Heinemann, 1991.

Rubinstein, W.D. (editor). *The Jews in Australia*. Melbourne, VIC: Australasian Educa Press, 1986.

Rubinstein, W.D. (editor). *Jews in the Sixth Continent*. North Sydney, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1987.

Rutland, Suzanne D. *Edge of the Diaspora: Two Centuries of Jewish Settlement in Australia*. Sydney, NSW: Southwood Press, 1997.

Rovner, Adam. *In the Shadow of Zion*. New York: New York University Press, 2014.

Steinberg, I.N. *Australia- The Unpromised Land, In Search of a Home*. London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1948.

Steinberg, Isaac N., "What an Outrage," *Australian Jewish Forum*, February 1945.

Wimborne, Brian. "A Land of Milk and Honey? A Jewish Settlement Proposal in the Kimberley." *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Originally published May 22, 2014. Accessed on January 24, 2016.

Other

Archer, Jodie, and Matthew L. Jockers. *The Bestseller Code: Anatomy of the Blockbuster Novel*. New York: St Martin's Press, 2016.

Brinker, Menachem. "Theme and Interpretation." In *The Return of Thematic Criticism*, ed. Werner Sollors, 33. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993.

James, Clive. *Unreliable Memoirs*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2009.

Kaplan, Frank. *Gore Vidal: Biography*. New York: Open Road Media, 2013.

Klepner, Frank. *Yosl Bergner: Art as a Meeting of Cultures*. Melbourne, VIC: Palgrave Macmillan Australia, 2004.

Law, Benjamin. *Gaysia*. Collingwood, VIC: Black Inc Books, 2012.

Leonard, Tom. "Is the Obama marriage on the rocks?" *Daily Mail*, January 18, 2014.
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2541580/Is-Obama-marriage-rocks-Ugly-fights-selfie-Even-Presidential-affair-Astonishing-claims-emerge.html>

Opala, Joseph A. *The Gullah: Rice, Slavery and the Sierra Leone-American Connection*. Washington, D.C.: United States Information Service, 1987.

Pavel, Thomas. "Thematics and Historical Evidence." In *The Return of Thematic Criticism*, ed. Werner Sollors, 121. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Peters, Charles. *Five Days in Philadelphia: The Amazing "We Want Willkie" Convention of 1940 and How it Freed FDR to Save the Western World*. New York: Public Affairs, 2005.

Porter, Darwin. *Pink Triangle: The Feuds and Private Lives of Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal and Truman Capote*. New York: Blood Moon Productions, 2014.

Schultz, William Todd. *Tiny Terror: Why Truman Capote (Almost) Wrote Answered Prayers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Sollors, Werner. *The Return of Thematic Criticism*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Teeman, Tim. *In Bed with Gore Vidal*. New York: Riverdale Avenue Books, 2013.

Raymond Trousson, Raymond. "Reflections of *Stoffgeschichte*." In *The Return of Thematic Criticism*, ed. Werner Sollors, 290. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Vidal, Gore. *Palimpsest: A Memoir*. New York: Random House, 1995.

Vidal, Gore. *Point to Point Navigation: A Memoir*. New York: Vintage, 2007.

PART ONE: The Jew Lizard

Western Australia

1935

There was an allegation of theft from the station and the pastoralists called the local constabulary. By the time the official from the Department of the Interior appeared on the scene—he just happened to be in the district that day—the rumor of theft had expanded to a counter-charge of rape. The official from the Department of the Interior came in his ornate car to investigate the initial allegation lodged, as it were, against ‘Mary’, a young Aboriginal woman long assumed to be secretly embittered against the whites.

The whites—the pastoralists—included a head stockman, a lead stockman, a quiet stockman, a couple of imported drovers from Scotland, the station owner and his Missus.¹ Together and with consensus, they informed the official from the Department of the Interior, a big white man from Canberra, that Mary had allowed her relations out bush to run off with two head of cattle. That’s why, they informed him, they had detained Mary—that was the name they’d given her—and put around her neck an iron shackle attached to chains the drovers held in a sleek, rusty line.

The official from the Department of the Interior had brought with him three others: two white policemen and an Aboriginal tracker, a blackfella who worked alongside the white men. The official listened to the stockmen and to the owner of the station. He then turned to the Missus and asked:

“Well? What say you?”

The Missus proved no different from the others. She pointed a long bony finger at Mary and said, “She helped her people spear and steal our cattle.”

The stockman said, “She’s been sending secret messages to the blacks out bush. She told them when our cows were moving from one paddock to the other, and she turned a blind eye when them blackfellas ran off with two of ‘em.”

The lead stockman and the drovers from Scotland nodded their heads while the quiet stockman broke his silence: “I saw her, sir. I saw her with my own two eyes, I did.”

The official from the Department of the Interior turned to the station owner, “How do you know she did any of this?”

“How,” came the station owner’s reply, “do we know she didn’t?”

“She’s never appreciated what we’ve done for her.” The Missus said, “She and her people secretly hate and resent us.”

“All I can tell you,” said the station owner, “is that I had two more heads of cattle than I do now and that was before we drove them across a billabong.” The station owner explained that he didn’t even want this Mary—this dirty black woman—working on his station. “We go out of our way to help these people the best we can, but we get no respect. No appreciation for our efforts whatsoever.”

The official looked down at Mary. The weight of the shackles had forced her to her knees. Her hair was disheveled and her upper lip sweaty. He saw rage and anger across her face. Her bolt-like, pinpoint black eyes never wavered. When her eyes finally met his, the official did not see nor did he feel fear emanating from this woman. He felt the opposite of fear and this, for reasons that would remain unknown to him for the rest of his days, he found disquieting.

“She hates us,” the Missus said. “She’s always hated us and she always will.”

“These allegations?” The official stood over young black woman. “What say you?”

The eyes of Mary bore right into him, “Them two men fuck me and put me with child.” She nodded at the drovers.

“Rape is a very serious allegation.” The official looked down on her, “What say you about these two heads of cattle your people have run off with, hmm?”

Mary broke her stern gaze to look down at the dusty earth, soiling the dress the white people forced her to wear.

“Mary?” The official from the Department of the Interior clasped the underside of her chin, lifting her face, “What say you about those two heads of cattle? Did you help your people steal them? You been killum bullocky? Yes or no?”²

Limited by the iron shackle, Mary moved her head to free it from his clutch. “They was hungry.”

“They was hungry?” The official repeated her response with increased derision. “They was hungry, indeed! I mean honestly.” He turned to the Missus, “Don’t you people teach them anything? What is wrong with your education system out here?”

“She wasn’t smart enough for house or yard work. That’s why we’s put her with the cows.”

“Fine lot you’ve made for yourself now, isn’t it?” The official looked down at the station owner. “She’s accused two of your men of rape.”

“She’s always accusing them of rape.”

“Is she reliable?” The official looked at Mary. “Has she been a good worker all this time or has she always been difficult?”

“You ask me,” the Missus said, “she’s been *making* trouble.”

Mary, throughout all of this, kept her sights on the big white man. Mary had seen the official from the Department of the Interior on previous visits to the district when he humbled the station owner and dismissed the Missus into docility. He wore khaki, government-mandated trousers. His boots were dusty. His button-up shirt was white, short sleeved and soiled at the arm pits. He wore a belt and, on it, a giant ring of keys, hundreds of them.

The official looked straight into her eyes, “You say these two men raped you? I believe the word you used was ‘fuck’, am I correct?”

Mary glared at him, “I tell the truth.”

The official glanced at the drover holding onto the chain, “This *lubra* here claims you raped her and put her with child. Is this true? What say you?”

“I didn’t rape her.” He spoke with a Highland brogue. “She came to me willingly, sir, and I was lonely.”

“And you?” The official looked at the other drover. “What say you?”

“I ain’t had nothing to do with this gin, sir.” The other drover re-grasped the chain, pulling on it. “On my honor, sir, I ain’t never laid a hand on ‘er.”

The official looked down at Mary. He knew she knew she’d get it now, false allegations be damned. “Have you,” he turned to the station owner and his Missus, “ever had any problems with these two drovers? Any problems at all?”

“No, sir.” The station owner said, “None.”

“What about with Mary here? What say you about her?”

“She’s denied any wrongdoing, but we know she’s related to some of them nigs that haven’t been brought in yet and in the past them same nigs have captured my animals and run them off into the bush.”

“And you’ve made these allegations clear to her, have you?”

“I have, sir.”

The official looked at Mary. She was a slim woman, her arms as thin as broom handles. Restrained in shackle and chain, she appeared harmless but, the official knew, she—like her kind—could be violent and vengeful.

“Well, it’s no secret that all Aborigines are prone to exaggeration, now is it?”³ The official heard murmurs of agreement among the pastoralists. “Samson?”⁴

An Aboriginal tracker stepped into the foreground. Like Mary, he too was dressed in white man’s clothes. He wore dusty boots and a shirt stained with perspiration. He also wore a belt but, dangling from it, he had a coiled stock whip secured with a piece of string. With one look, Mary saw this Aboriginal tracker was certainly not from her country, nor from any country nearby.

“Go ahead, Samson, and remove her clothes.” The official came to stand next to the station owner and his Missus. “Strip the savage before we flog her, yes?”

The response from the station owner and his Missus was muted: the station owner knew this, or something like it, would be the outcome, while his Missus blinked wide eyes in anticipation.

“Those that break the law ought to be punished as soon as possible.” The official from the Department of the Interior said, “And it is my firm belief that under properly regulated conditions, corporal punishment should be handed out in lieu of imprisonment which, let us be honest, is clearly not understood by the native.”

Samson jerked Mary up to her feet. He used a knife to cut out the back of her dress, and it fell to the ground. The Missus noticed not only the thin weight of Mary but also the subtle bulge in her lower abdomen. Exposed to the sun and male eyes, Mary continued to glare at the white man.

“What these natives need,” the official went on, “is a strong moral compass to guide them toward their inevitable demise. All we can do now is protect them from the evil wrongdoing they are so clearly intent on inflicting on themselves.”

Samson unleashed the stock whip from its coil, snapping it on the red clay beneath his feet.

“Hold on to her tight, boys.” The official stepped away from the shackle and chains. “On my order,” he cleared his throat, “feel free to strike her!”

Using a whip made for mules, Samson whipped the black woman, drawing blood across her back. His thrashing was thorough and continuous and she cried out in pain. Mary had seen other beatings. She’d seen death come at the hands of white people. She cursed at them now—at all them white people—glaring up at the big white man with his ring of keys attached to his belt. She did not know his name but she knew he was the man in charge and she cursed at him in *her* language.

Mary looked him straight in the eye and spat out a series of words:

“*Balanda*”, “horse”, “*gardiya*”, “traffic”, “*munpa munpa*” and “*mungamunga*”.⁵

The white people could not begin to understand her language, yet all of them white people quietly pitied the young black woman.

New South Wales

1939

Out of his northern element now, Joseph Carrodus rode in an ornate car past the Royal Botanic Gardens and onto Anzac Parade where the route forked at Alison Road. Though born in Richmond and raised in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, Joseph Carrodus hadn't considered himself urban for over a decade.⁶ He felt out of place in the South, yet he'd been summoned to a private audience and was brought to the Members Entrance. He said, "I'm here to see a man about a horse."

"Certainly, sir." The man behind the glass—he wore a pageboy cap—stepped out from the booth, slamming the door behind him. "We was told to expect you. Right this way, sir."

Joseph Carrodus followed the pageboy cap past the Main Tote House around the side of Tea House and back through the area known as the 'Queens Stand' where giant white tents erected upon the grass appeared ahead. Inside these tents was a maze of stables lined with leather and hay. The scent of manure and oil hung heavy in the air. Jockeys, most of them dressed in riding breeches and looped switches, emerged from cubicles housing a series of pampered thoroughbreds. Joseph Carrodus heard laughter and the pop of a cork.

Pageboy cap said, "Mind your feet, sir."

Joseph Carrodus glanced down. Dried mud and grass carpeted the floor, a makeshift layer of pinewood. His shoes were caked with dirt and bits of hay and he doubted the effort to clean them later.

They turned a corner and came into an open area. Joseph Carrodus kept an eye on his feet, hoping not to set foot in a pile of horse dung. It was not until he heard the braying that he saw a horse rise in fury onto its hind legs. The beast snarled and bared its teeth, throwing him against a bench before reins were pulled to bring the horse under control. The horse was magnificent and statuesque—a palomino—a living brute of near-white gold with a long sensuous neck of sculpted muscularity.

"This one is hot blooded, she is."

"Oi, Simpson!" Pageboy cap moved in to help Joseph Carrodus up from the bench. "Can't you bloody well take care of anything?"

“*Oi*, you!” An Aboriginal man stepped into the foreground. “She was just eatin’ and gettin’ her mane clipped when she up and bronco-kicked the second you’s showed up.”

Joseph Carrodus was helped to his feet, and that’s when the Aborigine took more than a passing glance at him.

“Who’s this?”

“Never you mind, Simpson. We’re just passing through.”

Simpson looked Joseph Carrodus right in the eye, watching the white man smooth his hair. “My apologies to you, sir.” Simpson did not smile. “The race is in a few days and our girl here is just a bit jumpy.”

Joseph Carrodus noticed Simpson had a coiled stock whip dangling from his belt. His physical appearance had an uncanny resemblance to Samson, the loyal Aboriginal tracker who’d been found dead, shot on the banks of the Ord two years earlier. The voice of Simpson here in New South Wales was different from Samson’s back in Western Australia. Clearly, thought Joseph Carrodus, this was an assimilated black who’d been taught to speak properly. His skin might be as dark as night but his manner of speech was that of a working-class white.

Simpson nodded. “Sorry ‘bout the horse, sir.”

Joseph Carrodus dusted himself off. “Think nothing of it.”

They rounded another corner and Pageboy cap said, “Gentleman to see you here, sir.”

“Thank you, Randall.” The reply: “That’ll be all.”

Joseph Carrodus took half a step forward and said, “A pleasure, sir.”

Sir Samuel Cohen stood with his back to Joseph Carrodus. He held a bucket of carrots he fed one-by-one to a reddish brown chestnut stallion.

“I appreciate your coming here to see me on such short notice, Mr. Carrodus, and I appreciate the discretion with which you will no doubt preserve our discussion.” Sir Samuel turned around then. He was a stout man with a bald head and a big nose set beneath a pair of unruly eyebrows as thick as gray caterpillars and a luxuriant moustache.⁷ To Joseph Carrodus, Sir Samuel Cohen looked, for all intents and purposes, like a Jew, yet his presence at the Australian Jockey Club indicated a mastery of financial success without which entry would never have been granted to him, nor to any of his ilk.

“Absolutely, sir.” Joseph Carrodus held out his hand. “I wouldn’t dream of it being otherwise.”

Sir Samuel replied with a single word: “Good.”

Joseph Carrodus withdrew his hand. “Might I be permitted to say, sir, that I find this an odd location to have our discussion.”

“*Nu?* You have a problem with it?”⁸

“No, sir.”

“Tell me, Mr. Carrodus,” Sir Samuel did not smile, “do you enjoy the races? Have you ever been to Randwick before?”

“Did you summon me here today to speak about horses?”

“No, of course not but, before I begin, I want to expressly remind you, Mr. Carrodus, that everything I am going to say is by definition *off* the record. Though I speak quietly, I nevertheless speak clearly for my community, but that does not change the fact that *this* conversation *never* happened. Should you tell anyone you met me here for this little talk today I will of course deny your claim and, if need be, I shall make a significant and sincere effort to undermine your legitimacy to our mutual friends and acquaintances not just here in Sydney but in Canberra as well. Do I make myself clear, Mr. Carrodus?”

Joseph Carrodus nodded his head, “Yes, sir. Of course.”

“Good. Let us move away from this beast.” Sir Samuel fed another carrot to the stallion, then stepped into a separate room with chairs and benches and felt-turf covering the bare earth. A jockey—a short man with racing goggles—struggled to pull a tall black leather boot from his right foot. The jockey was bare-chested, hairy and glistening with sweat.

Sir Samuel said, “Pedro: the room, please,” and the jockey immediately disappeared. Sir Samuel pointed at the bench and said, “Sit,” then moved to a chair near the corner of the room. “Two years ago, about seven thousand Jewish refugees landed here in Australia. I’m sure I needn’t remind you that the people you work for, Mr. Carrodus—that is to say the Government—saw fit to intern about two thousand of them.”

“They were a security risk, sir.”

“Of course they were. Of that I have no doubt. I’m not questioning the motives or the intentions of your employers, Mr. Carrodus. Quite the opposite. The Government is right to raise not only apprehension, but also suspicion in regard to any repatriation for refugees on these, our fine golden shores.”

“Mmm.”

“I understand, Mr. Carrodus, that as Secretary for the Department of the Interior, it is your duty to inform our nation’s Government about the proposal regarding the Kimberley scheme. Am I correct in my understanding, Mr. Carrodus?”

“You are correct, sir.”

“Good. For me to be otherwise would be,” he paused, “unusual.”

Joseph Carrodus said, “Mmm” without parting his lips.

“The community I represent, Mr. Carrodus, has a self-interest and it is due to this self-interest that I asked you here today. We must safeguard the status of the Jewish people here in Australia. We are the classic example, venture I to say the very archetype, of an immigrant group that has upheld the—how shall I put it?—normative status quo regarding Australian society.⁹ It is no secret that we Jews serve openly in both state and federal parliaments. We’ve also been mayors. We’ve served in your armed forces and some of us have even been knighted by the King. Up until three years ago, we had Isaac Isaacs—*Sir* Isaac Isaacs—serving as Governor General. Before that, he was the Chief Justice of Australia. We Jews occupy prominent and important posts. Do you have any relatives, Mr. Carrodus, who arrived with the First Fleet?”

“Vaguely, sir.”

“We do, and in that regard we’ve been here right from the very start. In short, Mr. Carrodus, we Jews enjoy a good life here. We are accepted. We are free from persecution and we have been fully integrated into Australian society. We are worthy British citizens.”¹⁰

“I don’t doubt you, sir. Not at all.”

“I didn’t think you would, Mr. Carrodus. But nevertheless I fear the strength and fortitude of our community will collapse if we Jews endorse this absurd scheme to establish—of all things—a Jewish colony in the East Kimberley. Let me say it in language no clearer than this, Mr. Carrodus: it just cannot happen here in Australia, no.”¹¹

Joseph Carrodus said, “Mmm.”

“The pillar, Mr. Carrodus, that is our acceptance into Australia is our assimilation. People know Jews are here but they don’t realize it. This is not the case for the Jews of Europe, not comparatively at least. They’ve done something to set off *der Fuhrer* and whatever that something is, Mr. Carrodus, we don’t want it here in Australia.¹² Our invisibility will implode if we allow the hordes of Europe—especially the *Jewish* hordes—to settle among us in this country.¹³ No. Venture I to say it, Mr. Carrodus, but the Jewish refugee is not and never will be a

true Australian. He is not worthy of British citizenship, for if he was, they would let him immigrate to England or Scotland or to Wales even. If anything ought to be more obvious, Mr. Carrodus, it is that we Jews of Australia, in our thoughts and attitudes, are British from the top of our covered heads all the way down to our polished leather bootstraps.”¹⁴

“Of course you are, sir.”

“We do not take this privilege lightly, Mr. Carrodus, for this privilege we so enjoy and indeed take for granted will be shattered and, venture I to say it, usurped should our nation’s leaders allow for the large-scale settlement of alien Jews. That is why I am not in favor of this Kimberley scheme.”¹⁵

Joseph Carrodus had expected a different reaction to the scheme written about in all the newspapers, and he was relieved to hear this; he said, “I must say, sir, that I agree with you wholeheartedly. It is not my position, nor will it be the position of my department, to advocate to the Government in Canberra in favor of the Kimberley scheme. Frankly sir, I find the plan on the whole to be wildly unsustainable for a plethora of reasons, the degradation of top-end topsoil chief among them.”

“I know many Christians are in favor of this scheme. I know Willcock in Perth has been swayed to support the scheme. I know Sir Thomas supports it. I know both the Anglican and the Roman Catholic Archdioceses of every capital city is in favor of the scheme, not to mention a whole heap of others but *not* me. *I* don’t like this scheme and *I* speak to you now—in private—as *the* voice of Australia’s Jews. We are not in favor of it, Mr Carrodus. We don’t want those Jews here. We don’t want them in Sydney. We don’t want them anywhere in New South Wales. We don’t even want them in Melbourne, and our appeal to you, Mr. Carrodus, is we especially don’t want them in the Kimberley, no matter how far away we all think it is. You’ve got to stop this scheme from going through, Mr. Carrodus. You’ve got to kill this baby in its infancy.”¹⁶

“Of course, sir,” Joseph Carrodus nodded. “We are in agreement.”

“Good.” Sir Samuel rose to his feet. “That is all. I’m sure you can show yourself out.”

Joseph Carrodus left Sir Samuel to wander back through the maze of horse stalls and jockey paddocks, emerging finally into a bright sun obscured by low-hanging clouds. He saw jockeys and trainers leading several thoroughbreds away from the tents out to the racetrack. He saw the golden palomino that had charged him earlier. Far away by a number of yards, the palomino wore an empty saddle and a decorative cloak emblazoned with emblems of state

origin. Holding on to the reins, Simpson—the blackfella—guided the horse out to the track accompanied by a jockey dressed in a diamond-checked satin jersey of green and black.

This parade of thoroughbreds came to a halt just beyond the barrier surrounding the racecourse. The jockeys—all of them dressed in riding boots and bright colours—stepped away from the horses to congregate around the winners circle. Joseph Carrodus did not notice the palomino turn in agitation. He did not notice the amber-coloured eye narrow its glare in his direction. Nor did he see Simpson slacken his grip on the reins. The only thing Joseph Carrodus saw was an angry golden white horse charging at him at full speed. The horse bared teeth and rose up on hind legs, bringing them down on the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, robbing the official of mortal life by trampling his body.¹⁷ Blood poured out and stained the grass, and a woman let out a scream

Simpson grabbed hold of the reins to regain control of the horse and dragged the palomino to a distant paddock, leaving behind a collection of people to survey the damage. It was at this moment that Simpson, a hired hand—a hired *Aboriginal* hand—patted the neck of that horse and said:

“That’s a good girl. Simmer down now.” He cooed, “Simmer down.”

Pageboy cap reappeared standing over the bruised and crumpled corpse. He removed his hat and shook his head. “A gruesome accident.” He said, “I watched the whole thing happen. The horse was spooked.” He glanced at the jockeys, now joined by horse trainers, horse owners and other spectators equally as shocked and horrified by the scene.

That’s when the Pageboy cap asked no one in particular: “Does anyone know who that man was?”

Victoria

1946

On Sunday, Shtulik met Shmendrik when he came into Sam Cohen's Continental Café on Drummond Street in Carlton.¹⁸ Shtulik and Shmendrik met like this almost daily and as usual Shmendrik, a little bald man forever clad in a cardigan that hung from his bony shoulders as if from a wire hanger, was already seated at a table near the front window of the café where he sipped coffee from a tiny cup a waiter brought him.

Shtulik, a portly Polish import to Victoria, removed his hat and, upon sight of the newspapers strewn about the top of the wooden table, said, "You see that bit about the Kimberley in this week's fish-wrapper?"

Shmendrik turned his head, "Nu?"

"The paper," Shtulik sat down. "You saw the diatribe that Zionist wrote?"

"Diatribe?" Shmendrik was hard of hearing. "What diatribe?" He set the tiny cup down to sift through the newspapers in front of him. Some of the newspapers were copies left over from weeks ago mingled with more recent editions from the day before. Shmendrik made no attempt to check the dates as he browsed the headlines:

*Britain detonates A-Bomb over Potsdam—City Leveled—Yanks drop H-Bomb on Nuremberg*¹⁹

Shmendrik said, "I don't see any diatribe."

"Not that paper." Shtulik rifled through the copies on the table. "*This* paper," he thrust a recent copy of the *Australian Jewish Herald* at Shmendrik. "Page four."

Shmendrik turned the pages slowly. Clearing his throat, he read the headline aloud: "*Southern Jews Shouldn't Celebrate Robert Menzies' 7th Consecutive Year as Prime Minister.*"²⁰

"Yep." Shtulik said, "That's the one. Did you read it?"

"I'm reading it now." Shtulik, a native Yiddish speaker, may not have understood every word in the English-language newspaper, but he experienced no difficulty in grasping its tone:

In August 1940, just days before the official outbreak of World War Two, Prime Minister Robert Menzies signed the paper that opened the Kimberley region to the establishment of a large-scale Jewish colony here in Australia. In his order, the

Prime Minister limited the number of Jewish European refugees to 75,000 over a three year period. However, as we all now very well know, just over 100,000 Jews poured in to the ports of Wyndham within one single calendar year from the date of the signing of that order.

Since then, the people of Australia have watched as the intended trickle of European Jewish refugees has turned into an unstoppable deluge we Jews of the Australian South foresaw and consequently warned against. Current estimates place the number of European Jews now living in the Kimberley region as high as two million. Other estimates put the number as high as three million, to say nothing of the estimated half million currently living at various transit centres scattered across the Indian Ocean.

When will the Menzies Government in Canberra see the Kimberley scheme for what it is: a nightmarish reality in which the Jews of Europe will...”²¹

“Nu?” Shmendrik dropped the paper to the table, “Aaron Patkin is always complaining about the Kimberley Jews. This is not news.” He lifted the cup to his lips, “That’s *old* news, my friend.”

“Did you see his bit about deporting the Jews back to Mauritius?”

“Nu? That’s ridiculous. Mauritius is a tiny dot of an island.”

“I know.” Shtulik said, “That’s why half of the half-mil that’re still there are starving. Did we not predict a humanitarian crisis that we’re now responsible for? Honest to God.”

“We’re not responsible for that. *That* was Hitler’s fault. What’s the alternative, the showers? They say we lost a couple million that way.”²²

“Sometimes,” Shtulik turned to the page of another paper, “I see these pictures,” he looked at the printed image of a Jewish mother holding a newborn standing behind a fence, the caption: *Camp Senesh, Port Louis*. “I think maybe a better fate awaited them elsewhere. Anywhere,” Shtulik shook his head, “other than here.”

Shmendrik looked at the photo. “Nu?” He said, “There’s nothing we can do now but hope they all stay up there.”

“I know.” Shtulik nodded. “The last thing we want them to do is to come down here, right?”

Shmendrik stared at the picture of the woman behind the fence in *The Argus*. Her eyes were dark, her cheeks were sunken and the baby on her hip looked anything but happy. “Nu?” He said, “I expect to be dead soon.”

*

At the other end of Australia in the East Kimberley, a bark was thrown aside, landing on unformed earth, creating stones that scattered as tall as peaks and as deep as valleys across an ever-changing horizon bursting with a rainbow serpent of many colors. The bark—a brownish slate gray—lay idle upon some dry stones. From beneath, four tiny legs emerged on either side of a prickly tail lined with spikes. The lizard—it was a fat little thing—was a squat creature covered in horns with a two-toned tail bent behind him. The diamond-shaped head was fixed and pointy, its eyes small and black.

The lizard waddled with adhesive dexterity, using claws to hook onto the trunk of a boab tree knotted with branches blooming with long white whiskers. The lizard leapt on to the narrow trunk of a nearby pandanus, causing a flock of black cockatoos to take flight. The cockatoos cackled in laughter, frightening the lizard who jumped off the tree to land on a patchwork of mud and seed that pooled along the edges of a river.

On the ground, the lizard raised its diamond-shaped head and, cocking it to the side, flattened himself. He puffed out a scaly belly and opened a golden yellow mouth, expanding the jaw and frilly edge of a beard that hung like an upturned, reptilian halo beneath his chin.

This lizard—the Jew lizard—scurried away, those four squat legs carrying him far and fast, and those hooked claws cut up chunks of mud and earth. In a furious blur, the Jew lizard dashed under a spindly candelabrum of fuzzy pink mulla-mulla and lifted its diamond-shaped head, inching closer to a narrow green stalk, puffing out his scaly, frilly beard and widening his jaw to open a yellow mouth.

The lizard snapped his jaw shut and tasted the green stalk of the mulla-mulla. The flavour noxious, the lizard ran, scurrying away through sharp and hazardous bushes of grass under lit by red-orange earth. He came to the edge of a mighty river twisting spinelessly.

The river, on a clear day, reflected the wide sky like a flat shard of mirror, but the lizard scurried past this. The world of the Jew lizard had once been endless and infinite. In the

beginning and for all but eternity, the river had been a meandering stream encircled by the red formations of rocks and mountains. Men with black skin, small in their number, had danced upon the world of the lizard, but now there stood a modern jungle of concrete, bitumen and endless construction. Like the lizard, the men with white skin changed color in the sun: first pink, then red and, during the wet, to blue. They took over and the men with black skin all but disappeared. Then fences made of wood and barbed wire went up, cutting through the land, carving the world of the Jew lizard into irreconcilable sections that were arduous to traverse or be at home in. A whole new array of creatures followed: cows, dogs, sheep, cats and horses. What they didn't tear up they ate. They made strange noises. Covered in fur, they barked at the sight of the Jew lizard and tried to eat him. Others hissed at him and chased the Jew lizard to the tops of boabs to swipe at him with sharp claws that broke skin, causing blood to ooze..

The Jew lizard leapt onto a slab of concrete hidden under a bridge that stretched over the twisting, northbound river of Ord. The lizard scurried across that bridge—one of several, all of them spanning the distance from one polluted bank to the other—along the road past the old airport and the new riverside high rise that had conquered the world of this Jew lizard, stealing what was left of the fertile wetlands that had once been home to his brood and ancestry.

The lizard was now in a country foreign and hot, lined with roads warm and wide. First there had been songlines hidden away and known by many but then only by a few. Then came the roads, the white man brought them; first cut out of dirt, then laid with cement and paved over with bitumen. The city that rose up among these roads rose slowly at first. The men with the black skin had built nothing like the roads and fences that now crisscrossed the land. The men with the black skin had dug and dug but, after a while, had stopped. The white man was forever digging and when he was not digging, he brought the black men back and made them dig.

The black men had not herded animals that barked and brayed. The black men had not hunted crocodiles. The black men did not ceaselessly dig and construct. Their women had not swatted at the lizard nor had they sprayed at the lizard with a pungent, spicy mist that later choked the living, breathing life right out of his near-black green prickly skin. No, these black men had done nothing to exile the Jew lizard from his realm.

That had been the white man—the first set, small in numbers—who grew tired in a way the black men did not. The first white man brought foreign vegetation he put down in rows and rows here and there, then everywhere. He planted tubes that spewed out water and gas. Above

the earth, he planted leafless trees that carried strings—black strings—that were hot and alive. That first white man had used bitumen to build roads; the lizard followed those roads to places where white men dug holes in which he buried other white men, men sleeping in boxes, piling moist red clay over them but later no tree, not even grass, grew up out of that dirt.²³ The white men rotated his animals and his people—his women in particular—and moved the men with black skin out, no matter how many of them came in from the bush. The white man sat idle and his number slowly dwindled and, for a time, declined.

But then the new white man came with the grapes and the wine.

This new white man had beards and sidelocks and poisonous grapes, and he swept into the land like a cyclone coming in for the wet. He built tents and fences, then more roads cut with dirt and bitumen, then with hot tar and asphalt. He planted more leafless trees and linked them together with black string pulsating with the heat of bolted lightning. He dug more holes. He was forever digging! Once dug, the holes filled with mucky, mudflat water, yet into these holes he put more tubes filled with more water and more gas. He planted more sleeping white men—men wrapped in white shrouds—in more places along the outskirts of this newly-constructed concrete habitat, but no new trees or bushes grew from these seedlings. This new white man increased in number, exiling not just the Jew lizard but also the black cockatoo, the kookaburras, the barramundi, the crocodiles, brolgas, caterpillars, snails, snakes, hawks, ravens, magpies and flying foxes; even the men with the black skin were thrust into an ever-shrinking world they could hardly share.

The Jew lizard scurried toward the city, scurrying over hot bitumen across a vast expanse of urban concrete and past steps, some of them marbled, that led up into the white men's dwellings and synagogues, his *yeshivot* or into his *batei mikveh*. A separate slab of concrete led the lizard toward the Lakeside market and to this new white man and his ever increasing number. It was here that the Jew lizard climbed the trunk of a leafless tree, careful not to run too high to be zapped by the bolts of lightning coursing through those black vines. From here, the lizard enjoyed a panoramic view of the Lakeside market hemmed in by five streets: Bavin Street, Rehov Bishop Pilcher, Arbah Artzot, Lubavitch Boulevard and the Avenue of the Vilna Ga'on.

The Lakeside market was alive as piles of ripe tomatoes were bartered for imported bananas and grapes hanging in clusters near netted cloves of garlic. The Jew lizard eyed the bloody, skinless meat culled from the flesh of cows, lambs, goats and kangaroos. The lizard

turned around on that pole, sticking his tail out behind him. He cocked his head and caught sight of some new white men, smaller versions of the original, congregating at the root of that leafless tree. Like the new white man, his smaller offspring wore circular skullcaps and sidelocks and ritual fringe—their *tzit-tzit*—and they spotted the Jew lizard way up there on that leafless tree, circling below like buzzards. One of them picked up a piece of wood and, standing on his toes, swatted at the lizard, but he was fat and had short arms and the stick he threw had no hope of hitting the lizard.

The lizard scurried to the other side of the pole, careful not to hit or snag the black vines. He jumped on to a roof made of corrugated aluminum, radiant and hot from the sun. He scurried over to the white wooden branches of a ghost gum tree that, for centuries, overhung the area now home to the Lakeside market. The lizard scurried down to cut across the hot road, a steaming flat riverbed of toxins made further treacherous by the hooved feet of horses and the spinning wheels of the white man's automobile, both of which promised to flatten the Jew lizard dead against the asphalt.

The lizard scurried to the grass, a veritable island in the middle of a black tar road. From here, the lizard leapt up on to a horse driven buggy over-burdened with fresh fruits and lettuce to hide beneath a burlap bag filled with chia and petit maize. There, the Jew lizard feasted for hours until the cart came to a halt. Crate by crate, each compartment of produce was lifted out of the hitched trailer as the lizard scurried around the vegetables in search of a new place to hide but—alas!—he was spotted by a toothless white stockman who jumped back from a box of turnips in fright. The Jew lizard, sensing threat, flattened himself and puffed out all his frilly scales. Opening his yellow mouth to hiss, he arched his front paw and raised those hooked claws, ready to strike.

The toothless white stockman fled from the cart, his sidelocks flapping in the wind. Another white man came up to look, spotting the lizard hidden among the greens. “Moshe! Kipke! Anshel! Come take a look at this!”

More white men came up to scoff at the Jew lizard, one of them said: “*Paskudne yashtsherke*.”*

There was a voice—a booming, light voice—that brought the white men to a halt. A black woman appeared, and the Jew lizard recognized her skin instantly: she was not of the

* “*paskudne yashtsherke*” – Yiddish for “nasty lizard.”

saltwater people, nor was she from the desert. Like the lizard, she was displaced here in this new land belonging now—somehow—to someone else.

The black woman, in turn, recognized a kindred spirit in that Jew lizard and she came up to the cart where he was hiding to coo at him in *Language*.

“Be careful, Mary.” The white men said, “He’s liable to bite ya’ finger off!”

The black woman ignored him, lifting a crate filled with the tusks of Belgian endive to speak in a language the lizard did not understand. Though on foreign soil—her language made this obvious—the black woman was, in effect, some sort of local and it was clear to the lizard that she came from one of the neighboring countries.

The black woman held out her hand, laying her palm flat. The lizard recognized her scent and viewed her not as a relation per se, but as a relation of a relation of a relation. This black woman coaxed the Jew lizard to drop his prickly defenses and closed his hollow yellow mouth. Using his four squat legs, the Jew lizard waddled onto the pink palm of her black hand. He traveled up her forearm, straddling her black skin with hooked claws. She whispered at the Jew lizard, speaking to him like a beloved aunt doting on a mischievous nephew and she lifted him from the cart much to the revulsion of the white men standing around her.

“How can you touch that filthy creature? Be forewarned, Mary.” The white men were adamant, “He could have diseases!”

“They could have diseases.” The black woman stroked and caressed the head and neck of the Jew lizard, “We already know them mob get creepy sores on their lips in the wet.”²⁴

The black woman took a step back from the cart, bringing the lizard on her arm to where the other Jews could see it.

“Give him to us, Mary,” they said, “and we shall kill the wretched monster!”²⁵

The black woman shushed them. “You leave him be with me. You no more kill ‘em when I put him back out his country.”²⁶

She moved away from the cart parked behind the newly re-christened Lee Tong’s Kosher Cafeteria that catered to all them Jewish mob forever coming in off all them boats.²⁷ The black woman carried the Jew lizard across the road, turning the corner at Gambier Street to make her way through the giant crates piled three miles deep at the paved edge of Anton’s Landing. People were everywhere, fresh off the boats from some little island far away, and the black woman could tell the new Jews from the old Jews that had been here for a while: the new Jews wore old

woollen clothes cut, hemmed and chopped with shoddy skill. Most of them were gaunt, yet tanned. Many of the women carried babies, some had two or three, and just about all of them—if and when they saw Mary with that near-black, horny lizard on the skin of her long, thin black arm—shrieked at the sight of a black native in the street with a living, breathing dragon affixed to her arm! These new arrivals moved out of her way, allowing her to carry the lizard through the maze of cargo near the docks. Out of the corner of his eye, the lizard saw the edge of water in the nearby gulf. He smelled salt on the same breeze that brought cyclones in the wet and realized he was a long way from home and far from his point of origin, and he did not know where this friendly foreigner—this black woman—would take him.

The black woman carried the lizard past a white woman holding an infant in her arms. The baby—it smelled like a boy—was asleep despite the bright sun and the heady discussion going on between the white man and the white woman:

“I told you not to tell them we were married in Mauritius. I told you they wouldn’t bother to ask when we got married but you—you stupid woman—you just had to tell them we were married after you got to the island. You make me so angry, I *veel* hit you!”

“Don’t call me stupid. I am not stupid.” The woman spat at him. “I am your wife!”

Due southeast of Anton’s Landing, a large sandstone structure stood encircled by covered verandahs. Behind it, the sandstone split into a network of long, narrow buildings linked on the outside by covered verandahs. Each verandah was decorated with flower boxes overflowing with scented colour and big bushy green ferns sprouting out of planters dangling from hooks.

The black woman knew this to be the front façade of the ever-growing Kimberley Institute of Science and Agriculture. She knew relatives of relatives who went there to study and to learn.²⁸ Just like white men, these relatives of her relatives wore hats, gloves and shoes and spoke her language as well as their language. They knew how to plant tubes in the earth, tubes that grew water, giving life to all sorts of other plants and flowers, many of which the black woman had never seen prior to the arrival of all these different white men.

The black woman walked along the edge of a verandah, passing a series of arched windows, many of them open to let in the breeze. The black woman ignored this and focused on getting that prickly, near-black Jew lizard as far away from the white people as quickly as possible. She knew them white people—all them Jews—would kill that Jew lizard by hitting it over the head with a club or bat or by spraying into its face a poison she knew would strangle

him. She also knew she was walking in the centre of town; unless she hiked up the side of a nearby mountain, she knew the countryside was at best two days walk from Wyndham.

The black woman was spotted by a man—an Anglican missionary—sitting in a lecture inside the Kimberley Institute of Science and Agriculture. The Anglican was bored and his mind was stuck wandering in a swirling stupor. If it had been up to him, he would be elsewhere, outside perhaps, just beyond the verandah and next to that black *lubra* walking past the window. She was stunning! The Anglican did not see the near-black Jew lizard grasping her arm. He only saw her smooth, black skin and her slim, slender figure. There wasn't a drop of fat on her. Her neck was long and feline, her breasts round and plump. Her jaw was tight and her hair was pulled back and tied in a knot at the nape of her neck.

That neck!

The Anglican sweltered at the thought of clasping his hand around the back of that black neck. He felt a startling sensation rise up out of his centre, then it subsided, disappearing as quickly as it arrived. The Anglican squirmed in his seat. He crossed, then uncrossed, then re-crossed his legs, unable to get comfortable now that he'd seen that *lubra* and her neck—that neck! His heart beat fast just thinking about it!

The Anglican glanced back out the window. The black girl was gone. She had disappeared—vanished—just like that startling sensation.

He stared out the window.

The sun was gone now and the heavens—today they were dark purple—opened up in a slow torrent of rain.



Western Australia

1951

“Some of the natural areas affected by urban growth in the Eastern Kimberley region currently contain some of the highest concentrations of endemic species in the world. In just a few short years, over ten percent of local vertebrae species are likely to be labeled as endangered due to the effects of rapid urban development of the Wyndham ports system and the suburbs that grew up around that area. With the increasing urbanization and development of the strip between Wyndham and the northern arc of Durack City, the general number of plants and animals and other species categorized as endangered is expected to rise in tandem with this new urban expansion and growth and, soon enough, and right before our very eyes, we shall see the city of Wyndham and the newer urban sprawl of Durack City encroach on the natural wetlands and mudflats surrounding not just the Ord river but increasingly both banks of the Chamberlain as well.”

The Vicar turned back to the lecture. Professor Lochlin MacAlistair was a tall man fit for his age with a full head of blond hair, a beard and a straight nose upon which rested a pair of scholarly spectacles. His eyes were blue and his skin taut and free of blemish.

The Vicar looked back out the window. The sidewalk and the street were both empty now, the black woman had vanished. The Vicar remembered her slender, thin black arms. They had been so unlike Elmira’s arms. Elmira had chunky, white arms. Her face perpetually flushed, especially in the unrelenting humidity of Durack City, Elmira’s hair was always greasy with sweat, her underarms forever equatorial and fetid. He remembered how she had inaugurated a sustained campaign of quiet yet visible complaint upon arrival. The wet, in particular, did nothing to lighten her mood.

The Vicar gazed out the window. That black *lubra*—he licked his lips—what did she look like when caught out in the wet? Did the rain turn her garments into a second skin? How would her breasts look? That black neck? How old was she?

The image of his ex-wife pushed back into his thoughts. He remembered her bitten nails and her eczema and he scowled. He felt sorry for Elmira, for them and for their marriage. Then the heat and humidity of the wet came; the breasts of Elmira had been large and round but, in the wet, they became bothersome—loathsome—and moist.

“This region,” the Professor at the front of the room said, “and its plants and animals, its birds and fish, its insects, its lizards, its weather, its flora and fauna and the Aboriginal people that were here before the arrival of white Europeans, have all lived here in the Eastern Kimberley for hundreds of thousands of years, but now suddenly most of this northern tropical region along the eastern side of the Gulf of Cambridge right down through Durack City is, in fact, a cluster of cities. These cities—and I hesitate to call them cities, as this part of the region functions more like a cluster of highly urbanized suburbs—are growing at an enormous rate that is likely to result in the development of a full-scale megapolis by the year 2000. This new megapolis will not only redefine the concept that is the ultimate escape from nature but will also be the largest concentration of people in Australia, far outpacing both Sydney and Melbourne combined.

“It would appear,” the Professor continued, “that we have succeeded in achieving that old adage: populate or perish. Something tells me the hordes of Asia won’t even dare to invade us now that our northern region is home to such a sprawling,” he smirked, “population.

“My point is, if we do not design the cities of this region and, by default, the cities of this continent with at least some respect for nature, we will not have any nature left anywhere in Australia! So say the prognosticators and disciples of doomsday scenarios put forth by the southern makers of culture and opinion.”

Some members of the audience laughed at this.

“This region,” the Professor went on, “has changed dramatically in the past ten years. While we found the effects of urbanization to be localized, cumulatively they pose a massive threat to biodiversity. The urban footprint in the Kimberley region is quickly endangering many local indigenous species of plants and animals. As time goes on, and as this urban expansion increases, you will see a direct increase in new and hitherto unseen risks to protected areas and parks.

“Economic concerns also begin to emerge with rapid urban growth in the East Kimberley region. At present, there are four major population centres here in the East Kimberley, spearheaded by the major metropolitan areas around the Wyndham ports and around the northern arc of Durack City. Increasingly, we are beginning to see the urban sprawl taking shape on the southern end of Durack City as well and, if the proposals currently submitted to the Shire Council are successful, we shall see Halls Creek, even further south and further inland, opened up for Jewish settlement, but for now we have only these four major areas.”

The Professor clicked a button and the slide on the screen flipped to a map of the East Kimberley. Two major cities dominated the map, one of them long and sinewy like a snake slithering along the edge of the sea, the other a lopsided seashell with northern and southern growths as prominent as tumors. Both cities threatened to merge; that was the Vicar's deduction. According to the learned Lochlin MacAlistair, these two metropolitan areas had already made good on that threat and had already begun their amoeba-like coupling:

“This is undeniable and irrefutable. Many things, from people to livestock, to plants and flowers, birds and even domesticated animals such as cats and dogs, have been imported or implanted in the East Kimberley and the result is the inevitable alteration to the biological and geographical landscape of this region. Let us not forget that ten years ago, virtually none of what you see here today existed. The sudden and rapid change that has swept across this region is a direct result of the influx of European Jewry.”

The Professor glanced now at the members of the audience. The room had gone quiet and he said, “Before I go any further, I know it is not always an acceptable nor easy topic to broach: the impact of the massive Jewish settlement of the Kimberley now that it is a reality and, I dare say, a booming one at that. However, this is the academy, and this very institute—the Kimberley Institute of Science and Agriculture—would not even exist were it not for the Jewish settlements here in the East Kimberley. Nevertheless the impact of these settlements and the rapid urban development that immediately followed their establishment are undeniable and we simply cannot ignore this.”

The Vicar chuckled. Many of the other people in the room were in fact Jews. Many of them were, like the Professor at the front, on loan from various universities in the South. The Vicar knew the Jews in the room, Southern Jews most of them, were particularly sensitive whenever a non-Jew like Professor Lochlin MacAlistair spoke about the Kimberley Jews.

The Vicar looked back out the window and saw the storm had melted away into a blue sky patchy with fluffy white clouds rolling across a steamy horizon. That *lubra*; where had she gone? The wet made the Vicar thirsty. Then again, the dry made him thirsty. His thirst had remained insatiable and unquenched every season since the departure of Elmira. He looked out the window but, this time, he looked not for the black girl but for the local hotel. Was it still open for trading?

“These changes,” the Professor went on, “however massively they may have occurred in our most recent era, are not unusual to this part of Australia. My point is to highlight the precedent that this region is prone to sudden and dramatic change that, on occasion, seems to take a long time but when measured against the epochs of natural biological development, especially as it develops alongside human-driven urban growth, takes place very quickly. We therefore realize these changes are not themselves inevitable but, to use another word: drastic. For example, the risk of accidental or intentional fires has increased two-hundred fold in just the past decade due to the sudden expansion of Wyndham and Durack City.

“We also know, for example, that the Eastern Bearded Dragon, colloquially known by many as the ‘Jew Lizard’, so called because some say of its horns but,” here the Professor clicked a button to flash upon the screen the image of a dark lizard, his head cocked to this side, “more than likely due to his frilly beard that he is—in this slide at least—puffing out for us in a grand display of deterrence.”

The Vicar scowled; those damn lizards were everywhere. They were pests and they got into fights with the dogs. The kids—the black kids, the white kids and the Jewish kids—liked to capture and taunt those lizards. They were good for eating bugs and insects, but they disgusted the Vicar. Whenever he saw one, he tried to kill it.

“We know,” the Professor said, “that the Jew lizard is not native to this region of Australia. There is sufficient evidence across a number of disciplines, and not just the biological, that suggest the Jew lizard was somehow imported to this area. We can see evidence of this in the songlines belonging to several different Aboriginal groups right across the top end. If one looks at a map and, with the assistance of a capable anthropologist, connects the recurrent trends and themes that come up among the various Aboriginal groups between here and the Cape York Peninsula, one can track the movement of the Jew lizard from northern Queensland along the edge of the Gulf of Carpentaria²⁹ through Arnhem Land, Kakadu and the Katherine until finally the Jew lizard arrives here in the Kimberley.³⁰

“This migration is reflected in many of the Aboriginal dreamtime stories that permeate northern Australia. In fact, of the seventy-odd different Aboriginal groups that we know of between here and the Weipa region of far north Queensland, we know about sixty of them have some dreamtime story that charts the movement—what I sometimes call the migration—of the Jew lizard.³¹ Here specifically in the Wyndham area, we have three or four different Aboriginal

groups, each with their own language, tribal lands, customs and history, each of them distinct and different to each other.³² Oddly enough, though, but not terribly surprising, here around the Cambridge Gulf, on one side—the eastern side—you have the Doolbung people and in their ancestral dreamtime history, you do find the Jew lizard. However on the western side, the Yijji people do not have a dreamtime story about the Jew lizard, thus suggesting the migration of the Eastern Bearded Dragon stopped at the mouths of the Ord and Chamberlain rivers or, at the very least, just beyond it.

“From there on, of course, there are several indications that the Eastern Bearded Dragon interbred with other indigenous reptiles but what we don’t know is when exactly the Eastern Bearded Dragon made his way across the top end.³³ Because various versions of migration turn up in the various dreamtime stories relevant to local Aborigines, we can assume the Eastern Bearded Dragon migrated to the Kimberley a long time ago, perhaps, some speculate, thousands of years ago. Carbon dating and other methods of scientific disambiguation, however, do not corroborate this nor do they confirm or deny other speculations like it.

“In other words, ladies and gentlemen, we just don’t know when those pesky little Jew lizards got here to the East Kimberley. It is therefore possible to assume that the Eastern Bearded Dragon was introduced, perhaps by humans, to this area. It is not uncommon for waves of human migration to be accompanied by various animal species. Take, for instance, the dingo: the dingo looks like a dog and acts like a dog but we all know deep down inside the dingo is not in fact a dog but an entirely different yet similar animal.”

The Vicar slumped in his chair at the back of the room. He had little interest in this lecture. He had no head for science or agriculture. At the moment, his head was filled with lust and desire for a black girl. Where was that *lubra*? Did they call her ‘Mary’? The Vicar tilted his head in the breeze blowing in through the window. He sighed; they called all the black women ‘Mary’.

His presence at this lecture was obligatory. The Vicar had driven up from Durack City in response to the personalized and embossed invitation the Extraprovincial Diocese in Wyndham had sent him. The Vicar was only mildly—distantly—acquainted with Lochlin MacAlistair. He had met the Professor years earlier when both men were new to the Kimberley and back when both had wives and were, so it seemed, happily married.

Now one of them was alone and the other a father of four.

After the lecture, people crowded around the Professor to offer their thanks and appreciation and to bestow upon him their hopes for his good future.

“Christopher, hello!” The Professor was unable to hide his surprise at seeing the Vicar. “I am delighted to see you. How nice of you to come. I don’t believe I’ve seen you since,” he recalled where he had last seen the Vicar, “the memorial.”

“They sent an invitation.” The Vicar said, “That’s why I’m here.”

“Yes, of course they sent an invitation. How are you, Christopher?” The Professor offered his hand. “You’re looking well.”

“It’ll be a long way home for you.” The Vicar shook it. “How are you getting that big house back down to Victoria?”

“Christopher, my God.” He smelled the Vicar’s breath. “You’re as drunk as a Lutheran. Are you quite sure you’re alright?”

“I’m fine. It’s just a long drive to get here is all. They can widen the roads or build more of them, but that doesn’t change the fact that it’s a miserable drive to get up here in this weather.”

“Yes,” the Professor stiffened, “quite. Tell me, Christopher,” he folded his arms across his chest, “how’s it going in Durack City? How are you getting along now that you’re,” he cleared his throat, “on your own?”

“Everything’s fine. I have my work at the parish.”

“And how is the parish? Are you having a successful go at converting our Jewish friends?”

“I don’t convert Jews anymore. I’m back to blackfellas again.”

“Oh I see. And has that proven to be a more successful endeavour?”

“The path to Christian salvation is not an exact science.”

“No, of course it isn’t.”

“These things take time.”

“Of course they do.”

“It’s not like we test our methods in a laboratory or in some journal nobody ever bothers to read.”

The Professor said, “You are quite right.” But the Professor thought: you are as drunk as a skunk. “Did you say you were driving back to Durack?”

“I’m leaving right after I take a piss down at the local hotel.”

“Do you think that wise?”

“Why? You want to join me?”

“Oh I wish I could, Christopher, for your sake I wish I could, but I can’t.” Upon hearing himself, the Professor realized he was relieved to leave the Kimberley, and he tapped the watch strapped to his wrist, “Camellia and the children are waiting with dinner and I mustn’t keep them.”

“No, of course not.” The Vicar scowled, “God forbid.”

“Would you like to join us? I’m very sure my wife could set an extra place for you.”

“Don’t bother. It’s a long drive back to Durack and, like you said, you mustn’t keep them.”

“Yes.” The Professor was relieved yet again. “Of course, and it is very good of you to come out here for this. It would’ve been totally acceptable for you to have sent along your regards, but to have actually made it here yourself, why, that’s just wonderful. Simply marvelous!”

“Yes,” the Vicar pursed his lips. “Well, then.”

“Yes,” the Professor nodded.

“I’ll be off and you,” the Vicar now offered his hand, “you’ll be off later?”

“Friday we leave.”

“Friday it is, then. See you, Professor. Travel safely.”

“Yes.” The Professor knew he was never going to see the Vicar again. “Goodbye, Christopher.”

The Vicar stepped out to the verandah and onto the sidewalk. The black girl had not returned, though he scanned the area looking for her. He saw the hotel at the far end of the street on the corner: the New Plenty Soak. He saw its doors swing open from the inside. A couple of men—Jewish dockworkers wearing dark blue, baggy overalls—came out to walk in the opposite direction.

It began to rain as the Vicar started toward the hotel; he mumbled: “Just as long as they’ve got a half-decent single-malt...”

PART TWO: Across the Road

Western Australia

1953

The teacher clapped her hands in rhythm: “Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water.” Her face was tight with frustration. Her hair, which had been brushed back and tied with a ribbon, was now loose and messy. Her lips were thin and dry; when not curled around the rhyming words of verse, they remained as stoic as a flat line. She clapped her hands: “Jack lost his crown and came tumbling down and Jill came rolling after.”

The students—all of them Aboriginal—stood on chairs or moved about the classroom, not paying any heed to Miss Louise who continued to clap her hands:

“Jack and Jill ran up the hill to fetch a pail of water.”

Miss Louise was a thin woman. She was tall and white and she said:

“I’m the teacher! You kids need to listen to me!”

But the children spoke in *Language*, poking and hitting each other over the head with pencils.

“Don’t make me summon the Vicar!”

The students outnumbered the teacher twenty-seven to one and their nonchalant indifference irritated her. Miss Louise realized she may as well not even exist. She reckoned she could easily absent herself from the class and leave the room without most of the students even noticing.

“I’ll just summon the Vicar, shall I?”

The Vicar was, at the moment, spotted through a window. Prindy saw the Vicar walking with hunched shoulders across the courtyard in front of the chapel where, every morning, Prindy and all the other students were herded like cattle into pews for a ritual of prayer and the singing of hymnals.

The Vicar was a stocky man. His spine was bent, weighed down by the girth of his gut, and he had white hair along the edges of his bald head. Prindy watched the Vicar carrying some papers and books, watching him cross to the steps that led up to the church to disappear through a pair of double doors Prindy and the other children were forbidden from darkening.

Miss Louise, up at the front, clapped her hands: “Jack and Jill,” she cut into those names, pronouncing the Js like butcher knives slicing through hardened butter, “went up... the... hill. Now, I want you all to repeat after me: Jack and Jill went up,” Miss Louise raised her voice, “the hill!”

The classroom before her carried on as an indoor forum, a circus where tribal business, as those missionaries called it, reigned supreme. The children had brought into this Christian classroom the world of black savagery, and the Anglicans believed their salvation rested upon their ability to memorize and recite not only the Lord’s Prayer but, en route to that, “Jack and Jill”. Miss Louise knew—she just *knew*—the staccato, rhythmical clapping helped those blessed little black children:

“Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water!”

Prindy saw Miss Louise clench her jaw and narrow her eyes, pinching up her face. A group of children climbed onto the ledge to toss an Oxford dictionary through an open window to the ground outside. That’s when Miss Louise stormed from the classroom.

Prindy turned to his classmates. He watched them play, fight and argue. He thought to tell them in *Language* not to upset the teacher, whose name he’d already forgotten, but before he could say anything, the door to the classroom flew open and in walked the dreaded Miss Apple.

“That is enough!” Miss Apple was fat woman. She carried a long wooden ruler she slapped into her other hand. She was older than Miss Louise. She’d been at the school forever and, like the Vicar, she was gray and balding. Her eyes scoured the room as she whacked the ruler at the black feet of those students standing on the ledge at the window. “Enough!”

The students scrambled back to their seats.

“You dirty, disgusting, revolting little children!” Miss Apple rolled her Rs and slapped that long wooden ruler into her palm. “How dare you harass your new teacher?” She came to the first row of desks and, with dark eyes, stared down that first row. “Miss Louise has worked very hard on today’s lesson and how do you show your appreciation, hmm? Hmm?”

Prindy, seated at the far end of the first row, was terrified of Miss Apple. Miss Apple had, on more than one occasion, been known to order a student to lay a pair of hands, palms down, atop the desk and, in discipline, had used that long wooden ruler to strike their knuckles. Miss Apple had never hit Prindy with that ruler but he’d watched her hit other people. The fear that

she might do that to him now, as she moved closer to his desk, welled up inside him only to then, as luck would have it, weigh down upon his bladder.

“You stupid insolent children have been at it all day from what Miss Louise tells me.” Miss Apple stopped in front of Kieran seated at his desk. A year younger than Prindy, Kieran had been the ring leader of the students who’d tossed a dictionary out the open window.

“*You!*” Miss Apple shoved the wooden edge of the ruler into the boy’s face, “Put your hands out on the table.”

Kieran protested, “No, miss.”

Miss Apple flinched. She raised an eyebrow and placed the hand with the ruler on her hip. Leaning back as if in surprise, she said, “Oh ho ho ho! What’s this then, hmm? Now you’re ready to listen to Miss Louise, are you?” Miss Apple shot glares all around the room. “If I have to come in here again, I swear by all that is holy, you stupid little kids will really get it!” She panted like a bull and sneered at Prindy.

Prindy felt a chill run down his spine. Every hair on his body prickled and his bladder filled like a balloon, filling him with a sudden and urgent need to pee.

“Now, Miss Louise,” Miss Apple turned back to her younger, thinner counterpart, “I do believe you can continue with your lesson, now that they’re back under control.”

Miss Louise did not thank Miss Apple. She stepped front and centre and, clapping her hands in rhythm, said, “Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water. Now you,” she pointed at the class. “Repeat.”

“Jack and Jill wen’ up da’ ‘ill to fesh a pail of water.” The class stopped there.

“Go on,” Miss Louise said, “you know the rest.”

“Jack come down and...” From them on, the children recited a jargon that was garbled and unintelligible.

“Oh Miss Louise,” Miss Apple shook her head, “that was terrible. The worst I’ve ever heard. Have you taught them nothing since you got here?”

“Some of them know it. A few of them are quite good at it.”

“I’ll believe that when I see it, Miss Louise.”

“*You!*” Miss Louise pointed at the first row, “Prindy!”

Prindy felt two things come out of him: first, the word “Miss,” then a spurt of urine wetting through his uniform.

“You know the rhyme. You know how it goes.” Miss Louise honed in on the boy. “Why don’t you come up to the front of the class and show everyone how it’s done?”

Prindy shook his head, “No, miss.”

“But you know it. I saw you saying it with me before. Now come up here and show everyone. Show Miss Apple how smart you are and that you’ve been learning.”

Prindy shook his head, “No, miss.”

“Don’t be daft, Prindy. Come up to the front of the room and show us.”

Prindy shook his head, squirming in his seat as hot liquid trickled down his inner thigh. “No, miss.” He said, “Please, no.”

Had it been up to Miss Louise, she would have backed off. Prindy was a good student. He hadn’t been disruptive earlier; it was not his nature to muck around—that was not Prindy’s problem—and she was not further inclined to single him out.

“Did you just disobey your teacher?” Miss Apple, however, glowered at the boy. “Did you just say no to Miss Louise?”

Prindy felt a pool of piss gathering beneath him and he shifted his line of vision from Miss Apple to Miss Louise in appeal.

“Don’t look at her!” Miss Apple barked at him. “Look at me when I’m speaking to you! You know this rhyme, do you, hmm? Well, go on, then. You heard Miss Louise. Now get up out of that chair and do as she says!”

Prindy looked at Miss Louise. “Miss?”

Miss Apple whacked the desk with that long wooden ruler. “I said look at me! Not at her!” Miss Apple leaned in, “Prendergast Percival Percy!”³⁴ She pointed the ruler in his face, “You will get up out of that chair right now and you will do as Miss Louise says. Do you understand me, hmm? Or do you need some discipline for encouragement?” She slammed the ruler down on the desk in front of him.

Prindy moved with reluctance. He came to the front of the room and, in front of his classmates, said:

“Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water. Jack lost his crown and came tumbling down and Jill, she followed after.”

Miss Louise, standing behind Prindy, saw his entire backside was wet, but she was pleased with the boy and she said, “Close enough.”

“What is *that*?” Miss Apple pointed the long wooden ruler at Prindy’s groin. “You dirty, disgusting, revolting little boy! You’ve wet yourself again, have you, hmm?”³⁵

Prindy, in that moment, felt the weight of twenty-six pairs of eyes shifting their gaze toward his white pants now stained yellow. The other children started to laugh.

“You dirty, disgusting, revolting little boy! What you’ve done is filthy.” Miss Apple grabbed Prindy by his ear to drag him toward the door. “You are never to enter this classroom again, not until you’ve had a proper wash, you dirty, disgusting, revolting little boy!” She pushed him into the corridor, slamming the door shut behind him.

Prindy could hear the children laughing at him through the door. Filled with shame, he ran. He bolted from the premises just as Miss Louise came out of the classroom to look for him.

Prindy had run off before, and for lesser reasons. This was not his first flight from the school and he knew they’d come after him, if not Miss Margaret or Miss Eloise, then the liaison officer or one of the older Mirriwong boys. Prindy knew the Vicar would eventually send someone out to lure him down from whichever roof he managed to climb up to, if not the belfry itself. Prindy had hidden in both locations as well as beneath the stairs in the boiler room, in the bathrooms and behind the kitchen near the water tank. They found him every time, only to lead him back to class, sometimes with a beating and almost always without supper.

Today, however, Prindy bolted not just from the hall but also from the school. He ran to the end of the corridor and through a maze of classrooms and offices until he flew through a pair of double doors that opened out onto the gravel-covered playground. He ran past the swings and the hopscotch and leapt like a spider half way up the chain-link fence that separated the children from the road. He scaled right over the top of that fence just as a group of teachers—Miss Margaret, Miss Eloise, Miss Donna and Miss Katelyn—came out to the playground with calls and shouts for Prindy to please come back.

Prindy landed on the other side between the fence and the edge of the road. He felt better, on this side of the fence and he gave the teachers a cheeky wave, then he ran across the road to the only place he reckoned the Vicar would never send anyone to find him.

Prindy ran to the rear of a wooden building. It was a new building and not much older than the school. Some of the windows were square-shaped, others were round. Many were high up and small. Prindy saw a ladder built into the wood running up the spine of the building near the drain pipe. Arriving at the foot of this ladder, he looked left, he looked right and then, hand-

after-hand and foot-after-foot, he climbed up. His perspective on the local area changed with each rung of the ladder. From this height, he was able to view the classroom he had just quit and he saw clear, sunny blue skies dotted with tufts of white cloud hovering over orange-green earth. On the horizon, he saw gray clouds merging with each other, getting ready to head further inland to dump rain.

Prindy came upon a small window. The first floor contained a room similar to the chapel at the school across the road. Above the pews, a light—an electric candle, white man’s magic—dangled from a chain at the front of the room. In the pews, Prindy saw hairy white men wrapped in white shawls with little round caps on their heads bending at their knees. Prindy heard them chanting as he climbed further up the ladder. At the next window, he heard singing. At the window after that, arguing.

Prindy reached the last rung of the ladder and without trepidation swung up on to the roof. The tin was hot beneath his bare feet but he tiptoed to the shade provided by an overhang. A round window—a skylight—had been installed here and Prindy looked through this window. He squinted, placing his hand above his brow to block the sunlight. Inside, on the other side of the window, a large trunk sat wrapped in chains. Aside from this trunk, the room was empty. Prindy did not see any doors or any other windows in the room.³⁶

Prindy turned to look out over the hazy distance beyond the cows and the pigs in their far-flung, patchwork fields. He saw the panoramic outline of Durack City and the road headed north to Wyndham. He felt a light breeze and, upon it, the sound singing, or something he thought sounded like singing. It stopped and started and Prindy followed after it, jumping from that top roof onto the roof covering what appeared to be an east wing.

Prindy came to another window, another skylight. Again he shielded his vision from the sun to peer through the glass where he saw two people, a man and a boy, standing side-by-side looking over a scroll surrounded by stacks of leather-bound books. The man held a stick made of silver. Prindy squinted, blinking his eyes in disbelief; he saw a small silver hand attached to the end of the silver stick.³⁷ This small silver hand was balled into a fist pointing a finger.

Prindy furrowed his brow: *This* is where that singing came from?

The man handed this silver stick with the pointed finger to the boy. Prindy watched the boy move the silver stick with the pointed finger along the words printed on the scroll. At the edge of the table, Prindy saw a curly horn wedged between towers of leather-bound books.

Prindy heard the man raise his voice. He heard the man grunt and groan and watched him move away from the boy, who remained in place.

Prindy watched the man fling himself into a chair. Unlike the Vicar, the man had sidelocks and a beard and a full head of dark hair settled beneath a round skullcap he now removed from his head. Prindy watched the man run both hands through his thick, dark hair. He watched the man reach for a drawer. He removed a small bottle. Prindy recognized the label, it was grog. He took a hearty sip from this bottle while Prindy, in an effort to hear and understand, leaned in closer, pressing his ear against the window...



*

The Rabbi—Rabbi Stintston—held the *yad* in his hand, using it to point to the Hebrew written on the parchment. “Here.” He said, “Start here.”

The student—Felix Morose—took the *yad* from the Rabbi and, clearing his throat, proceeded to butcher the proper pronunciation: “*Bish na’na hey—*”

The Rabbi *nouk’ed*. “Start over.”

Felix squinted his eyes, “*Bo she na hee—*”

“Nope.” The Rabbi *nouk’ed* again. “Start over.”

Without delay, Felix said, “*Bey’sh na ha—*”

“Felix,” Rabbi Stintston rolled his eyes. “Start! Over!”

Felix sighed heavily: “*Bee shay nee ha—*”

“Felix!” The Rabbi looked at the boy. Felix Morose had blond hair and fair skin. He wore a *kippah* clipped to his blond hair but, due to negligence, the *kippah* was bunched up and sagging off the centre of his crown. The student, slumped atop his propped-up elbows, continued to read the words incorrectly. His voice monotone, he had no comprehension of what he read. He sighed mid-sentence and reached the last line of the right-to-left paragraph. He stopped and tossed the *yad* onto the desk and turned to the Rabbi:

“Can I go now?”

Rabbi Stintston looked down at his student, framed by blond rivulets dangling over his temples. “Tell me, Felix, do you really think you’ll be ready for your *bar mitzvah*? It’s not like it’s a thousand years away. It’s coming up soon.”

The student shrugged. “I don’t care.”

The Rabbi flinched. “You don’t care?”

His jaw moved, Felix was chewing gum. “I’ll practice later.”

“Felix,” the Rabbi felt his chest rise, “how many times have I told you not to chew gum when you come to my study?” He glared at his student. Felix Morose had dark blue eyes and, upon hearing the Rabbi, he stopped chewing. He gulped and cocked his head:

“There.” He said, “All gone.”

The Rabbi sighed, “I bet you spent a total of forty-two minutes practicing your *Haftorah* before you came in here today. The rest of the time, you are one of the worst kids in this *yeshiva*. You screw around all the time. You never study and you don’t take anything seriously. You’re a bad influence on the other students and I don’t like working with you. You are not prepared and then you come in here late and you’re chewing gum over the Torah. Do you know what we’d have to do if that gum fell out of your mouth onto the Torah?”

Felix was unmoved, “My dad would have to buy another one?”

The Rabbi stiffened. “You are not a *mensh*, Felix.” He moved the *yad* from the parchment and rolled up the scrolls. “You are not ready to become a *bar mitzvah*.”

“That’s what you think.” Felix cocked his head to the left. “My father thinks otherwise.”

The Rabbi tied the scrolls together with a band of felt and moved away from Felix, mumbling under his breath, “I’m too old for this.” Felix Morose, indeed the whole Morose family, had been a thorn in the Rabbi’s side for years. One of the seventeen original families to set up the *yeshiva*, the Morose family shared the wealth of their windfall brought to them through

pastoral luck. Maxim, father of Felix, had become rich supplying the district with high quality, kosher beef later requisitioned by the Australian Defence Forces during the waning days of the war, increasing his family's wealth tenfold. Now they lived in a giant Queenslander surrounded by a large estate that was, according to local gossip, expanding in secret to include a pen for pigs and another for red kangaroos. Though Maxim Morose was a Jew, he knew his monies allowed him to flaunt his skirting of *kashrut* by breeding flat back turtles he then sold to blackfellas off the back of a rickety old pick-up truck parked near a derelict town camp due north of Durack City.

The Rabbi knew Felix's father. Maxim's direct sponsorship of his son's education at the *yeshiva* paid the Rabbi's salary and, beyond that, provided scholarships for several other local Jewish boys who, if left to other devices, would probably not be in school at all, but instead working for Maxim Morose raising unkosher cattle the Rabbi wasn't supposed to know about.

"Felix," the Rabbi sat down in a nearby chair, "do you know how your family got its name?" He removed his *kippah* and ran fingers through his hair. "Do you even know why you're here?"

Felix did not respond. He stood in place and stared.

"I'll tell you how your family became the Morose family." The Rabbi reached over to a drawer. "I'm sure you know your father came from Russia from some small insignificant little village in the Pale of Settlement." He pulled a bottle from the drawer. "Your father's family," the Rabbi took a drink from the bottle, "was called 'Morozova', a crude Russian name, if you ask me. Sounds Moldavian." He took another drink. "But when he and your mother got to the dock in Wyndham, the Immigration Authority—in an effort to make us Australian—changed our names.³⁸ Even I used to be called something else, just like your father. I, too, had a different name before I got here. They were so eager to erase any Jewish-sounding name from the rolls before we even set foot in Australia. My name was changed before I left Mauritius. Mauritius!" The Rabbi grunted, bringing the bottle back to his lips. "Do you even know where that is?"

"Nope."

"Today my name is Stintston, Rabbi Jacob Esau Stintston.³⁹ Do you know what my name was before?"

"Unh-unh."

“It used to be Stieteltitz. My name was Jacob Esau Stieteltitz but they made me change it. They couldn’t give me an easy name like Bradley⁴⁰ or Morgan or Ettlinger⁴¹ or Delacy.⁴² They had to give me a name with the different letters in it, minus the zed as these people call it. I guess the *goyim* thought they were doing us a favor.” The Rabbi took another drink. “So that’s how I became Rabbi Jacob Esau Stintston and that’s how your family went from Morozova to Morose. Your mother hadn’t yet named you when the people from Immigration changed your family name. She decided later to call you Felix after some distant uncle or something, and now we call you Felix Morose.” He took another sip. “I don’t think she saw the irony.”

Felix, in the meanwhile, started chewing another piece of gum. “Can I go now?”

The Rabbi looked at Felix, at his blond hair and those cold blue eyes staring back at him. Felix didn’t look anything like his father but, as the Rabbi saw it, he was the spitting image of Maxim; they both possessed the same attitude.

“Go!” The Rabbi groaned. “And send in the next pupil.”

Felix fled from the room, leaving the Rabbi in peace and solitude. He took another drink, and the Scotch felt warm as it coursed its way down his throat. He reckoned it was the English the Australian Government insisted on teaching in the local schools, coupled with the convict culture, that made students like Felix cocky and arrogant and disinclined to learn *Halacha*.^{*} He imagined Felix some twenty odd years into the future—sometime in the 1970s—the cocky kid would be Jewish in name only. His wife might also be Jewish. Given the circumstances of Felix’s geographical location and the restrictions on any Jewish movement south of the Kimberleys,⁴³ the Rabbi was willing to bet that the future wife of Felix Morose would indeed be Jewish but their children, the next generation, all bets were off there. The Rabbi read the national newspapers flown in from the South. He knew what the Commonwealth’s goal was and when he encountered students like that cocky little Russian, he feared the tactics the Government had instituted in pursuit of that goal were indeed working.

There was a knock at the door and the Rabbi looked up at a small boy peeping through the open door:

“Rabbi?”

“Yes, yes.” The Rabbi said, “Come in, come in.”

^{*} *Halacha* – the Hebrew word for “Jewish law”; direct translation: Hebrew noun for “the way.”

This little boy, shorter than Felix Morose, was fat and round. His hair was red and his sidelocks were bushy and tangled. The chest of his shirt was stained with food from the afternoon meal. *Tzit-tzit* dangled from the boy's wide expansive waist and he wore a pair of shorts and a pair of sandals with dark socks pulled up past his ankles.

He said, "Good afternoon, Rabbi Stintston."

"*Tzohorayim tovim*, Baron." The Rabbi remained seated in his chair. "Have you been practicing your trope this week?"

"Yes, sir."

The Rabbi winced at this formality and took another sip from the bottle. "Do you speak English or Yiddish at home?"

"My dad doesn't let my mother speak Yiddish."

"He doesn't?" The Rabbi returned the bottle to the drawer.

"She has to go to her club if she wants to speak Yiddish."

"How do they communicate? Which language do they speak?"

"They talk in German sometimes."

"Not in Polish?"

"We don't speak Polish."

"No, of course you don't." The Rabbi sighed. "How," he pushed himself out of his chair, "is your trope coming along, then?"

"Very well, sir."

How is your trope coming along, then? The Rabbi rolled his eyes. He hadn't grown up talking like this. He didn't grow up addressing his elders with yes, sir or no, sir, and hadn't grown up under the sun dressed in shorts and sandals with dark socks pulled up past the ankles.

The Rabbi thought Baron Freedel looked ridiculous.

"Did you practice the *bracha* we say before we read from the Torah? Do you remember how that goes?"

Baron opened his mouth and, without delay, he said, "*Baruch et Adonai hameivor'ach. Baruch Adonai hameivor'ach le'olam va'ed. Baruch Adonai hameivo—*"

The Rabbi waved his hand to silence the boy. "I just asked if you remembered it, Baron, not to say it."

"My apologies, sir."

The Rabbi shuffled back toward the Torah. “Do they teach you to talk like that in the district schools?”

“Like what, sir?”

“Like a British subject.”

Baron was confused, “Sir?”

“Oh never mind.” The Rabbi pulled at the felt holding the scrolls in place. “I’m sure you’ll do better than my last pupil.” He thrust the *yad* at the boy. “You always are.”

“But sir, the prayer.” Baron’s voice squeaked. “We can’t open the Torah without saying the proper *bracha*.”

The Rabbi suppressed a belch. Baron was a good kid, annoyingly so. According to his German-speaking father and his Yiddish-speaking mother, Baron lived to please his parents, his family, the Rabbi and his teachers at the district school—the secular Australian school—as the Rabbi called it. It was those Anglo-Celtic schoolteachers sent up from the South who taught the kids—*his* kids, as the Rabbi saw them—this yes, sir, no, sir business. It had been the Rabbi’s experience in Australia that his kids would pick up the “yes, sir” “no, sir” much faster than the “*ken*” and “*lo*” his *yeshiva* had been reduced to teaching.*

“What matters, Baron, is that you know the *bracha*.^{*} You’ve shown me that before, many times. You are like a sponge. Do you know what a sponge is?”

“Yes, sir!” Baron was an eager child. “You use it to clean things.”

The Rabbi blinked a few times and, turning to the parchment, he unscrolled the Torah. “It really doesn’t matter if we say the *bracha* before we read from the Torah, Baron.”

“But it does, sir. You told me so yourself.”

“Ignore what I said, Baron. It really doesn’t matter. It just doesn’t. Now,” the Rabbi, without the *yad*, leaned over the parchment in search of a particular paragraph. “Baron, *boychik*, do you know where the *parsha* begins?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, then,” the Rabbi stepped back, “let me know when you’re ready to start.”

* “*ken*” and “*lo*” – Hebrew for “yes” and “no.”

* “*bracha*” is the Hebrew word for “blessing.”

Baron Freedel, with the *yad* in hand, came to the parchment. He scanned his younger eyes across the Hebrew words, locating his starting point in a matter of seconds. “Do you want me to read it, or do you want it with trope?”

“It doesn’t matter, Baron. Either or is fine.”

Baron quickly whispered the applicable *bracha* under his breath and, using the *yad*, he pointed at the text: “*Bashana hat’shee’it le’Tzid’ki’yahu melech Yehudah bah’chodesh ha’asir’ee, bah Nevuchadreiztar melech Bah’vel ve’chol’cheilov el-Yerushalayim, v’yatzru a’leyha. Beyashtei’esray shanah le’Tzid’ki’yahu, bah’chodesh ha’revi’i beytish’ah la’chodesh hav’kei’ah ha’ir....*”*

The Rabbi, standing over Baron’s shoulder, nodded. Baron Freedel preferred to read using trope. Of the students at the *yeshiva*, Baron was the only student who did this voluntarily. The other students barely practiced at all, let alone with trope. Baron should have been a bright spot, an anomaly that flew in the face of the trend the Rabbi saw emerging among this first generation of Jewish boys born in the Kimberley: the lure of spear-fishing in billabongs and kangaroo-hunting in the bush, inspired by a ruse to protect livestock and cattle, was far greater than any desire to learn Hebrew or study Torah. Yet a student like Baron Freedel, and there were more than a few like him, was an ambitious overachiever, a bookish little imp from unimpressive stock. Though pleased at the boy’s progress, the Rabbi imagined it would be fat little redheaded boys like Baron that would keep the *shadchanim** and the cake-bakers employed for another two millennia.

If only it mattered, but the Rabbi kept this thought to himself as Baron—*baruch haShem*—reached the last word in the last line of his Torah portion. At the end, the Rabbi said, “Very good, Baron. *Kol hakavod lecha*.”

“That means ‘well done’, right?”

The Rabbi wanted to say: “Learn what it means in Hebrew. You’re translating it in the wrong direction.” But instead he said, “Yes, Baron. It means ‘well done’.”

The student smiled, “*Kol hakavod lecha gam*, Rabbi.”

The Rabbi said, “You say: ‘*kol hakavod gam lecha*’, not *lecha gam*.”

* This is Hebrew for: “In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army and laid siege to it. And on the ninth day of the fourth month of Zedekiah’s eleventh year, the city wall was broken through the walls of the city...” (Jeremiah 39).

* “*Shadchanim*” is the Hebrew word for “Matchmakers”, i.e. “Marriage brokers.”

At that moment and quite suddenly, there was a smash and a crash, bits of wood and a pile of glass raining down from above. Damage and timber poured from the heavens, along with dust and rusty nails. The smoke cleared and, right in front of them, a black boy with wet pants appeared lying atop of a stack of leather-bound Talmuds. He did not look hurt or injured. His big black eyes were wide open and, turning his head, he saw the Rabbi and his student looking back at him, a pair of jaws agape.

Prindy said, "Hello," holding his lips in a circle to drag out the O.

"You knocked my *shofar* off the table." The Rabbi squinted and sniffed at the air; he made a face. "*Shetten*?"*⁴⁴

"Where did you come from?" Baron glanced up to see the damaged frame of the broken skylight. "Did you fall through the window?"

The Rabbi also looked up. "You were on the roof?" He looked at the black boy. "What were you doing up there? Where did you come from?"

Not sure of the proper protocol, Prindy looked from man to boy and said, "Acrost' the road."

"Across the road?" The Rabbi lit up at this. "You came from across the road, from the Vicar's school?"

Prindy said, "Hmm," and moved his hand to rub the back of his neck.

Baron asked him, "Are you hurt?"

"Did you *pish* on yourself?" The Rabbi saw the yellow wet stain on Prindy's crotch. "For God sakes get off my desk if you have to *pish*."

Prindy made a move to get up.

"Help him, Baron. Be careful of the glass."

There was plaster and dust and shattered glass on the floor and in between the books on the desk, but the parchment itself had miraculously escaped damage. Baron, in his socks and sandals, moved to the other side of the desk to help the black boy up off the Talmuds. He noticed Prindy was barefoot, his feet were dirty, and Baron said:

"Rabbi, look! He hasn't got any shoes!"

The Rabbi looked at the black child. "You go around barefoot all the time, or you forgot your shoes when the Vicar sent you over here?"

* "*Shetten*" – Hebrew for "urine."

Prindy hopped off the table, barely missing bits of glass to land on the wooden floor. He turned to the Rabbi but remained silent.

“Does the Vicar know you’re over here?”

Prindy said nothing; he stared at the Rabbi.

“He doesn’t know you’re here, does he?”

Prindy said, “No.”

The Rabbi nodded, “I see.” The Rabbi thought for a moment, staring at this black kid. He nodded slowly, deciding that this little black boy was his opportunity—finally—to show up that damn Vicar across the road. Like most of the other Jews that sailed from Europe to this Godforsaken outpost at the far edge of the world, the Rabbi resented the efforts of pioneering Christians to systematically convert the Jews throughout the Kimberley.⁴⁵ Here in this particular corner of the outback, the Rabbi had gone out of his way to block and stymie the efforts of that Christian proselytizer across the road. As a result, the Vicar had turned the focus of eternal salvation in Lord and Saviour toward the blackfellas peopling the district, leaving the Jews to, in the words of the Vicar, “their own devices”. Well, the Rabbi smirked, I’ll have to give this one some thought.

Baron asked the boy, “So what’s your name?”

“Prindy.” He barely spoke louder than a whisper.

“Come again?”

The Rabbi said, “Take him down to the showers, Baron.” The Rabbi thought this little *shvartze* might be just the thing for that damn Vicar. “Clean him up.” He felt his lips curl into a smile. “Get him some clean clothes and some shoes. Then take him down to Shlomo in the *mitbach* for some *nosh*.”

“Yes, sir.” To the boy, Baron said, “Come on!” He grabbed his hand, “I’ll show you the way.”

The Rabbi, in the meantime, came around the desk to retrieve a fallen *shofar*. “Moshe! Kipke! Anshel!” He dusted off the ram’s horn. “Get in here and help me clean this mess up!”

Baron led Prindy down past the library, talking the whole way: “That’s the *chadar ochel*. That’s the first year *cheder chevrah*. That’s the second year *cheder chevrah*. Down there is the *mitbach*. Here,” he pointed at a door with a window, “this is the third year *cheder chevrah*. I’m in *kitah hay*. My *cheder chevrah* is upstairs. What year are you in?”

Prindy followed Baron through a swinging door and they came in to a room of high ceilings and bright light.

“This is the *sherutim*. You go that way for the shower,” Baron pointed past a panel of porcelain sinks, “or that way,” he pointed in the other direction, “if you need to *pish*.” He looked at the boy. “Do you need to *pish*?”

Prindy saw his reflection in the mirrors mounted above the sinks. He saw himself with his black skin standing in a room full of white tile. He watched the redhead follow his gaze and turned his head toward the mirror. Prindy turned crimson at the sight of a yellow stain on his white uniform; he said, “I go to shower first,” and pulled off his shirt.

Baron moved past the sinks and, sticking his hand in the shower, flipped the faucets. He said, “I’ll check with the *mashgi’ach* in the kitchen for some clothes,” then left Prindy alone. Baron returned a few minutes later with a pair of black pants, a white shirt, a pair of black socks and black shoes. He found Prindy naked standing next to the shower with only his hand under the running water. Prindy had long black arms and long black legs and a thin black torso. His skin was smooth and dry, his hair an unruly mop.

“Here, I brought you something to put on when you’re done.” Baron held out the clothes, “I’ll hold on to the shoes and socks for now.”

Prindy turned around and said, “Too hot.”

Baron saw Prindy’s penis then, it was small and black and did not look anything like his. “Here,” Baron stuffed the shoes and clothes under his arm and reached in to the shower to adjust the faucets, “You turn that one this way if you want cold water, or you can turn the other one that way for hot water. You see?”

Prindy leaned in to look at the faucets; he nodded, “Yes.”

“Well alright.” Baron glanced down again, then up, “Do you want me to wait for you outside?”

Prindy did not answer. Finding a temperature he could work with, he stepped under the shower and closed his eyes to let the water stream over his face.

The next day, dressed in a pair of black pants, a white button-up shirt and a pair of black socks and matching black shoes, Prindy was led into the *cheder chevrah* for *kitah hay*.^{*} Though dressed similar to Baron, the sudden introduction of a new black student brought the classroom to silence. Looking up from Mishnas and Gemarrahs, they stared at Prindy with gaping mouths. Prindy stared back at them seated, as they were, on benches behind rows of long tables.

In the back of the class, seated on the last bench, Felix Morose saw the black boy enter the room and he said, “Since when do we let the *shvartzes* in?” He narrowed his eyes. “I don’t know what that *shvartze* is doing here, but I don’t like it.”

Those seated around Felix were quick to agree.

Baron, oblivious, took his place at the bench in front. Prindy sat next to him. The next boy over inched away from Prindy, moving closer to the student on his right.

As usual, Baron Freedel said, “*Boker tov*, Rabbi.” He leaned over to Prindy, “That means ‘good morning’ in Hebrew.”

The Rabbi nodded, “*Boker or*, Baron.” He looked at Prindy, “And good morning to you, sir.”

Prindy wilted like a flower. He felt the stares coming at him from all parts of the room. The class was quiet except for the Rabbi, who made direct eye contact with him:

“Tell me, do you know how to read?”

Prindy nodded. “Yes.”

“I don’t think he can read Hebrew, Rabbi.” Baron said, “He told me he’s never heard Hebrew before.”

“You don’t know Hebrew, do you?”

Prindy shook his head, “No.”

The Rabbi went over to a set of bookshelves lining the wall. Between copies of the *Shulchan Arukh*—written in Arabic—and *Pirkei Avot*—written in Hebrew—he located an English title that was, in comparison, much thinner than the other books. Rabbi Stintston pulled this book out and flipped it open. He placed the book on the long desk in front of Prindy and pointed to a random line on an early page:

“Can you read that?”

^{*} “*cheder chevrah*” is *yeshiva*-Hebrew for “classroom”; “*kitah hay*” means many things to many people: to Americans, it translates to “fifth grade” but, to Australians, it means “year five.”

Prindy leaned in. He felt nervous, but he took a deep breath and said: “‘God has dealt me a blow.’ And again they cried openly.” Prindy paused for a moment, tilting his head to sound out the next word, “Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth embraced her and held on.” He paused again and said, “Nomi—”

“*Nah-oh-mee*,” the Rabbi corrected him. “Her name is Naomi.”

“*Nah-oh-mee*,”⁴⁶ Prindy continued, “said ‘Look! Your sister-in-law is going back home to live with her own people. You should go with her and her people and her gods. Go with her.’ But Ruth said, ‘Don’t force me to leave you. Don’t make me go home. Where you go, I go, and where you live, I will live. Your people are my people. Your God is my God and where you die, I shall die, and that’s where I’ll be buried, so help me God. Not even death itself will come between us.’ And when *Nah-oh-mee* saw that Ruth had—”

“*Zehu!*” The Rabbi stopped him. “I guess the Vicar across the road is doing something right. You read very well, better than some of my students. How is your comprehension?”

Prindy shrugged.

“What do they call you over there across the road? Did the Vicar give you a name?”

“They call me Prindy.”

“Prindy?” The Rabbi made a face. “Where did the Vicar come up with that? I’ve never heard of this name. Do you like it?”

Prindy shrugged.

“Well,” the Rabbi said, “I don’t like it, so I’m going to call you by some other name.”

“Call him *shvartze*, Rabbi.” Felix Morose spoke up from the back, “That’s what he is.”

This comment made the other kids laugh.

“You are mean kids.” Baron turned to the Rabbi. “They’re being rude to your guest, aren’t they, Rabbi?” To Prindy, he said, “Ignore them. They don’t know anything and they don’t matter.”

The Rabbi stared at Prindy for a moment, then snapped his fingers. “I’m going to call you Benjamin—*Binyamin* in Hebrew. How do you like that name?”

Prindy shrugged, “It’s long.”

“We’ll call you Ben for short. How’s that?”

Prindy nodded, “It’s good.”

“Benjamin it is, then. Now,” the Rabbi put the book back on the shelf, “who can tell me which *bracha* we say before the end of Shabbat?” He looked out at his students. Only one had his hand raised, and eagerly so, and the Rabbi said, “Someone other than Baron Freedel, please.”

Western Australia

1955

The Vicar poured Scotch into the tumbler. He looked out the window and saw the Jews across the road lighting a bonfire. They were an industrious lot, those Jews. For weeks the Vicar had watched them gather up wood and kindling they now set aflame on the lawn of the Synagogue. He poured more Scotch into that tumbler.

The Vicar fell back into a wooden swivel chair, swirling the Scotch on his tongue. He stared out his window. The Jews had multiplied in number. Whole families had been hauled in from the far-flung western suburbs of Durack City. Jewish men had brought their Jewish women—their wives and daughters, aunties and nieces—adding them to the usually all-male student population of the Synagogue. Now there were generations of Jews gathered around the bonfire. By the smell of it, a barbecue awaited them.

The Vicar sneered at this. A feast had brought forth not just the Jews, but also the blackfellas, hundreds of them. They looked as if they outnumbered the Jews right there on their very own lawn!

The Vicar took another swig.

Two years ago, those Jews ran off with one of his boys, no doubt luring Prindy across the road with promises of bon-bons and lollies. Once they got their grips on him, they brainwashed him. By the looks of it, they'd converted him into a full-fledged black-hat Jew, minus that little round beanie those Jews like to wear. The Vicar had not forgotten. He'd aired this grievance and there it hung like dirty laundry, spawning resentment between the Vicar and his Judaic counterpart.

The Vicar moved closer to the window to rest his elbow on the ledge, peering out in a futile search for young Prendergast. The Vicar felt he had a special bond, a special kinship, with young Prindy. The boy had been a toddler when first delivered to the Anglican compound years ago after the Wyndham police had been summoned to a local hotel to raid one of the rooms. Inside they found 'Peabush,' an Afghan teamster who'd stayed on in the north long after motor trains replaced the overland camel. Also known as 'Parbaroosh,' the police found the Afghan *en flagrante* with a black woman, a *lubra* later identified as 'Mary'. The policemen—white men all of them—proved no match for the Afghan's wily charms:

“Listen, copper,” the Afghan said, “you take me in and I get a thirty dollar fine but you’ll get nothing beyond your salary. You leave me here now to finish with this lady and I give you twice as much. What say you?”

“Where’s that sixty bucks?”

“Ain’t got it now, copper. Payday is tomorrow. I get paid plenty. Tomorrow I give it all to you in cash.”

The cop agreed but the very next day, long after the *lubra* disappeared, the copper approached the Afghan to demand his money.

Parbaroosh reacted with pure innocence, “Since when and for what I owe you money?”

“For last night of course. When I didn’t take you in for catching you in the act with Mary.”

“Mary?” The Afghan, the father of the boy the police later brought to the Anglicans, twinkled in a mockery of lacking memory. “Who the bloody hell is Mary?”

“You know bloody well who the bloody hell is Mary.”

“Then why you not arrest me last night,” the Afghan, so went the story, winked, “*Nu?*”⁴⁷

The Vicar glared at the people gathered around the bonfire across the road. Prendergast was impossible to locate. He could be any one of the other black boys running around over there, many of them dressed in white shirts and black pants, just like the Jews.

The Vicar scowled. The Rabbi had stolen Prindy and then, as if it were his rabbinical duty, had flung open the gates of his Synagogue to let in—nay, to welcome!—the local Aborigines. Many of the boys, both the Doolbung boys and the Mirriwong boys, had wandered across the road, causing the population at the Anglican compound to plummet just weeks after Prindy’s disappearance. Looking across the road, the Vicar saw not one Aborigine but dozens of them dressed indistinguishably from the Jewish boys playing bows and arrows. The adults, in comparison, were subdued and gathered on the verandah. The Rabbi had done what had hitherto been thought unachievable on such a grand and lavish scale: he brought multiple generations of black and white together on the front lawn of his Synagogue. The Rabbi was relatively new to the district yet somehow, and to seemingly great advantage, he’d manipulated the local blackfella grapevine, for the blacks had turned out in droves lured from the bush, the Vicar suspected, with promises of a feed and, for the children, of foot wear and other *accroutements* should they be requested.

The Vicar noticed a group of black women seated amongst the Jewish women at the far end of the verandah. At the other end, a group of boys—both black and white—were gathered around a flowing spigot that stuck out from the side of the water tank. There, next to the verandah and illuminated by the flames of the bonfire, the Vicar spied the Rabbi wielding a pair of scissors whilst standing behind one of black boy seated in a chair.

Was the Rabbi cutting hair? The Vicar squinted; just what the hell was he up to? The Vicar poured himself another Scotch, turning to his desk in search of an Anglican calendar.

“Two can play at this game, Rabbi Jake. Two.”



At the other end, a group of boys—both black and white—were gathered around a flowing spigot that stuck out from the side of the water tank.

*

“Two.” Rabbi Stintston held a pair of scissors. “Two years I’ve been telling you your boy won’t be ready for his *bar mitzvah*. He isn’t ready.”

“Vot do you mean, he *isht* not ready?” Maxim Morose spoke with a thick Russian accent, “He practice every day now.”

“He doesn’t practice every day now and you know it.” The Rabbi clipped the hair of the black boy seated on the chair in front of him. “He’s not ready to become a *bar mitzvah*.”

“Of course he *isht* ready. I see him study every day, all day.”

“I am telling you, Maxim,” the Rabbi used a comb to even out the strands, “your boy Felix is not,” he clipped with the scissors, “ready for the ceremony.”

“But he practice every day.” This from the boy’s mother. “I see him do it.”

“Maybe you see him sitting with a book but,” *snip-snip*, “that doesn’t mean he’s actually reading it.”

“Of course he read it.” Maxim became gruff, “*Vot* else he ‘sposed to do *vit* book?”

Rabbi Stintston finished off the boy’s crown, pulling the cloth from around his shoulders. He said, “All done,” and ran his hand through the boy’s hair. “How’s that feel?”

The black boy, dressed in black trousers and a white shirt, touched the top of his ears, then his hair: it was shorter and he said, “*Todah, Mullaka*,”* and hopped out of the chair to run off.

“*Vot* do you *meen*, my boy *isht* not ready?” Maxim’s thick Russian accent deepened as his level of anger rose. “He be *thirsteen* soon.”

Another black boy dressed in black trousers and a white shirt leapt into the chair to sit with his back to the Rabbi. “That may be, but,” the Rabbi threw a cloth over the boy’s shoulders, “that does not mean Felix will atomatically become a *bar mitzvah*. If he isn’t ready, then he won’t do it. Not with me, at least.”

“*Vot*,” now the mother, “does he need to do? *Vot isht* it and how much does it cost?”

“It doesn’t cost anything.” The Rabbi combed through the black hair. “He just needs to grow up.”

“*Vot* do you *meen*? My boy *twelf* now. He be *thirsteen* soon. He does *bar mitzvah* then.”

The Rabbi snipped a strand, “Not on my watch, Maxim. Felix can turn thirteen, but that doesn’t mean he’ll be a *bar mitzvah*. Not with that Hebrew.”

“*Vot* Hebrew? You ‘sposed to teach him Hebrew. Honest to God, *vot* do I pay you for?”

“You, sir,” the Rabbi stopped cutting hair to glare at the father, “pay me to teach him, which I do and quite well, I might add.” He turned back to the hair. “It’s your Felix that’s the problem.”

“My boy *isht* not problem.” Maxim pointed at the Rabbi, “It is *you* who *isht* problem.”

“Please, Rabbi,” the mother placed a hand on her husband’s forearm. “Perhaps there *isht* *somethink* *ve* can do to overcome this dilemma? Maybe there *isht* some *vay* *ve* can to pay—”

“No,” *snip-snip*, “you can pay me to teach, but you can’t pay so he’ll learn.”

* “*Todah*” means “Thank you” in Hebrew. “*Mullaka*” means “elder” or “boss” in an Aboriginal language; the phrase is lifted from a dialogue between the characters Jeremy Delacy and the young boy Prindy in Xavier Herbert’s *Poor Fellow My Country*.

“*Vot?*” This made Maxim very angry. “*Vot* do you *meen*, I can’t pay him? He *isht* my son. Vy should I pay my son *anythink?*”

The Rabbi focused on the hair in front of him. “Enjoy the barbecue, Maxim. All the food is kosher.”

“I’m not hungry and *ve’re* not done. My boy *veel* have *bar mitzvah* soon. My boy *veel*—” the breeze shifted and smoke blew in from the bonfire, engulfing Maxim, who coughed. “My boy,” he coughed and pointed. “My boy *veel*—” Maxim bent over and hacked up a lung.

The Rabbi finished the boy’s hair and whisked the cloth from around his neck, dismissing him before the smoke of the bonfire blew their way. The sky clapped with a peal of thunder that rolled over the land and the Rabbi put the scissors in a back pocket. He picked up the chair and told the next boy he was done for now with the haircuts. He felt a heavy rain drop land on his shoulder, wetting his shirt. He looked up at the distant horizon and saw dark blue clouds massing in the northwestern skies.

The Rabbi called out to the people illuminated by the glow of the bonfire, “Hurry up! Storm comin’ through!” He saw the women on the verandah take their chairs and their cups of tea into the lobby of the Synagogue. He saw the children running for shelter through the side door that led past the *mitbach* and the *chadar ochel*. He called out to those standing near the fire: “Moshe! Kipke! Anshel!” He saw them turn around. “Leave the fire.” He pointed west. “Storm’s comin’!”

“You can bloody well say *that* again.”

The Rabbi turned on his heel. Standing there, at the edge of the now-deserted front verandah, he saw the Vicar looking back at him. “Chuck?” He felt another rain drop wet his white shirt. “What are you doing here? You should’ve been here hours ago when we started.” He came to the verandah with his right hand extended. “How are things across the road?”

“Where’s my boy, Jake? What have you done to him?”

The Rabbi, standing close to the Vicar, smelled the scent of a distillery and thought: Oh holy Moses! Not all this bullshit again. He withdrew his hand.

“Which boy, Chuck? Look around.” The Rabbi spread his arms. “You see I have many boys, and girls, too. Look how happy they are, the children.” He looked out at the lawn where a healthy mix of colors ran together with bows and arrows. Some of the kids—the black kids—danced in the coming rain near the fire while others—the Jewish kids—ran for the verandahs and

side doors that led up to the lobby of the Synagogue. “You see how I’ve brought everyone together?”

“You’ve done that through blatant manipulation and theft! You’ve kidnapped my blacks!”

“Since when were they your blacks?”

The Vicar raised his voice, “Since before you got here!”

“Then it’s a good thing I came. They tell me they were absolutely miserable with you people across the road.”

The Vicar went red in the face, “You Jews ran off with one of my black boys two years ago. But one wasn’t enough for you, was it? Oh no! You had to go steal the whole lot of them, didn’t you?”

“I didn’t steal any one, Chuck. They came over here on their own free volition.”

“God will punish you for your greediness.”

“My greediness?” The Rabbi laughed as another peal thundered across the horizon. “Oh, Chuck,” he placed a hand on the Vicar’s shoulder, “sometimes it’s nice to have a comrade-in-arms.”

The Vicar glared at that Jewish hand on his Christian shoulder.

“And sometimes,” the Rabbi saw the look on the Vicar’s face and removed his hand, “it’s good to have someone like you.”

“What is that? Some sort of Jewish saying?”

“That’s not any kind of saying, Chuck. I made it up just now.” The heavens cracked open to let a river pour down from above. The Rabbi stared out from the verandah, watching the rain consume the bonfire, turning the burnt pile into molten black ash. He called out to the remaining children, yelling out in Hebrew, Yiddish and, much to the Vicar’s chagrin, in *Language*, causing the children to run *en masse* for the Synagogue.

The Vicar narrowed his eyes, “Since when do you know how to talk like a blackfella? And where the hell is my boy?”

“You don’t have a boy, Chuck. You don’t have any kids.”

“Those blacks you’ve got are my kids.”

“They are not.”

“They were mine before they were yours.”

“They’re not mine, either.”

“You certainly treat them like they’re yours.”

The Rabbi smirked. “Do I?”

“You do and you do it because you know they’re mine.”

“Is that right?”

“Don’t drag me in circles, Jake. Those kids’re mine and you know it! I’ve half a mind to report you to the state authorities in Perth just to get around you Jews who run everything up here in this little fiefdom.”

“I think you mean *shtetl*.”

“Don’t put words in my mouth! You’ve kidnapped my kids and you’ve brainwashed them, just like they brainwash people in Red Russia. Now give me back my kids!”

“They’re not yours kids, Chuck, and *you* know it. Those kids are wards of the state which has, in this district, given the power of authority to the local government which, unfortunately for you and the Church of England, is made up of *my* people who probably won’t go against a rabbi. Not when they come here due to some cable you’ll send to Perth claiming I’m abusing your blacks, as you call them. They know they can leave to go back across the road whenever they please and besides, these kids are not your kids, Chuck. You don’t have any children. Your wife was barren from what I understand and I’m sorry I have to say that, but these kids are not your kids. They’re not my kids. Hell! They’re not anyone’s kids. They just *are*, and if I want to invite them to a *yom tov*,* then I’ll go right on ahead and invite them, if it’s all the same to you.”

The rain became heavy, obscuring the view from the edge of the verandah. The Rabbi realized the Vicar would be, for now at least, unable to get back across the road. He looked at the Vicar glaring back at him.

“How dare you! You’ve no right to—”

“I’ve no right? No, Chuck, *you’ve* no right. You’re the one who’s come over here accusing me of kidnapping *your* children.”

“And just where the hell is my boy? Just what have you done with little Prendergast? Have you brainwashed him into a Jew yet, or did you forget to teach him how to steal?”

* “*yom tov*” is translated literally as Hebrew for “good day” but, in this context, it refers to a specific Jewish holiday: *Lag B’omer*.

Now the Rabbi glared at the Vicar. They leered at each other, standing on that covered verandah while the sound of rain mingled with the voices of singing children wafting through the windows of the Synagogue. Another peal of thunder rolled across the horizon as the pitter-patter of rain turned into a hose-like deluge.

Rabbi Stintston was the first to speak: “I didn’t do anything to that boy, Chuck.”

“Where is he, then? I want to see him. Take me to him.”

“He’s not here.”

“Where is he?”

“I don’t know.”

“What do you mean, you don’t know? Surely he’s around here somewhere, in one of the classrooms maybe.”

The Rabbi cocked his head, “You think you saw him.” The Rabbi pointed, “You think saw him from your window, don’t you? You knew when he came over here we gave him a bath and a feed—as you people call it—and then we gave him some shoes and—”

“You gave him black shoes.”

“To go with the black pants we gave him, yep.” The Rabbi nodded. “That’s right.”

“That’s your plan, is it? To lure little black children over here to dress them up like Jews and convert them. That’s it, isn’t it?”

“That’s different from your plans for my people? How many times did you and that fat woman over there come to us in our tents and humpies back in the day to try and convert *us* with all those ridiculous Jesus stories? And then you, like a fool, you have the *chutzpah* to come over here to my place to accuse me of stealing your precious little black children and all because you’re still upset your wife is dead? *Aizeh goal nefesh atah!*”*

The Vicar stewed, his chest rising as he took deep, penetrative breaths. “My wife didn’t die, you stupid Jew! She left me.”

“That’s not what I heard.”

The Vicar choked on a gasp, then silence befell them. The Rabbi felt he’d said too much to the Vicar who, in the dreary grey of the storm, glared at him without blinking. The Rabbi stared out at the rain and, after a moment, turned to the Vicar. The Rabbi listened to the children

* “*Aizeh goal nefesh atah!*: is a modern Hebrew phrase that can be translated as “You are disgusting!”

inside the Synagogue—beautiful music, a chorus of youth singing a melodic *niggun*—and decided the tension was too heavy to bear:*

“*Nu*, Chuck? Are we going to stand out here forever? I have some Scotch in my study.”

“Are you serious?” The Vicar allowed some of his venom to relent. “Prendergast isn’t here?”

“We don’t call him that anymore. You Aussies are so fond of giving people new names, we started calling him Ben.”

“Why did you change his name?”

The Rabbi shrugged.⁴⁸ “I guess he wanted something less *goyische*.”*

“I don’t know what that means.”

“Of course you don’t.”

The Vicar followed the Rabbi. “He’s really not here?”

“He’s gone.” The Rabbi led the Vicar through the halls of the *yeshiva*. “We haven’t seen Ben around here for weeks. Poor little Baron Freedel’s been friendless without him.”

“Did he run away? Where’d he go?”

“*Nu*, Chuck? Where do any of them go when they go out bush?”

*

At the first sign of rain, Risa ran for cover. At first the rain was light, but it quickly turned into a gray sheet. Grabbing her husband’s hand, she dragged Maxim not to the verandah or into the lobby of the nearby Synagogue, where everyone else ran, but to their car parked across the road from the *yeshiva*.

“Risa!” Maxim pulled her arm, “Where is the boy?”

“He ran inside with the others.”

“Are you sure?” Maxim unlocked the passenger side of the car but closed the door before she could answer.

From inside the vehicle, Risa Morose watched her husband run around the car to get in behind the steering wheel.

* “*niggun*” is the Hebrew word for “tune” or “melody” and is the word used to describe a particular form of Jewish song.

* “*goyische*” is the Yiddish word for a person or a thing that is not Jewish.

“Did you see him go in?” Maxim looked toward the *yeshiva*, wiping the window with his sleeve. “Seems too late in the season for a rain this strong.”

“Maxim, we need to talk about the boy.”

“You said he went inside.”

“Either way,” Risa switched to Russian, “it’s good that the boy is not here. I think I know what the problem is with the Hebrew.”

“It’s that stupid rabbi that’s the problem. Perhaps a demotion will teach him a lesson. Honest to God, I don’t know what is wrong with that man. First he lets in all those blacks, and right into the classroom, and then he has the gall to tell me my son won’t have a *bar mitzvah*? The *yeshiva* has—what?—five, six rabbis?”

“It’s not the rabbi, Maxim.”

“It *is* the rabbi. That one,” he looked back toward the Synagogue, “is stupid. He doesn’t know anything, so that’s it. We’ll just get a different rabbi.”

Risa sighed, “Maxim.”

“And why the hell does it have to rain all the bloody fuckin’ time? One of these days we’re all going to drown in this rain. Maybe not this year, maybe not next year, or even the year after that, but some year—make no mistake about it—this stupid wet season will drown us or worse, it’ll drown our cattle, and then we’ll really be tossed.”

“The rain is not the problem, Maxim, and it’s not the rabbi, either. Changing to a different rabbi, and to one less influential at the *yeshiva* than that stupid rabbi, as you call him, isn’t going to change the boy’s Hebrew.”

“Oh it will. He will learn better with a different teacher.”

Risa clenched her jaw, “It’s not the teacher, Maxim.”

“It is. It’s that stupid rabbi! Clearly he forgets who pays his salary. No one can learn from him.”

“That’s not what Liesel and Kurt and others say. They can’t stop saying good things about the Rabbi.”

“He’s crazy then. He is stupid and crazy and no likes him. No one ever liked him to begin with, especially since he let all those stupid blacks in. I knew I should’ve had him canned then.” Maxim thought about it for a moment and, in frustration, he slapped the steering wheel, mumbling under his breath, “Stupid rabbi.”

“Maxim, you know that’s not true. You know everyone likes him.” She looked her husband straight in the eye, “Do you remember when the Nazis expelled the Jews from Germany and everyone started walking toward the Black Sea?”⁴⁹

“Of course I remember.”

“Thousands—hundreds of thousands—of Jews came east on foot and the Red Army wanted to keep them out, so when they Jews got to the Soviet border, they were met with Russian tanks.”

“*Nu?*” Maxim said, “I know this already.”

“The Soviets were killing Jews. My little village was attacked. My brothers were killed. My father was captured and tortured right before my eyes. They set everything on fire, the synagogue, the shops, people in the streets. Everything was destroyed.”

“The Red Army was doing that all over. Why are you telling me this?”

“Because,” she swallowed, “when I got to the port in Burgas,⁵⁰ there were people buying passage for the boats from brokers running rackets. People were getting ripped off left and right, and then there was the local police, and the Bulgarians were no better than the Nazis. They arrested people and charged them exorbitant fees to get out of whatever ridiculous charge they laid on them, if they didn’t shoot you first. On the boats, at least on our boat, they didn’t have any medical equipment. Doctors were plentiful, but they didn’t have enough food for even half the people on board, let alone any medical equipment. You remember how some people starved? The captain sent the crew around to toss the dead bodies into the sea. Remember that?”

Maxim nodded, “*Nu?*”

“Do you remember, after we left Mauritius, how that young married couple went crazy? They said they lost their little boy on the ship, that he disappeared?”

“Little Manny Cohen?” Maxim nodded, “I bet he fell overboard when no one was looking.”

“His mother claimed he was kidnapped but, either way, I was just like any mother. I was terrified I’d lose the baby.”

“But Felix hadn’t been born yet. Besides, every ship that came from Mauritius has a story like that. At least our boat wasn’t sunk by the Japanese.”

“I could have miscarried, Maxim. There was no medical equipment! Sometimes I’m shocked I made it through the birth.” Risa looked out the front windshield, “There was an awful lot of blood. I’m stunned I survived.”

“I know.” Maxim said, “I was there.”

Risa looked at her husband, “Many people died on that ship, Maxim. Lots of babies. Makes you wonder why they gave priority to young, single, pregnant Jewish girls. I remember when my mother heard that, she told me to find a Jewish husband, but to skip the Jewish wedding and go straight to the Jewish bedroom for the Jewish baby, and sure enough, I was told at the boats, as I had been told previously back in Russia, they were giving priority status to single Jewish mothers.”

“I don’t see what any of that has to do with our boy and his Hebrew.”

“It was a two-for-one deal, Maxim.” Risa locked eyes with him. “And my family didn’t bribe my way across the border, not like I told you they did. My family were Jews in Soviet Russia just like yours: peasant farmers. We were poor. We barely ate. We didn’t have any money and my father—God rest his soul—didn’t buy me passage on that ship, either.”

“That doesn’t explain why,” he turned back toward the *yeshiva*, “that Rabbi is so stupid.”

“Maxim!” Risa closed her eyes. “I didn’t buy my way across the Ukrainian frontier.” She waited until her husband turned to her. “I slept my way through, Maxim. I was raped. I was raped by a Cossack with a Ural accent.”

Maxim flinched and his mouth fell open, but words eluded him.

“That boy may not even be yours.”

Maxim blinked once and stared at his wife.

“He probably isn’t yours.” Risa looked out the window. “When I met you during that hold up in the Suez, you were so eager to sleep with me that I held you off until you could put a ring on my finger and then, a few months later, I told you that boy was yours.” Risa looked at her husband, he was speechless: “I don’t think he’s yours, Maxim. I don’t think that side of him is Jewish. They never asked who the father was when I got to the boat. They just asked if I was a Jew. To prove it, I said the *Shehecheyanu*,* but I wasn’t about to tell them that I’d been raped by a soldier in the Red Army. I didn’t even know I was pregnant back then. I thought I was lying to them.”

* The *Shehecheyanu* is a common Jewish prayer recited to celebrate special events.

“But instead you lied to me?”

“I’d lie again, Maxim. I’d lie to you. I’d lie to them and I’d do it all over again if I had to.” Risa felt her eyes brim, but she maintained eye contact with her husband. “I had to lie to get out of my village, and then I had to sleep my way across two borders and—”

“Two borders?” Maxim started counting numbers in his head; something didn’t add up. “Did they rape you or did you put out for every Cossack soldier between that stupid little village and that God damn boat? What the hell are you, some kind of cross-border Jew-slut, no better than a lone gypsy?”

Risa felt a tear run down her cheek. “I’m not apologizing.”

“Oh no, of course not. You’re just confessing like some stupid Catholic girl. Why are you telling me this now? ”

“Because,” she sniffled, “the boy’s Hebrew. He’s not getting it because he’s not even Jewish.” She saw the glare her husband lobbed at her. “Not probably, at least.”

Maxim stared hard and cold at Risa, the woman he’d met on a ship. He’d chased her up and down the decks. She’d been coquettish and now, Maxim realized, plump. Later, in Port Louis, they were unloaded like luggage and tossed into different transit camps. Maxim convinced the British authorities to let them circumvent this separation when—some way, somehow—he produced a bearded, toothless rabbi from the ghettos of Bucharest who—some way, somehow—drafted a *ketubah** with her name written in ornate Hebrew calligraphy. They were married instantly and, just as instantly, she was pregnant and, Maxim now recollected, already round that first night.

Maxim thought about the boy. Felix had his mother’s slender arms and hands. He had long fingers and long fingernails. He had blue eyes and a diminutive chin, two traits he did not, on second thought, attribute to his wife. Felix had blond hair, and Maxim knew that didn’t run in his family. He felt heat rise in his chest and, without compunction, he threw up the back of his hand to hit Risa hard right across her cheek, causing her head to bounce off the glass window.

“Stupid lying gypsy bitch!” Maxim looked back at the *yeshiva*. In English, he said, “Stupid Rabbi. My boy *veel* have *bar mitzvah*.” He rubbed the back of his hand, Risa’s face had hurt it and he said, “If I have to buy a new rabbi to have it done, then I *veel*.”

* Considered an integral part of a Jewish marriage, the “*ketubah*” is a sort of “marriage contract” signed by both husband and wife.

*

Prindy was awakened by the cut of a switch.⁵¹ Lying beneath a mosquito net, he opened his eyes and, turning over, he saw the black face, bushy hair and grey beard of his aunt's husband.

"We go now." His uncle spoke in *Language*. "We come to take you."

They seized him immediately. Other men he did not recognize immobilized his arms and legs. His brothers prevented flight and, under his uncle's instruction, they dragged him from his bed in the pre-dawn darkness.⁵²

They marched the boy down the road, across the road and, turning north, off the road into the bush, where a wide green expanse spread out ahead of them in a sumptuous display. They walked for hours. They walked for days. They walked across an ocean of tall green grass, through forests of shrubbery and pandanus, passing boabs and mulla-mulla. Honey-bees swarmed nearby. Cockatoos, black as night, cackled as the bright golden Sun held steady in approval. Along the way, the brothers pointed out leaping kangaroos and wallabies.

His uncles took command of the landscape, singing out over the dark burnt soil of red earth beneath a vast blue sky interrupted with tufts of scudding cloud. His older brothers made him look at hills and rocks.

"That's him," they said. "You see him?"

The boy saw sharp, reddish rocks—the skin of an Ancestor—and the rocky ridge became a spine heaving with living inhalation just high enough to scrape the lowest rungs of heaven. The brothers whispered at the boy. They sang and the trees—strong and sprite, tall and powerful—bent like moist kindling as their road became apparent.

At the crest of the ridged spine, and at the awesome sight of a wide flat river as low as a table, a flock of budgerigars took off in a dazzling sheen of green, revealing the route as if hidden behind a thick plumage lifting with the advent of flight. Kites, skeletal and white, snaked up over the horizon, reaching toward the endless blue canopy like tentacles. A great uncle halted their steady progress to point towards the white kites rising in the sky.

He spoke just above a whisper: "They know we's coming."

His word was heard by all as he pulled at the horizon to bring the edge of their world to the very tips of his fingers in one single deft movement.

Again his older brothers seized the boy. They immobilized him and stripped him naked. They wrapped a string made from the hair of his brothers and sisters around his waist and brought a small red cloth to place over his genitals.⁵³ His cousins held his arms while his brothers affixed tufts of dyed feathers—brightly coloured reds and yellows, purples and blues—to armlets they tied around his biceps. They dragged the boy over to the sinewy roots of a sprawling fig tree and sat him down. An elder came to him to speak in *Language*, placing a finger to his lips. The boy understood this gesture to be one that demanded total and complete silence. The boy took a big breath, like a breath taken before diving underwater, then fell silent.⁵⁴

His mother's sister's husband and his cousins from his father's brother's family came to the boy. They rubbed grease and fat on him, smearing him with red and white ochre.⁵⁵ The other people cleared a ring by removing plants and branches. They uprooted trees, jerking them from the ground, replacing them with boulders and rocks. The boy saw a horde of men digging at the ground with sticks. In the centre of this, they—the boy's brothers, uncles, cousins and country elders—gathered around him to coat his body with ochre and grease.

The boy saw the women of his brood—his mother and her sisters and her husband's sisters, his mother's brother's sisters and some of his other aunties—had turned up in sorrow and grief. They cried and shrieked and, when it was their turn, they came to the boy to rub his shoulders in a final display of affection. Each woman wore a dress but little else, not even shoes. His mother, in a green dress, came to him and, rubbing his shoulders, let the palms of her hands wander across his torso, smearing fat and ochre across his abdomen and belly. His aunties and sisters clamored around him, each one fighting with the woman next to her to touch the boy and to cackle at the men. The men responded by hurling insults worded sharp as spears right back at the women.⁵⁶ Some of the women tried to stop the boy's older cousins from painting the images of creation upon the boy's back. His mother's husband's sister, in a dress made of red fabric, pushed on the wrist of the men painting the boy, cursing at them in *Language* as her law entitled her. The law for the men enabled them to shove her away.

The boy watched the women leave him as a crying, tear-laden, grieving mass, passing by the men hacking away at the earth. The women ignored these men and, in turn, these men ignored the women. The women walked to the other side of the clearing where some of them

collapsed to their knees in wails of agony only to, as was their duty, prepare the hay amassed there for this very purpose: to make a mattress of green boughs the boy would later use.⁵⁷ Then, in a single voice, they sang out in cherished lament. The boy, in his silence, wanted to rush to them to comfort them and to be with them, but his law forbade this.

The men finished painting the boy and started to sing a different tune. They again seized the boy, grabbing him under his arms and lifted him from the entangled roots of the fig tree, bringing him out into the open. They shoved the boy into a small shelter made of bark and broken tree branches and covered in a thicket of palm leaves. Inside, the boy was boxed in like an animal. Through the branches of the hut, the boy watched the men grab spears and bullroarers. They chased after the women, cursing at them with violent insults and threats of death.⁵⁸

The women—the boy's mother, his mother's sisters and his father's sisters and their brother's wives—ceased their mattress-making and, in a flourish of colorful skirts and dresses, a wistful display of red, yellow, black and blue fabric, they disappeared over the ridged spine of the sleeping Ancestor to flee south as they, not to be spited or ignored, hurled one final lasting insult back at the men. The women cackled as they ran, scaring some rare yellow chats, who took to the sky to provide commentary as well as gossipy air cover to the escaping women.

At the sight of a green dress disappearing over the edge of the horizon, the boy felt a single tear streak down his face.

*

In the morning, Kurt Freedel walked out from his house to his narrow yard at the rear of his lot.⁵⁹ He stopped at the chain-link fence. On the other side, in his small meager field, he saw a group of black women pounding into the planted rows with thick sticks. The women were barefoot and dressed in skirts. One woman wore a green dress and stood with hands on her hips, lording over the other women stabbing at the dirt.

Kurt watched the women digging up his field. They were after the yams; a pile covered in dirt and hairy with torn roots already lay next to them. Those digging were too enthralled to notice the white man staring at them. The woman in the green dress had her back to Kurt and, oblivious to his presence, continued to cackle out commands.

Kurt did not understand her but, whatever she said, it caused those women, squatted down on their hunches, to dig at the planted rows with greater fury. Another spate of instructions and then a squatted woman rose to her feet, using the digging stick to heft herself up. She spotted the white man staring at them from the other side of the chain-link fence. She said one single word in *Language*, bringing the women to a halt in an instant.

Kurt felt all those black, feminine eyes turn on him. A staring contest ensued as grey-fronted honeyeaters, tiny, yellow and plentiful among the tree branches and along the roof of the house, chirped in commentary before they too fell silent.

“Good morning.” Kurt held up his hands, palms open to show they were empty. He did not smile, unsure of the occasion.

The women stared back.

“If you don’t mind,” Kurt moved toward the open gate, “please don’t dig up my field.” He stepped across the threshold and, in that instant, the women tightened as if he’d stepped into tension with them.

“I mean you no harm.” Kurt held up his hands, making eye contact with the woman in the green dress. “You see there?” He stepped over the planted rows. “This part,” he pointed toward the uncultivated corner of his field, “this part I leave for you.”

The women did not move. They stared.

“In *this* section and in *those* sections there,” Kurt pointed southeast, “and *there*,” he pointed to the southwest, “and *there* and *there*,” northwest, northeast, “I leave the gleanings in the corners for you.” Kurt looked at the woman in the green dress. “This part I leave for you.” He held out his hands, “Properly you say, yes?”⁶⁰

The woman did not speak.

“I have to leave this bit for you.” Kurt swallowed. “Properly.”

The woman in the green dress turned to the other women. Nothing was said between them but those with sticks re-grasped them.

“You can take from there, from the corners. But this part,” Kurt pointed at the planted rows, “this part I plant for me and my family.” He tried to make eye-contact with the other women. “You understand properly, yes?” Kurt opened his hands again, “You savvy that?”

The woman in the green dress stared at him, her face as dark as a well-used saddle.⁶¹ She finally tilted her head, pulling her lips into a smile that revealed a row of strong white teeth.^{61a}

“Nu?”

She turned to the other women and swept her hands over the planted rows. She pointed at Kurt and at his house, then turned to him and said, “We savvy that lot.”

The birds, those little honeyeaters, chirped and flitted all around between the roof of the house and the trees.

The woman in the green dress turned to him, “Hey, *mullaka*, what they call you?”

“Kurt.” He moved back through the gate in the chain-link fence. “They call me Kurt. What do they call you, *nu*?”

The woman flashed a smile, “Mary.” She said, “They bin callin’ me Mary.”

Kurt nodded to her once and she replied with a single nod of her own. He returned to his house and came in through a side door into the kitchen. Standing in front of the ice box near the window, he saw his son donning a *kippah* and holding a small book open to the middle. Leather straps hung limp from his right arm. A small box—the arm *tefillin*—was affixed to his bicep. His arm was bent toward his chest, causing that small box to slide down.

Baron recited prayers, winding the strap seven times around his forearm and around the back of his head. He placed the small box—the *rosh tefilin*—on the edge of his hairline and said the *bracha* a second time, tightening the straps around his head to drape them over his neck and shoulders. He weaved the straps betwixt his thumb, forefinger and middle finger, then began to *daven*.

Kurt watched his son cover his eyes with the palm of his left hand to lean back in full concentration: “*Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad.*” He lowered his voice and dropped his shoulders, crumpling his posture, “*Baruch shem kavod malchutoe le’olam va’ed.*” He kept his eyes closed and went on to the *V’ahavtah*, swaying in melody at the start of each paragraph, bowing occasionally in various directions.

Kurt himself had long ago given up the daily rite of phylacteries but his son had taken to it like he’d taken to noodle *kugel*. Kurt let his heart swell with pride. He moved through the tiny kitchen, hoping not to disrupt his boy now busy with morning prayers. He turned into the small living room—they called it the salon—but, blocking his way, he encountered Liesel, his dark-eyed wife. Like Kurt, she too had spotted their son donning *tefillin*; the Rabbi at the *yeshiva* had taught him how to do this but, unlike her husband, the vision of piety brought her tears.

“It’s Shabbat.” Liesel waited for Kurt to look at their son. “*Shacharit* isn’t said on Shabbat, or did you forget?”

“*Nu?*” Kurt turned to his wife, “You heard what the Rabbi said, none of that matters anymore.”

Liesel watched at Baron. “You should join him.” She turned to Kurt. “Don’t let your mind lay fallow.”

Kurt glanced at his wife and smiled. “Why do you always pretend to be so much older than me, *nu?*” He leaned in to kiss her. “Two years are nothing.”

To hush him, Liesel touched his lips.⁶²

*

The heat of the Sun awakened Prindy, who found himself snuggled beneath a blanket of paperbark. He opened his eyes and saw his mother’s sister’s husband above him; his head had been, according to the procedure of Law, resting on his guardian’s thigh.⁶³

He was told: “You must remain silent.”⁶⁴

The boy blinked.

“Do not look at your Elders. Only look at me.” Direct eye contact was made: “You savvy?”

The boy started to sit up.

He was pushed down at the shoulder and the back of his head slapped that bare black thigh. “You savvy?”

In the background, the boy heard the singing of the Elders breezing in from afar. He felt the vibrations of their song booming off nearby rocks, yet he never broke direct eye contact with his older guardian.

His brother helped the boy to his feet. “They are singing behind you at the location we will show you later. Keep your back to them. Never again will you see your Elders as a boy.” Eyes stared him down: “You savvy?”⁶⁵

The boy was brought to a edge of the clearing. In the far shade of a sprawling fig tree, the boy pulled back his foreskin to urinate. When he was done, he shook off the last remaining droplets of piss before he was escorted backwards to his guardian.⁶⁶

The boy saw many of his uncles and brothers waiting for him. Many were younger, many others were crying; this was the last time they would see him as a boy. Their role was exceptional and specific: pre-existing spirit children⁶⁷ painted up in white ochre. They sang over him and, in joyful sadness, rubbed his arms with affection, smearing his body with grease and fat to reconstitute the first batch already absorbed by his skin.⁶⁸

The boy was forbidden from speech and unable to say goodbye to his younger male siblings as they vanished from the area, as required by Law. His older cousins sat him down, then an older brother appeared before him:

“Open your mouth and stick out your tongue.” The boy complied and a nugget of dried grass was placed on his tongue. “Bite down on that.”

The boy chewed. Within seconds, the *pituri* duped him into a docile stupor.⁶⁹

They dipped the sharp, pointy end of a long feather into a cup filled with liquid white ochre. Squatting between the boy’s legs, they pushed the loin cloth to the side and, using the quill, painted his inner thigh. They sang to the boy while they painted. The song was melodic and predetermined, groomed by eons of tradition. They sang about the lightning tongue of the Rainbow Serpent and of the Snake sitting with the Flying Fox⁷⁰ at the bottom of the sea. They sang about the Rainbow Serpent and the Flying Fox telling the other Ancestors—the Saltwater Crocodile, the Jabiru, the Barramundi, the Lizards, the Dingoes and the Fire⁷¹—what to do. Then a new verse of the song brought the boy in to a new realm of knowledge: none of these Ancestors, not the Pelican,⁷² not the Eagle Hawk nor his wife the Crow⁷³ and certainly not the Snakes, listened to Ancestors sitting at the bottom of the sea. Instead, they sang, these Ancestors set out to follow their own road as they created and pioneered the world, navigating their way across the infinite universe before now, meanwhile, and forever.

They finished painting the boy’s body and raised their voices in chorus. They seized the boy and sat him upright. The boy saw they had started a series of fires encircling the area. He watched as those initiated ahead of him ran to jump through a cloud of white smoke over the fire ablaze in the centre of the clearing.

His guardian appeared alongside him: “You must jump over the fire so that Ancestor will make you tall and strong.” He made eye contact with the boy: “You savvy?”⁷⁴

The boy bit down on his lip. He took a few steps back and, in a leap, he took off and hurled himself through the white smoke over the fire. He touched down on the ball of his left

foot and ran straight into the waiting arms of his guardian who had—somehow, some way—materialized on the opposite side of the ring.⁷⁵

Just beyond the clearing, a man painted up like the human embodiment of a Kangaroo⁷⁶ sprang out from a cluster of spinifex. He held a narrow board carved like a human phallus. The Kangaroo gyrated, moving the decorated member up and down in rhythm.

Another man sprang up from behind a different bush, rising back-lit by the Sun. He emerged from the spinifex decorated like a Wallaby.⁷⁷ Like the Kangaroo, he too danced with a sacred board carved out like an erect phallus. He aimed this board at the boy as two other men decorated in the totems of the Saltwater Crocodile⁷⁸ and the White Crane⁷⁹ emerged from both the East and the West, grasping long narrow boards they, like the Kangaroo and the Wallaby, aimed at the boy. Together they charged at the boy until they appeared standing in a line swinging their sacred boards up and down in unison with the music.

More men—the boy's immediate Elders and his extended Elders, many of whom had been summoned from across several countries for this specific occasion—leapt out from the spinifex painted, dressed and decorated according to their individual Law until a plethora of Ancestors—the Dingo, the Cloudy Water,⁸⁰ the Flatback Sea-Turtle,⁸¹ the Red-Faced Finch, the Brolga,⁸² the Honeybee,⁸³ the Sugarbag⁸⁴ and the Catfish, each of them armed with his own sacred board—charged at the boy, raising their voices in staccato whilst gyrating.

The boy was not hurt, nor was he frightened. He was held in place by those who had gone before him, rooting him to the centre of activity like a tamarind tree. They watched his grey eyes and when they saw his black-dot pupils dilate, they fed him another little nugget of *pituri*.

The singing rose into crescendo as the Elders circled the boy seven times. These men were loud and the songs they sang complex and beautiful, poetic and secret. His Elders threatened the boy with wicked sorcery and painful death should he ever reveal, and in particular to women or children, the rites that would soon be forced upon him.⁸⁵

He was fed another small clump of *pituri* as they sang. They seized him by his extremities and, as if he were paperbark, clutched at his wrists and ankles to swing him up and down.

The chanted melody of the *niggun* wafted up from the sanctuary as a throng of bearded men draped in *tzit-tzit* and *talitot* danced around the *bimah* in rapturous delight. Liesel watched them “*nah-nah-nah*” as if they’d been tickled by this nameless faceless Lord on high. Their singing of the endless *niggun* was hardly musical; anyone could “*nah-nah*” or “*bim-bam*,” then leap into Psalm Nineteen in a holy display of obedience in subservient praise for the Lord.

The men’s section was festive. The women’s section, a small cramped balcony with narrow wooden chairs, was quiet and all but empty. Liesel did not know the other women seated in the balcony, their noses wedged in prayer books.

God forbid, Liesel thought, you forget to praise the Lord at all times.

Down in the sanctuary, the men clapped and sang. Rabbi Stintston and the other rabbis crowded around a table covered with dozens of open books piled atop each other. They banged on the table while the books walked. Liesel watched the books inch closer and closer to the edge. She was mesmerized by those books, made to move by the rabbis pounding on the table. The tune of the beat enveloped her and the rhythm carried her away.

Liesel returned to the freighter, where the choppy seas of the Eastern Mediterranean were as reliable as the bribes needed to obtain favours, fruits, vegetables and meat from the Portuguese-speaking African mariners who robbed the Jews of money and whatever worldly possessions they later snuck under the corruptible noses of the British in Port Louis. She and Kurt had brought books from Vienna: he his Talmuds and Mishnas and the *Tehillim* he used now in the Synagogue, she a book of Yiddish poetry and some Hebrew books for Aaron, their first born.

Aaron had been fascinated with the freighter and with the Africans. Liesel remembered the boy’s endless questions about the black people of Australia. Her answers to his questions proved less decisive than his assumptions. He thought the African mariners were the same as the black people he’d heard about in Australia. He thought Portuguese was their common language.

Liesel looked down at the ceremony in the Synagogue. The singing and the dancing and the chanting and the pounding of the tables was chaotic. The other rabbi—Rabbi Danglow, a septuagenarian Southern Jew flown in from Sydney to officiate with the vested weight of Government approval—caught a stack of leather-bound books before they tumbled over the edge down onto the wooden floor.⁸⁶ The men sang louder than usual; a boy would become a man today and, from tomorrow onward, he would be obliged to the *mitzvah* of *minyan*.

She felt a whisper slip past her lips, “I should have seen this for Aaron.”

Liesel said this out loud but spoke to no one. The other women in the balcony were seated far away from her, the Psalms more important to them. Liesel rolled her eyes.

The Red Sea indeed, she *humphed*. They had passed through it, right past the Promised Land and down the western coast of the Sinai, passing the ports of Sudan and Aden and some God-forsaken place called Djibouti. She and Kurt had fled from Europe as a family of three. Weeks later, upon arrival in Port Louis, Liesel informed Kurt their number would increase to four.

Down in the Synagogue, silence; standing with their eyes covered and their heads cloaked in *talit*, the men turned northwest toward Jerusalem. They separated themselves, taking three steps back, then three steps forward to bow at their knees. She stared down at the leather-bound books piled atop the table on the *bimah*, letting her mind wander back to the freighter. Kurt had been furious; some of those books had been prayer books and her disregard for them when they slid off the trunk to fall to the floor of a windowless cell deep in the lowest bowels of the *Peixoto* had upset her then-pious husband.

Aaron had been confused when his father fled from the cabin in anger, “Will he come back?”

“Of course he will. Where can he go?” Liesel wiped a tear from the boy’s cheek. “We’re in the middle of an ocean.”

The men down in the Synagogue began the Aramaic *targum* of the *Kadish*. Liesel watched them.* The sanctuary of the Synagogue was not unlike the top deck of that freighter chugging past the curved jetty built for the meat-works of Wyndham. The *Peixoto* dropped anchor but before the gangplanks were lowered, the people amassed on the freighter heard the drone of engines. Liesel remembered the sight of planes, hundreds of them, sorties emblazoned with the red seal of Imperial Japan. They filled the sky like a flock of grey birds flying south. They opened fire on the port. Panic erupted and the spectacle of Jewish discord, held at bay whilst at sea, dissolved into pushing, shoving, screaming and trampling. Youth shoved elderly under foot and out of their way. In the confusion, families were separated, people crushed and children slapped.

From down in the Synagogue, Liesel heard: “For we are consumed in Thine anger, and by wrath we are hurried away.”

* “*targum*” – Hebrew for “translation”

Liesel agreed: chased out was more like it. The Lord *had* hurried them. Their journey started in coastal Thrace, chased there by invading Nazis only to be held up—locked up—by the British on some remote French-speaking island, then shipping out to Australia only to arrive at the same time as the Japanese Air Force. In the madness that ensued, Liesel was separated from both her eldest son and her husband. Had she not held the infant Baron in her arms, she'd have been separated from him, too. She was eventually spat out and off the freighter, tossed up onto the decks of Anton's Landing with the baby. Reunited on shore with Kurt, she wailed at her husband:

"I thought he was with you!"

Kurt took charge of the infant and forced his irate wife through immigration, offering not even the slightest resistance to the name change proposed by the *goyische* clerk: "Friedl"⁸⁷ became "Freedel" and—*stamp stamp*—baby makes three; they were now Permanent Residents of Australia.

Welcome to the New World.

Baron had grown up to be a fat little boy, round with red hair. Liesel could not help but wonder what his older brother might look like. She did not imagine Aaron fat or round. She did not picture Aaron taking to life at the *yeshiva* like his little brother. She did not picture Aaron at all. Liesel was told she was not unique. Every ship that pulled into Wyndham docked with similar stories, they were as rich and as plentiful as urban legends down at the Yiddish club. Claims of kidnapped or trampled children, coupled with lurid tales of disgruntled spouses tossing unfaithful partners or pregnant mistresses with newborn mixed-race babies over board were prevalent, especially among the Polish imports, yet undermined, at least during the war years, by the onslaught of *kamikaze* pilots sent south by Hideki Tojo.

"So what if your kid was killed by the Japs? Better to have been killed by the Japs than by Hitler."

"You weren't raped by a Cossack or molested by a *shvartze*. " She was told, "The more you complain, the longer you shall live!"

"The fact you got out alive at all and all the way down here," they told her, "you shouldn't moan too much."

Liesel hated these sentiments. So did Kurt. A willing sacrifice for the sake of millions of Jews was not her eldest son. Kurt barely mustered the strength to search for the boy after those

African mariners herded them off the *Peixoto*. On shore, they were told they could not under any circumstances go back on board. The Australian authorities told them they'd keep an eye out for a boy matching Aaron's description but quietly, and only to Kurt, they suggested he search the orphanages and the morgues.

"Jewish children lose their parents all the time, especially in those Jap air raids. If he's still in Wyndham, we'll find him. Eventually someone will pick him up."

Kurt told them their eldest did not speak English.

"Don't worry." They told him, "We've got some Yids on our payroll."

"He doesn't speak Yiddish, either."

"Don't worry," they told Kurt: "We'll find him."

Today Liesel would see Baron surpass her first born. Today Baron would become a man. Liesel spotted her husband and her son swimming through the bearded throng down in the Synagogue. She heard the Rabbi recite another *bracha* before opening the *aron kodesh* that housed the Torah. Men hauled the various scrolls from the Ark to dance beneath the eternal flame dangling on a chain from the ceiling, holding the scrolls as if they were wanton lovers eager to escape, they paraded around the sanctuary using the corners of their *talitot* to touch and kiss the Torah. Liesel heard the *click-clack* of the sterling silver breast plates and the twinkling of the little silver bells hanging from the twin *remonim* covering the wooden rollers that stuck out the top of the scrolls as they were carried around the all-male congregation up to the *bimah*.

Rabbi Stinston raised his arms, calling Lazar Cohen to the *bimah*.

The Rabbi dismissed Lazar Cohen after he read a single line from the Torah. He then called up Avrum Levy and recited the proper blessing. Avrum Levy followed suit and, like Lazar Cohen, was dismissed after he read a single line aloud from the parchment.

Liesel sat up straight to ensure a good view. She knew Baron was to be called up next; the Rabbi said: "*Ya'ah'mode, et Barak, haben shel Itzik.*"

Liesel watched her son and her husband climb the steps to the *bimah*. Draped in white *talit*, Baron stepped on to a wooden riser the Rabbi kicked in to place, and Liesel watched her plump, redheaded son step up to the Torah.

Baron said: "*Baruch et Adonai hamevorach.*"

The men replied: "*Baruch Adonai hamevorach le'olam va'ed.*"

Baron said: “*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha’olam asher bachar banu mikol ha’ah’mim venatan lanu et haTorahto. Baruch atah Adonai, notein HaTorah.*”

And the men said, “*Amen.*”

Liesel saw the Rabbi hand her son the *yad*. Using the cornered-edge of his white *talit*, Baron transferred a kiss from his lips to the Hebrew words written in calligraphy on the parchment. Taking a deep breath, he began...



Liesel heard the *click-clack* of the sterling silver breast plates and the twinkling of the little silver bells hanging from the twin *remonim* covering the wooden rollers that stuck out the top of the scrolls as they were carried around the all-male congregation up to the *bimah*.

*

Prindy saw brown fruits dangling from branches hanging down among green leaves.⁸⁸ He sat alone in silence beneath this tree. His elder brother came up to him to remove the girdle of hair, stripping him of his loin cloth. Grasping him by the hand, he escorted him to the sacred place located away from the main fire.⁸⁹

“See?” The elder brother said, “This is the place we said we’d show you.”⁹⁰

The boy watched his elder brother use a fire-stick to kindle a small fire of eucalyptus branches and fig leaves. Elder brother rose to his full height and removed his own loin cloth to stand tall, black and naked in the waning hours of morning Sun at near-zenith peak. Elder brother began to sing, first out over the place, then in awe of Ancestors who would come back before him. He sang out over the boy, perched on the cusp of manhood. He began to dance in a circle around the fire. Prancing now, he came toward the boy to sway his hips and thrust his pelvis. The

younger sibling could not avert his eyes from the dancing leaping black penis of his elder who sang about the Wind and the Air, about the Wet and about the Emu, the Brolga and the Kangaroo.⁹¹ The Rainbow Serpent reappeared with a lightning tongue that lapped at the heels of all creation, and then his elder brother jumped up and over the fire. Naked, this leaping caused his brother's genital, with its exposed pink tip, to flop around.

The boy glanced down at his own penis. He did not have a pink tip, not unless he pulled back that extra hood of skin. He knew his elder siblings and cousins would later paint that part of his body white with ochre.

"Join me!" The boy was told: "You must copy me. We know you savvy. Come." He danced, "This way you will grow tall."⁹²

The boy *was* savvy and he too sang about the Wind and the Air, about the Wet and about the Emu, the Brolga and the Kangaroo. This time, they danced and sang new verses about the Red-faced Finch and the Pelican who flew in as required by Law and ceremony. They sang about the desert-reared Echidna dancing with the Snakes in a Dream that belonged to the Saltwater Crocodile. Fire threatened the Goanna as the White Crane swooped down from above to pluck Barramundi from the Cloudy Waters of the rivers flowing out to the sea where, at the bottom of the ocean, the Rainbow Serpent, goaded by the Flying Fox, lapped at the heels of all creation, causing the boy and his elder brother to sing, dance, prance, and leap around and over the fire as required by Law.

Confident of their younger sibling, his older brothers sang out the next verse and took the boy to a gathering of his Elders.⁹³ The Elders—uncles and great uncles—stood at their leisure around a giant hole that had been dug days earlier. Beside the hole, a massive pile of leaves and branches lay in a steep cluster. Nearby, the Elders leaned on sticks, some of them propped up on one leg.

The boy was shoved into the clearing and, naked, he presented himself to the older men. The Elders changed their collective tune and sang out a new song. The boy knew to expect this. He did not enjoy it. Though they sang over him in loud voices, he heard his mother's brothers and his mother's sister's husbands singing in the distance over a blade of quartz.

The men raised their voices, drowning out the other songs coming in from beyond the circle. The Elders began a new dance, re-enacting lizards by prancing about the boy, slithering over and under him. They affixed fake beards to their chins and placed dried leaves of

tamarind—yellow in color—on their lips and tongue. They squatted and puffed out their bellies, raising their heads with bird-like precision to claw at the boy.

Another group of Elders appeared wearing little black boxes on their heads and black straps wrapped around their arms. Some wore fake noses—big and white—while others danced with feathers hanging in front of their ears.

The boy watched this spectacle, it was new to him, a piece of Law he was expected to learn, know and understand.

He was told: “This is not yours to share. You will die if you share this.” They did not ask him if he was savvy.⁹⁴

The boy sat up and, for the first time ever, he heard the secret lyrics of a song no longer forbidden to him:

“The Jew came here twice.

“Once as the bearded dragon

“Then again as a white man

“With a big nose.

“But not all of them

“Have big noses now.”

The lyric changed and the song refrained:

“They are different

“Than that other white man.

“We knew them Jews would come.

“We knew they were coming.

“They’ve come here before.”

The song continued late into the day. The Elders expected the boy to be confused and his cousins came to speak to him in *Language* over the din of singing.

The boy asked, “So is that why the Jews never cross the road?”

“The Jews are another kind.” He was told: “Different from silly bugger Christian.”⁹⁵

“They gave me shoes.”

“They gave us numbers.”

Prindy was confused, “Numbers?”

They patted him on the head. “All in due time.”

*

The speed it took Baron to recite verses five through fifteen surprised Liesel. The names went on forever and then, all of the sudden, Moses changed a name. Liesel had never studied Torah, not like her husband and her son, but she listened. The lone woman in the small Freedel house, Liesel eavesdropped through thin walls and had picked up a suitable amount of *Tanakh*. Her comprehension of the text her son read aloud as a *bar mitzvah* from the *bimah* with rabbis at his side astounded Liesel: Caleb and Yehoshua, at the Eshkol wadi, cut down a branch laden with grapes and figs and pomegranates, balancing large branches strapped to a pole hefted between them.

Liesel felt tears sting her eyes: There should be two boys down there today!

She thought to throw something—a *Siddur*, a shoe, anything—at the *bimah*. It was insincere. She knew her husband did not merit these displays of observance. He only went through the motions for Baron, reading about the children of Israel in the desert of Paran under the guidance of Moses and Aaron. Aaron—*Aharon*—she heard the name of her first on the lips of her second and caught a sob in her throat. Liesel had packed a handkerchief in her pocket. She knew she would cry. She felt a wail rise inside her and she covered her mouth with both hands as her son, in a squeaky voice, troped in tune, retelling the tale of ancestral revolt against Moses and her first born. A land flowing with milk and honey, but also with powerful giants that lived in fortified cities. The ancestors—the children of Israel—said unto them:

“If only we might die in this wilderness!”

Liesel watched the *bimah*, listening to her son and husband and the rabbis. She wanted to scream: “There should be another one down there with you! Why won’t anyone *say* anything?”

Baron read aloud: “*Ve’yamiru Adonai al-Moshe, ad-anah ye’na’eh’tzeh’nu ha’am hazeh, ve’ad’anah lo ya’ah’min’nu bi, beh’kol ha’o’tot, asher asiti beh’kirboo?*”⁹⁶

Liesel simmered in the balcony: You just wait until I get up there!

She knew Baron had opted to read more than necessary. Through the *yeshiva* parent grapevine, she’d heard the Morose boy, the troublemaker, was years behind with his Hebrew. Baron, conversely, was spited for his achievements. He was a good boy, a *mensch*. He once brought home a *shvartze*, a little one, in the shape of a boy.

Ben was his name.

Baron brought the little blackfella in and said, “He fell through the window!”

Liesel had looked down on the boy dressed in a white shirt and black pants. On his feet he wore a pair of black shoes much like the pair worn by her son. Aside from skin colour, hair and the shape of their bodies—Baron was round and fat, Ben was slim like a rake—they could be twins.

Liesel said as much. She asked the black boy, “So, do you speak English?”

At first, Ben had difficulty understanding Liesel’s accent until Baron repeated the question in a local, child-like vernacular.

Ben then nodded in response. “Yes.”

“Where do you come from?”

“I come from country up north side of river.”

“Which river?”

“The river.” He said, “The one up top Wyndham.”

“Your parents?” Liesel asked, “Where is your mother?”

Ben shrugged.

“What about your father?”

Baron repeated his mother’s questions, using the word “dad” instead of “father”, and Ben said, “Dad Afghan, mum Doolbung.”

“Afghan?” Liesel furrowed her brow at her son: where did you find this one? “Are you hungry? Have you eaten?” Liesel remembered the boy ate everything she put in front of him,

* The transliterated Hebrew in this chapter is taken from the Book of Numbers, Chapter Fourteen, Verses 11 and 12, i.e. *Parshat Shlach* (פרשת שלח): “The Lord said to Moses, ‘How long will these people provoke me? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs I have shown among them?’”

from brisket to borscht, sauerkraut, herring and *kneidlach*. He asked for more and she doled it out, envisioning a negligent black mother neglecting her black child, but she kept this to herself.

“So,” she asked Baron, “they’re letting the *shvartzes* into the *yeshiva* now? How did you meet this black kid?”

“I told you.” Baron scooped *kugel* into his mouth. “He fell through the window.”

Liesel looked at Ben, “*Nu?*” She asked, “Were you on the roof or something?”

Down in the Synagogue, Baron continued to read Hebrew from the Torah, snapping Liesel out of her memory: “I will smite them with pestilence and destroy them and will make thee a nation greater and mightier than they.”

They. Liesel thought about *them*; the blacks. She thought about Ben and her son. They were friends. Ben became Baron’s near-constant, almost entirely silent companion. He became a fixture at their dinner table and not just on Shabbat. He became a *de facto* member of the small Freedel household but, weeks after Baron first brought Ben home, the little blackfella took off, disappearing overnight. Baron had been distraught by Ben’s sudden and unannounced departure, then delighted by his sudden and unexpected return just over a month later.

Baron finished reading from the Torah and, as held by tradition, he scrolled over to the *Sefer Yehoshua* for the *Haftarah*. Liesel, watching from above, remembered finding her son and his black friend sitting on the steps out the front of their small house, both of them hunched over a chessboard.

Liesel had asked, “Who’s winning?”

“He is. I taught him this game last week and already he’s better at it than I am.”

Ben, like her son, kept his eyes glued to the chessboard and Liesel asked, “Is that right?”

“Yeah.” Baron also stared down at the chess. “You should hear his Hebrew.”⁹⁷

Liesel relayed this to her husband. Kurt, who was fond of Ben and thrilled Baron finally had someone to play with, said, “That boy *is* adaptable.”

That boy, Liesel thought, is gone.

Ben had disappeared yet again; there the day before, gone the day after. This time he’d been gone not for weeks, but for months. Baron, troping his way through the conquering of Canaan, had asked his mother:

“Do you think he’ll be back for my *bar mitzvah*?”

Liesel knew her son in his youth felt the sudden loss of Ben as acutely as she felt the loss of her first born. Her tears welled up. Their family had never been large but now, here in Australia, she felt their numbers should have been different—higher—and they should've included more people than just her son and husband. She wiped her nose with a handkerchief. Ben should be down there in the Synagogue. Even though he did not wear *tzit-tzit*, Liesel believed they should all be down there together to see Baron become a son of the covenant.

*

Prindy watched his elder brothers light a fire at the far end of the clearing, illuminating a cross made of wood stuck in the ground. The elder brothers pointed at the cross and told the boy it was sacred.

Prindy asked, "Does it belong to that silly bugger Christian?"

"Nah." They shook their heads. "Just coincidental." The eldest brother placed a finger to his lips, signaling him silent.⁹⁸

They gathered around the boy, holding little bowls made of stone filled with white paint made from ochre. They smeared white paint all over his face and neck and down his arms and legs. They painted his hands and feet, his knees and his elbows. They smeared the ochre down the boy's back and over his buttocks. They held his arms down and parted his legs and painted his penis, coating his testicles in ochre until he was white from head to toe.

The boy was uncomfortable. They seemed to take a long time, but they told him not to be frightened. They sang over him. They sang about the Kangaroo and his journey from joey to boomer. They rubbed his shoulders in a display of fraternal affection. They increased in number and gathered around him. They joined the chorus with cousins and elder brothers until the boy felt their voices ringing in his ears, his grey eyes wide with wonder.

The men around the boy stepped away from him but not out of the clearing. Another group of men—the boy's Elders from the line of his uncle's kin—emerged from the southwestern edge beyond the clearing, stepping through the smoke dressed in the totem of the Nightjar. They wore headdresses carved to resemble abrupt heads in flat pointy alignment with short curved beaks. The eyes of the Nightjar were big and black and they stared at the boy as men danced backward in time to the rhythm.⁹⁹ The role of the Nightjar was specific: they

watched to ensure everything followed according to the interconnected Law between them and the ten men who, at this moment, appeared at the opposite edge of the clearing.

The ten men were decorated as Saltwater Crocodiles. Their eyes were red and their song was loud, even from a distance. They chanted and stamped their feet, pounding ochre-painted spears into the ground.

The boy—painted white and standing naked—was shoved out alone to face those ten Crocodiles. His heart throbbed in his chest and he felt sweat, mixed with the ochre, sting his eyes.

The ten men grunted and panted. They rushed at the boy, aiming spears straight at him. They charged, frightening the boy who wet himself and peed all over his white feet.

The men did not spear the boy. They disappeared, vanishing without a trace, taking their song with them. The boy was pulled back into his group by his elders, who fed him another nugget of *pituri*.

“Newly acquired knowledge,” they spoke to him in *Language*: “You reveal it and we spear you for real next time.”

The boy chewed on the *pituri*, feeling a calmness wave over him. He felt light-headed and dizzy, but he remained silent and stoic. His elder brothers carried him over to a hole they had dug days earlier. They dropped him into the hole and dispersed, vanishing into the wilderness beyond the clearing. The boy now stood lower than the eucalyptus branches and fig leaves piled up next to the hole. The pile towered over him, close to the edge of the hole he’d been thrown into. He heard a new voice and, upon it, a new song. He turned around and, behind him, he saw an elder—the Elder—the Man of Medicine, the Flyer!—his long beard, his chest carved with white paint, his wild red eyes, his claws.¹⁰⁰ For the first time ever, the boy looked him right in the eye.

Those red eyes never blinked.

He held a stick of fire in his right hand and, with a flourish, he moved toward the boy. He swung the stick of fire in a brilliant arc, bringing the flame into contact with that pile. The eucalypt exploded, turning the fig leaves into a giant ball of fire that sent a mushroom cloud rising toward the Sun.¹⁰¹

The boy, crouching down inside the hole, was seized and lifted out. The clearing was filled with those initiated before him. The boy knew some of these men and recognized others.

The rest were men he would only see from now on at *corroborrees*. They chanted a song over a blade of quartz they passed between them, then they dropped to their knees to form the legs of a table upon which the boy was placed. They held him down and pulled back his arms, fastening their hands around his ankles.¹⁰² They pushed his legs open, parting his knees to make way for the man with the knife. The man with the knife grabbed the boy's penis to insert his finger into the sleeve of foreskin. He pushed the bulbous head down and pulled the foreskin up. He made four quick and delicate cuts with the blade of quartz and, in swift movement, circumcised the boy, removing him from his foreskin and causing the white-painted genital to bleed blood red.

Flies swarmed around the cuts, chasing after the blood dripping on to an oval-shaped shield.¹⁰³ The flies were swatted away as the boy's manhood was encased in a thick patch of moist pipe-clay. They gave him a roll of paperbark to use as a bandage before they flipped him over to tie a new loin cloth around his waist.¹⁰⁴

The Elders, in the meantime, stood nearby in the light of the fire to examine the severed foreskin to ensure the ceremony had followed proper procedure. The Elders conferred with the boy's affines before they tossed the foreskin into the fire in satisfaction of the Law. Their job over, the Nightjars took to flight; the boy was a young man now and the men he could now count himself among erupted into celebration, embracing this new and most recent initiate.¹⁰⁵ They carried him over to the hay mattress his mother and aunties and older sisters had made for him and rubbed his shoulders, speaking to him in *Language*:

"You real savvy now, hey?"

The young man was expected to be resentful for a time, yet he said, "*Nu*?" as a streak of smoke rose up into the air.

Across the ridged spine of the Ancestor, located miles away at the far edge of the distant horizon, the boy's mother watched that streak of smoke rise. She too held a stick of fire she now extinguished, turning back to the other women to weep over the loss of her son.¹⁰⁶

*

Liesel blew her nose into a handkerchief. The men in the Synagogue pelted her son and husband with *gelt*. Singing "*Mazal tov v'siman tov*", they linked arms with Baron and Kurt, dragging them from the *bimah* to dance the *horah*.

Everyone threw candy at them.

Everyone clapped and sang.

Everyone except Liesel.

Sitting by herself in the women's section, she covered her face with her hands, sobbing like an irate child.

She let go of his hand!

Beneath the glow of the eternal flame, Liesel saw her fat little son dancing with his father and the other men and she sobbed. On the *bimah*, Rabbi Danglow lifted the Torah to display the *parsha* the *bar mitzvah* had just read, but he faltered and the heavy scrolls nearly snapped his hands clear off his wrists. Rabbi Stintston caught the older rabbi at his elbow, preventing him from dropping the Torah altogether.

Liesel sobbed at this. Where she'd succeeded, she'd failed. She was ashamed and guilty. She'd robbed her family of its total number, and Baron and Kurt were down there now alone. Through her tears, she saw them smiling and she halted her bawl. They were happy. Baron of course knew the steps to the *horah* perfectly, despite his rotund little figure. His father, on the other hand, struggled to keep up.

Liesel blew her nose into the handkerchief, smearing green mucous across her cheek. She turned to the woman nearest her and held out her hand, palm up, "*Gelt, nu?*"

The woman nearest her, Risa Morose, passed Liesel a small net of chocolate coins wrapped in gold. Liesel tore open the little net and, aiming for the Morose boy, the troublemaker, she hurled the fake coins, nailing the bearded man next to him by accident.

"Liesel?" Risa handed her a small piece of tissue, hoping to give Liesel a hint. "You and your husband must be so proud."

"We are satisfied with our lot in life." Liesel took the tissue and sniffled. She'd never been fond of Risa Morose and she turned away from her quickly, focusing instead on the men dancing arm in arm, kicking up the *horah*.. Liesel watched Baron's *kippah* slide right off his sweaty redhead and said, "At least my son is."



On the *bimah*, Rabbi Danglow lifted the Torah to hold it up to display the *parsha* the *bar mitzvah* had just read, but he faltered and the heavy scrolls nearly snapped his hands clear off his wrists.

Rabbi Stintston caught the older rabbi at his elbow, preventing him from dropping the Torah altogether.



“Gelt, nu?”

Western Australia

1957

Prindy returned on a Saturday morning. He walked across the road to the Synagogue where he saw adults mingling on and around the front verandah, the men down one end, the women up the other. They were dressed formally in blacks and whites and they did not notice him as he went around to the back. Behind the water tank, Prindy came upon the boys of the *yeshiva* standing in a close-knit circle. He heard them cheering and pushed his way in.

Prindy saw Felix shove Baron hard in the shoulder. Baron pushed back tit-for-tat until Felix charged at him, slapping Baron in the face. Baron attempted to grab hold of Felix but Felix proved too fast for him. He slapped Baron's head and poked fists at his round figure. He spat on Baron, slapped him a second time and pushed him away. Baron tried to shove Felix, but Felix grabbed his wrists and, using his rival's own hands, forced Baron to slap himself.

The boys laughed at this.

Baron managed to free himself and he punched Felix square in the face, busting his nose and splitting his lip. The boys—the spectators—went silent as Felix tasted blood in his mouth.

Felix took a wide swing, delivering an uppercut to Baron's jaw, knocking him off his feet. Baron did not fall over; he threw another punch and scored a direct hit, bruising Felix's left eye. Felix jumped on Baron and climbed onto his back. He wrapped his arm around Baron's neck, putting him in a headlock that forced Baron first to his knees, then to the ground.

This deft move impressed the spectators who offered ongoing vocal encouragement. A young man now, Ben Prindy had no dog in this fight; he watched but did not intervene.

Felix got on top of Baron, straddling him to pin down Baron's right arm with his left knee. He punched Baron twice—pop pop—on either side of his jaw, slapping him all around his head. Felix gurgled a mixture of saliva and blood from the back of his throat and spat again into Baron's face. Felix raised his elbow, lifting his arm in preparation for the final blow to Baron's freckled nose but, just before he took that last punch, he was jerked back and lifted off him.

"Moshe! Anshel!" Kipke appeared out of nowhere, growling at the spectators in a combination of accusatory Yiddish and Kimberley English: "What the hell is wrong with all of you, *nu?*" He held Felix by the collar, holding him back from Baron.

Anschel came in to help Baron from the ground while Moshe, in a loud and authoritative voice, said: “How dare you desecrate the Holy Sabbath with petty acts of violence?” Moshe took one look at Felix and said, “My God, Baron, what have you done?”

Baron wiped snot from his nose and began to cry, “He started it.”

“Felix,” Moshe asked, “is this true?”

“No.” Felix did not cry. “That fat little shit called me a bastard!”

Kipke gasped, “Language!” He shook his head, “And on the same day as your *bar mitzvah*!”

“Well that’s what you are, Felix.” Baron sniveled. “Your parents are divorced.”

Felix lunged at Baron and the boys, seeing this, cheered on the resumption of hostilities.

Just before Felix clothes-lined Baron, dragging him back down to the ground, Baron saw Ben Prindy standing among the spectators. Ben Prindy did not cheer like the other boys. He looked on without comment. He and Baron made eye contact and Baron, though bruised, bullied and injured, smiled just before Felix knocked him down to the ground.

This time, Moshe, Kipke and Anschel quickly separated Baron and Felix. Kipke stood to one side with Baron, Anschel to the other with Felix while Moshe stood between the two in the centre.

“You boys have desecrated Shabbat.” Moshe glared around, making eye contact with each and every spectator. “You boys have desecrated this Synagogue. And *you*,” he turned to Felix, “you just became a *bar mitzvah* an hour ago and this is your first act as a man, to attack Baron Freedel, of all people?”

“Yeah, well,” fifteen year old Felix gave his next words some thought, “he called me a bastard and that’s just not right.”

Baron said, “You spit on me!”

Felix responded to this with a pout and, turning to Anschel, he blinked his eyes rapidly to induce tears. “He insulted my mother.”

“I can’t help it if your mum’s a slut but she is, and that means you’re a bastard.” Baron used the back of his hand to wipe his nose. “It’s true, Felix.”

“See?” Felix pouted. “You hear how he talks to me?”

“Alright, here’s what’s going to happen: I want *you*,” Moshe pointed at Felix, “to keep away from that one,” he pointed at Baron. “And I want all you boys,” here Moshe addressed the

spectators, Ben Prindy among them, “to go back inside. And *you*,” he pointed at Baron, “you’re coming with me.”

Baron balked at this, “Where are you taking *me*?”

“Back to your father. Now go,” Moshe dismissed the spectators, “I expect to see all of you back inside. I don’t want to see anyone out here again, alright?” Moshe started to leave but he stopped himself to turn back to the boys. “We have a saying that if you can act like a *mensch*, then you should be a *mensch* but, based on what I just saw out here now; this is not what I consider being a *mensch*.”

“Nnh-nnh,” Kipke shook his head, “*behach’let she’lo*.”*

“All of you,” Moshe scowled, “should be ashamed of yourselves.”

Baron, during this, stared at his friend. Ben Prindy had finally come back. He looked older and taller than before, but it was Ben alright. Baron tried to catch Ben’s eye. He did catch it, but saw no flicker of recognition flare up in his friend.

Baron raised his hand in half a wave and said, “Hi, Ben!”

Prindy looked Baron right in the eye and, after a moment, he blinked and averted his gaze.

Moshe, at that moment, turned to lead Baron into the Synagogue. Kipke and Anshel vanished as well, leaving Prindy and Felix with the other boys. It was then that the boys of the *yeshiva* formalized their reactions to Prindy’s sudden return:

“Ben! Where the hell have you been?”

“You were gone for a long time!”

“Why didn’t you jump in there to help your fat little friend, *nu*?”

Prindy offered no sort of response, verbal or otherwise. He just looked at the other boys.

“He didn’t help that fat little shit because,” the boys hushed to hear Felix, “he’s decided he can’t stand Baron Freedel any more than we can, hey Ben, *nu*?”

Prindy watched Felix emerge from the melee. Like Baron, Felix was battered and bruised. “Well if the bloody dingo didn’t drag in another *shvartze*, hey now, *nu*?” Felix had also grown older and taller and now he and Prindy stood face-to-face at eye level. “I take it you know what a *shvartze* is by now, yeah?”

Prindy did not blink. He stared at Felix without expression.

* “*behach’let shelo*” – Hebrew for “absolutely not.”

“You know Baron’s no good for you, don’t you? He’s fat and dumb, but you’ve lived in his house, *nu?*” Felix took a moment to right the tangled *tzit-tzit* dangling out from beneath his white button-up shirt. “I bet you knew that already, hey?”

Prindy did not respond.

“You know what I think?” Felix used a bobby pin to reattach the *kippa* to his blond hair. “I think you’re better off dumping that fat little shit and better off coming along with me two-feller style. That’s what you people say, isn’t it? Two-feller style? Me and you two-feller now, *nu?*”¹⁰⁷

Prindy narrowed his eyes at Felix and turned to where he’d last seen Baron walking off with Moshe.

“He’s gone now, Ben. And he’s no good for you. All Baron Freedel is good for is cheating off of in class, but that means nothing to you ‘cause you’re not really a student, are you, *nu?*”

Prindy remained silent.

“Look, Ben,” Felix turned to spit blood from his mouth. “Look what your fat little friend did to my eye. You see it? You really want to be friends with the fat kid who probably wants to eat you, or would you rather be friends with the rich kid, *nu?*”

Prindy did not say anything, but he raised an eyebrow and cocked his head to his left.

¹ This 'list' of white people is 'lifted', as it were, from the pages of Jeannie Gunn's *We of the Never Never*.

² The phrase "You been killum bullocky" is taken from Page 14 of Keith Wiley's *Boss Drover*.

³ This line of dialogue is attributed to the words of Joseph Carrodus as described in *Governing Savages* by Andrew Markus, page 126 specifically, pages 122-129 in general.

⁴ The name "Samson" is taken from Chapter X, page 135 onward, of the book *Kimberley People: Stone Age Bushmen of Today* by J.R.B. Love, 1936.

⁵ The phrase "*gardiya*" as a term for white people is taken from Bruce Shaw's *When the Dust Come in Between* and in Ian Crawford's *We Won the Victory*. The phrase "*munga munga*" and "*munpa munpa*" and the notion of "traffic" are described at length in Deborah Bird Rose's *Dingo Makes Us Human*, pages 95-97 and 150-153.

⁶ Biography regarding Joseph Carrodus maintaining a residence in Mugga Way, Red Hill, Canberra.

⁷ 'Luxuriant' is the phrase used to describe his moustache in Sir Samuel Cohen's obituary.

⁸ According to the ANU online archive, the obituary for Sir Samuel Cohen served for seven years as president of the Great Synagogue of Sydney. According to the online biography written by Martha Rutledge, Sir Samuel Cohen was not only "a devout Jew," but also "a horse lover... he was a member of the Australian Jockey Club and raced many horses."

(<http://oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/cohen-sir-samuel-sydney-5718> and <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cohen-sir-samuel-sydney-5718>)

⁹ The status of the Jewish people in Australia as a "good" ethnic group that had "well-adapted" to Australian society is discussed at length on page 201 of *Jews of the Sixth Continent* in the section written by Konrad Kwiet.

¹⁰ The phrase "...we are... British through and through..." is common but in this particular example it is taken from an article written by Sir Samuel Cohen that was published in August 1938. (, page 113, *Australia and the Jewish Refugees 1933-1948* by Michael Blakeney)

¹¹ Sir Samuel Cohen's opposition to the Kimberley Plan is based on several texts, chief among them the chapter written by Paul R. Bartrop, specifically page 103 of *Jews of the Sixth Continent*

¹² The assumption that the Jews of Europe did something to "set off" the anti-Semitism of the Nazis is based on the chapter written by Konrad Kwiet on page 206 of *Jews of the Sixth Continent*.

¹³ Based on Sir Samuel Cohen's articles.

¹⁴ The phrase: "hordes of Europe", (i.e. "Jewish hordes of Europe" and similar variations thereof), are attributed to letters written by Sir Samuel Cohen that were later sent to Joseph Carrodus, (page 95, *An Unpromised Land* by Leon Gettler, and page 113 of *Australia and the Jewish Refugees 1933-1948* by Michael Blakeney, and page 160-161 from *Jews in the Sixth Continent* edited by W.D. Rubinstein).

¹⁵ Sir Samuel Cohen's disdain for the Kimberley Plan is discussed on page 206 of *Jews of the Sixth Continent*.

¹⁶ This phrase: "To kill this baby in its infancy" (i.e. "to kill this baby before it is born") is taken from the non-fiction book about the secret Israeli nuclear arms program, *The Samson Option* by

Seymour Hirsch (Random House, New York 1991). According to this book, Israeli PM Menachem Begin used this phrase in the abstract justification for “Operation Opera” – the Israeli surprise attack that destroyed an Iraqi nuclear reactor in Iraq in June of 1981.

¹⁷ In this Uchronic version of Australian history, Joseph Carrodus dies in 1939 in New South Wales instead of in Canberra in 1961, this is a point of historic divergence that later becomes an elliptical world history detail.

¹⁸ Arnold Zable, author of *Café Scherherazade*, is the one who shed light on where a Jewish café is located in Melbourne circa 1946. Sam Cohen’s Continental Café on Drummond Street in Carlton was, according to local urban lore, *the* Jewish place to eat at that time.

¹⁹ Elliptical world history: atomic weapons are used against Nazi Germany in the climax of World War Two, first by the United Kingdom, then by the United States.

²⁰ Elliptical world history: Bob Menzies, Prime Minister of Australia for seven consecutive years in 1946 means Bob Menzies never left office during World War Two.

²¹ The idea that Aaron Patkin, a prominent Zionist in Australia in the 1940s, was and thus would be against the Kimberley Plan is based on several texts including, but not limited to, articles he published in the *Australian Jewish Herald* on both March 17th and March 24th in 1939. Further, on page 98 of Leon Gettler’s *An Unpromised Land*, there is the following quote the astutely summarizes Aaron Patkin’s presumed position on the matter: “In Melbourne, leading Zionist Dr. Aaron Patkin poured scorn on the Kimberley scheme in a series of attacks on the ‘gentile idealists and dreamers’.”

²² Elliptical world history: “...a couple million that way” – this means only two million Jews were killed by Nazi Germany rather than six million, i.e. the Holocaust is bypassed in this alternate history..

²³ A reptilian reference to lines 71-72 of TS Eliot’s *The Waste Land*.

²⁴ *In the Wet* by Nevil Shute.

²⁵ A sense of irony: there are Jews that want to kill Jew lizards.

²⁶ “...langu his country...” was added as per John Bradley’s suggestion.

²⁷ According to Page 183 of Bruce Shaw’s *When the Dust Come in Between*, Lee Tong’s is described as the “only store in Wyndham.”

²⁸ The reconfigured and uplifted image of Indigenous people: mid-20th century and blackfellas are studying at university, so already we’re talking about a completely different Australia.

²⁹ *Carpentaria* by Alexis Wright.

³⁰ Point of Historic Divergence: the arrival of the Eastern Bearded Dragon to the East Kimberley region.

³¹ In this Uchronic version of Australia, Aboriginal Dream Time is considered at the academic level alongside Biology and Science in 1951, which was not the case in actual history at that time.

³² The fact that this is known in East Kimberley at the academic level is another indication of an alternate Australia.

³³ Though it is known what the point of historical divergence is, what remains a mystery is when did it happen?

³⁴ The name “Prindy” - as well as the name “Prendegast” - are both taken from Xavier Herbert’s *Poor Fellow My Country*.

³⁵ This scene is adapted from a similar scene in Sally Morgan's *My Place*.

³⁶ In Jewish synagogues, this space is typically called a "*genizah*" which in Hebrew means "hiding" but can be translated as "archive" or "repository." The most famous *genizah* can be found in Jewish folklore in Prague; that is where, according to legend, the Golem of Prague is kept locked in a truck wrapped in chains in a room that does not have any doors, thus barring entry and/or escape.

³⁷ In Jewish ritual, a "*yad*", which means "hand" in Hebrew, is popularly known as a "Torah pointer" used by the Torah reader to follow the text as it is read from the parchment Torah scrolls. A "*yad*" is commonly made of silver and is often shaped like a long rod capped by a small hand with its index finger pointing from it.

³⁸ Elliptical world history the Immigration Authority arbitrarily changes names of Jews to "make us all Australian."

³⁹ Like the name Felix Morose, the name Jacob Esau is meant to convey a sense of irony.

⁴⁰ "Bradley" as in John Bradley, whose family name underwent a change upon arrival to Australia.

⁴¹ "Morgan or Ettlinger", the surnames of present-day rabbis in Melbourne.

⁴² "Delacy" as in Jeremy Delacy, a fictional character in Xavier Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country*

⁴³ Leon Gettler states the intention of the Kimberley Plan was that the Jews would "promise" not to leave East Kimberley for Southern Cities.

⁴⁴ "*Shetten*" means "Urine" in Hebrew.

⁴⁵ The Christian groups wanted to build churches in a Jewish-settled East Kimberley.

⁴⁶ Not only can Prindy read, and quite well, he can adapt, too.

⁴⁷ The Afghan named 'Peabush', a.k.a. 'Parbaroosh', is adapted from page 153 of *Boss Drover* by Keith Willey; Rigby Publishing, Adelaide, South Australia, 1971.

⁴⁸ Just like Prindy, who "shrugged" when the Rabbi gave him his new name, so now the Rabbi also shrugs in reference to that event.

⁴⁹ Elliptical world history: the Nazis expel the Jews before they send them to concentration camps.

⁵⁰ Burgas, Bulgaria, is a port on the Black Sea that dates back to the Thracians of Antiquity. On July 18, 2012, at least five Israeli tourists were killed in Burgas by a Hezbollah suicide bomber when he detonated explosives on a bus.

⁵¹ The line "Prindy was awakened by a cut of the switch" is adapted from Page 1429 of Xavier Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country*.

⁵² That they come to take the boy is based on information described on Page 40 of M.F. Ashley-Monatagu's *Coming Into Being Among the Aboriginal Australians*

⁵³ That the boy will wear a string made from hair is taken from Page 258 of M.J. Megitt's *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* as it appears in chapter form, (Chapter 9), in *Religion in Aboriginal Australia*, edited by Max Charlesworth, Howard Morphy, Diane Bell and Kenneth Maddock.

⁵⁴ The the boy is "nearly sworn to secrecy" is based on information taken from Page 245 of M.J. Meggitt's *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* as it appears in chapter form, (Chapter 9), in *Religion in Aboriginal Australia*, edited by Max Charlesworth, Howard Morphy, Diane Bell and Kenneth Maddock.

⁵⁵ Smearing the boy with ochre is taken from is taken from Page 257 of M.J. Meggitt's *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* as it appears in chapter form, (Chapter 9), in *Religion in Aboriginal Australia*, edited by Max Charlesworth, Howard Morphy, Diane Bell and Kenneth Maddock.

⁵⁶ That the men and women will insult each other as part of this ceremony is based on Page 75 of Ian Keen's *Knowledge and Secrecy in Aboriginal Religion*.

⁵⁷ That women related to the boy would make a mattress of hay for him as part of this ceremony is based on Page 75 of Ian Keen's *Knowledge and Secrecy in Aboriginal Religion*.

⁵⁸ The men chasing the woman away is taken from Page 255 of M.J. Meggitt's *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* as it appears in chapter form, (Chapter 9), in *Religion in Aboriginal Australia*, edited by Max Charlesworth, Howard Morphy, Diane Bell and Kenneth Maddock.

⁵⁹ The name "Kurt" is taken from Xavier Hebert's *Poor Fellow My Country*

⁶⁰ According to the 'Holiness Code' and the 'Deuteronomic Code' of the Torah, farmers are expected to leave the corners of their fields unharvested and that these gleanings should be left for the poor, for strangers, for widows and for paternal orphans as written in Leviticus 19:9 and 23:22, as well as in Deuteronomy 24:19-21.

⁶¹ The phrase: "The face was as dark as a well-used saddle..." is adapted here from Page 14 of Xavier Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country*.

⁶² This dialogue sequence is adapted from Page 24 of *To the Islands* by Randolph Stow

⁶³ That the boy will rest his head on his guardian's thigh is based on information taken from Page 248 of M.J. Meggitt's *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* as it appears in chapter form, (Chapter 9), on Page 248 in *Religion in Aboriginal Australia*, edited by Max Charlesworth, Howard Morphy, Diane Bell and Kenneth Maddock.

⁶⁴ The vow of silence is discussed, and consequently adapted here, in M.J. Meggitt's *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* as it appears in chapter form, (Chapter 9), on Page 244 in *Religion in Aboriginal Australia*, edited by Max Charlesworth, Howard Morphy, Diane Bell and Kenneth Maddock.

⁶⁵ Keeping his back to Elders at all times is based on information taken from Page 248 of M.J. Meggitt's *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* as it appears in chapter form, (Chapter 9), on Page 248 in *Religion in Aboriginal Australia*, edited by Max Charlesworth, Howard Morphy, Diane Bell and Kenneth Maddock.

⁶⁶ This part of the initiation sequence is based on details gleaned and adapted from M.J. Meggitt's *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* as it appears in chapter form, (Chapter 9), on Page 248 in *Religion in Aboriginal Australia*, edited by Max Charlesworth, Howard Morphy, Diane Bell and Kenneth Maddock.

⁶⁷ The concept of a role male children can play in a ceremony of this magnitude—as a concept—is alluded to, i.e. suggested, on Page 98 of *From Digging Sticks to Walking Sticks Stories of Kija Woman* as told to Veronica Ryan.

⁶⁸ Rubbing fat or, in this case, grease, on the boy's body, along with red or, in this case, white, ochre is discussed, and consequently adapted here, in M.J. Meggitt's *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* as it appears in chapter form, (Chapter 9), on Page

244 in *Religion in Aboriginal Australia*, edited by Max Charlesworth, Howard Morphy, Diane Bell and Kenneth Maddock.

⁶⁹ Page 7 of Pamela Watson's *This Precious Foliage* describes pituri "as a crude plant drug made from *Duboisia hopwoodii*". Page 8 refers to pituri as "nasty dirty looking balls of chewed grass" that, when chewed, makes users "happy and perfectly indifferent."

⁷⁰ The Flying Fox is used here as a local totem; this is based on Page 144 of Bruce Shaw's *Countrymen* and Page 127 from Ian Crawford's *We Won the Victory*

⁷¹ Fire is used here as a local totem, based on page 144 of Bruce Shaw's *Countrymen*, as well as *When the Dust Come In Between, Aboriginal Viewpoints in the East Kimberley Prior to 1982*, as told to Bruce Shaw.

⁷² The Pelican is used here as a local totem, based on two books: *From Digging Sticks to Writing Sticks, Stories of Kija Women* as told to Veronica Ryan, and *My Country of the Pelican Dreaming, The Life of an Australian Aborigine of the Gadjerong, Grandt Ngabidj, 1904-1977* as told to Bruce Shaw.

⁷³ The Eagle Hawke and his wife, the Crow, are used here as a local totem based on *From Digging Sticks to Writing Sticks, Stories of Kija Women*, as told to Veronica Ryan.

⁷⁴ Jumping over the fire "to make him grow tall" is discussed, and consequently adapted here, in M.J. Meggitt's *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* as it appears in chapter form, (Chapter 9), in *Religion in Aboriginal Australia*, edited by Max Charlesworth, Howard Morphy, Diane Bell and Kenneth Maddock.

⁷⁵ That the boy must jump over a fire "to grow tall" and strong is based on information taken from Page 248 of M.J. Meggitt's *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* as it appears in chapter form, (Chapter 9), on Page 250 in *Religion in Aboriginal Australia*, edited by Max Charlesworth, Howard Morphy, Diane Bell and Kenneth Maddock.

⁷⁶ That the boy must jump over a fire "to grow tall" and strong is based on information taken from Page 248 of M.J. Meggitt's *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* as it appears in chapter form, (Chapter 9), on Page 250 in *Religion in Aboriginal Australia*, edited by Max Charlesworth, Howard Morphy, Diane Bell and Kenneth Maddock.

⁷⁷ The Wallaby is used here as a local totem based on *From Digging Sticks to Writing Sticks, Stories of Kija Women* as told to Veronica Ryan.

⁷⁸ The Saltwater Crocodile is adapted from *Miriwung Dreaming* as told to Bruce Shaw on Page 65 in *When the Dust Come in Between, Aboriginal Viewpoints in the East Kimberley Prior to 1982*. Miriwung territory is located next to Doolboong territory, thus Crocodile Dreaming is "near" to Doolbung territory as it is mentioned on Page 112 of the same book. According to both Frank Chulung, a Doolbung Elder, and his nephew, Donald "Duck" Chulung, the totem/symbol for the Doolbung is the Saltwater Crocodile.

⁷⁹ The White Crane is used here as a local totem based on *From Digging Sticks to Writing Sticks, Stories of Kija Women* as told to Veronica Ryan.

⁸⁰ 'Cloudy Water' as a totem is taken from Page 173-174 from Ian Keen's *Knowledge and Secrecy in an Aboriginal Religion*.

⁸¹ Turtles as a feature in local Dreaming stories is adapted from Page 268 of Bruce Shaw's *When the Dust Come in Between, Aboriginal Viewpoints in the East Kimberley Prior to 1982*

⁸² The Brolga as part of the “Totemic System”, or as part of the “Totem Heroes”, is based on Page 9 of Xavier Herbert’s *Seven Emus*.

⁸³ ‘The Honeybee’ as a totem is based on Pages 173-174 of Ian Keen’s *Knowledge and Secrecy in an Aboriginal Religion*.

⁸⁴ The Sugarbag is used here as a local totem based on Page 112 of Bruce’s Shaw *When the Dust Come in Between, Aboriginal Viewpoints in the East Kimberley Prior to 1982*

⁸⁵ That the boy is threatened with painful death should he ever reveal the contents of the ceremony to women or children is discussed on Pages 40 and 42 of M.F. Ashley-Montagu’s *Coming Into Being Among the Australian Aborigines*

⁸⁶ According to the Australian Dictionary of Biography, an online source, a brief article written by J.S. Levi specifies Rabbi Jacob Danglow’s birthday as November 28, 1880. Rabbi Jacob Danglow also spoke in favour of the Kimberley Plan. He was 75 in 1955-56.

<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/danglow-jacob-5878>

⁸⁷ “Friedl” is a surname related distantly to the Muller family back in Wroclaw, Prussia, when it was part of the German Empire. The Friedl family owned a camera shop in “the Old World” before they relocated to parts of the United Kingdom and the United States.

⁸⁸ The boy seated under a tamarind tree is adapted from the details as described on Pages 174-175 of Ian Keen’s *Knowledge and Secrecy in an Aboriginal Religion*

⁸⁹ The brother removing clothes from the boy is discussed on Page 256 of M.J. Meggitt’s *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* as it appears in chapter form, (Chapter 9), on Page 244 in *Religion in Aboriginal Australia*, edited by Max Charlesworth, Howard Morphy, Diane Bell and Kenneth Maddock.

⁹⁰ That the boy is taken and shown “the place of blood” is adapted from Pages 173-175 of Ian Keen’s *Knowledge and Secrecy in an Aboriginal Religion*.

⁹¹ That the brother also strips naked and prances toward the boy is based on Page 256 of M.J. Meggitt’s *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* as it appears in chapter form, (Chapter 9), on Page 244 in *Religion in Aboriginal Australia*, edited by Max Charlesworth, Howard Morphy, Diane Bell and Kenneth Maddock.

⁹² The invitation/command to “copy” his brother so that “he will grow tall” is based on Page 356 of M.J. Meggitt’s *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* as it appears in chapter form, (Chapter 9), on Page 244 in *Religion in Aboriginal Australia*, edited by Max Charlesworth, Howard Morphy, Diane Bell and Kenneth Maddock.

⁹³ That the boy is taken and “presented” to his Elders is based on Page 256 of M.J. Meggitt’s *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* as it appears in chapter form, (Chapter 9), on Page 244 in *Religion in Aboriginal Australia*, edited by Max Charlesworth, Howard Morphy, Diane Bell and Kenneth Maddock.

⁹⁴ Again, the notion that the boy is “warned on pain of death” is mentioned on Page 40 of M.F. Ashley-Montagu’s *Coming Into Being Among Australian Aborigines*

⁹⁵ The phrase “silly bugger Christian” is adapted from Page 793 of Xavier Herbert’s *Poor Fellow My Country*.

⁹⁶ The transliterated Hebrew in this chapter is taken from the Book of Numbers, Chapter Fourteen, Verses 11 and 12, i.e. *Parshat Shlach* (פרשת שלח): “The Lord said to Moses, ‘How

long will these people provoke me? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs I have shown among them?”

⁹⁷ Michael Chabon's *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* also contains a recurring motif of chess-playing.

⁹⁸ That the boy must not speak unless spoken to is taken from the details that appear in M.F. Ashley-Montagu's *Coming Into Being Among the Australian Aborigines*

⁹⁹ The phrase: “in time to the pounding rhythm”, is taken from the description of a Walbiri initiation ceremony as it appears in M.J. Meggitt's *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* as it appears in chapter form, (Chapter 9), on Page 260 in *Religion in Aboriginal Australia*, edited by Max Charlesworth, Howard Morphy, Diane Bell and Kenneth Maddock.

¹⁰⁰ The concept of “the Man of Medicine”, i.e. “the Flyer”, is based on A.P. Elkin's *Aboriginal Men of High Degree*, the image of this character archetype, i.e. his red eyes, is based on Bob Wirrididirridi in Xavier Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country*

¹⁰¹ This image, i.e. “a giant ball of fire” that sends a cloud “rising toward the Sun”, is adapted from Page 1431 of Xavier Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country*

¹⁰² This image, i.e. “fastened their hands firmly around his ankles”, is also adapted from Page 1431 of Xavier Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country*

¹⁰³ This “oval-shaped shield” is taken from based on Page 245 of M.J. Meggitt's *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* as it appears in chapter form, (Chapter 9), on Page 244 in *Religion in Aboriginal Australia*, edited by Max Charlesworth, Howard Morphy, Diane Bell and Kenneth Maddock.

¹⁰⁴ Though culled from many sources, this sequence of initiation is largely adapted from Page 1431 of Xavier Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country*

¹⁰⁵ “...where he receives the congratulations of the men, who inform him he is a proper man now.” Page 42 of M.F. Ashley-Montagu's *Coming Into Being Among the Australian Aborigines*

¹⁰⁶ That the mother will extinguish her own fire stick in response to her son's “death”, i.e. initiation and circumcision, is based on M.J. Meggitt's *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* as it appears in chapter form, (Chapter 9), on Page 244 in *Religion in Aboriginal Australia*, edited by Max Charlesworth, Howard Morphy, Diane Bell and Kenneth Maddock.

¹⁰⁷ “Me and you two-feller now”, as a dialogue device, is lifted from the pages of Xavier Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country*.

PART THREE: Diamonds!

Western Australia

1964

The beige ute swerved in and came to an abrupt, screeching halt just off the edge of the bitumen in front of the Original Plenty Soak. The engine rumbled into unpowered silence, kicking the dust up in a rising cloud of orange and brown. Belt buckles unclickeed and the doors, welded on rusty hinges, opened with wails and groans.

“I just don’t bloody believe it!” A woman pivoted out from leather seating, planting her feet on the solid red earth. She looked up at the two-storey sandstone structure wrapped in verandahs and buttressed arches and said, “Oh, I dare say these buildings all start to look alike, the way these Aussies hide them behind these big gigantic porches! Don’t you agree, Onslow?”

The driver pipped and squeaked, “Yes, Mrs Ricklesby.”

The Original Plenty Soak was a grand white building, where second storey banisters were decorated with giant ferns watered twice daily during the dry season.

“If I didn’t know any better, I’d say you brought me to yet another branch of the Institute. This is a bar, isn’t it?”

Her driver was right by her side, hat in hand. “Yes, Mrs. Ricklesby.”

“Well done, driver.” She clicked her heels, “A drink, I believe, is in order and so a drink I shall have. Onslow!” She snapped her fingers, “Lead the way.” She stepped under the shade of the verandah to march toward the double-swing doors but her driver grabbed her arm.

“No, missus!”

“Onslow!” She pulled free of him, “What did I tell you about unsolicited touching?”

“My apologies, Mrs. Ricklesby, but you’re a lady and ladies go in there.” He pointed to a door at the far side of the verandah:

ENTRANCE
LADIES LOUNGE

“*Ladies* lounge? Good Lord, Onslow. I don’t want to go to the loo. I want to get a drink.”

“But the rules, Mrs. Ricklesby, they says you have to drink in there.”

“Where? In the loo? That’s just ridiculous. Who’s ever heard of such a thing? *Me!* Drinking in the loo like a wanton schoolgirl? No, I shall have a proper drink at the proper bar like a proper adult.”

And with that, she barged through those double-swing doors at the front of the Original Plenty Soak in Wyndham, Western Australia, circa 1964.

*

At the bar inside, Ben Prindy sat hunched over the *Durack City Register*. “You see this?” He nudged his mate, “Some writer wrote a book about a plane crash in Canberra and some drunkard taking over during the war.”¹⁰⁸

Felix downed the pint and belched. “*Nu?*”

“Says all you Jews would’ve been wiped out by the Nazis if that’d happened.”

Felix leaned in. “What’s it say about Super Test cricket?”

“Don’t know. Talks about footy and rugby instead.”

“Rugby?” Felix took out his wallet. “No one pays attention to that.” He took out some cash. “Not even them blokes down in New South Wales.”

“Says the story ends with a red-headed lady as prime minister and some black guy as president of America in fifty years.”¹⁰⁹

“Sounds like a load of horseshit to me.”

The double-swing doors swung open and, for the first time ever, they heard her: “For heaven’s sake, Onslow! Let go of my arm!”

“But Mrs. Ricklesby! Them are the rules.”

“Don’t be daft, Onslow! Who’s ever heard of ladies drinking in the loo?”

Prindy and Felix turned to see a woman storming through the entrance to the pub. She was tall. The sleeves of her shirt were rolled up above her elbows, her front unbuttoned. She wore a pair of dirty, oil-stained trousers stuffed into pair of hiking boots. The belt around her waist was adorned with several leather caches and a set of keys clinking upon her thigh. She removed a wide brimmed hat, releasing a flowing mane of hair robust in colour—orange, not brown; red, not auburn—with thick locks cascading down around her shoulders.

Prindy and Felix, like all the men inside the pub, were transfixed. The woman brought a hush to the room as she sauntered up to the bar to slap her hand down on the wood. “Here, here!”

They all heard it; she spoke with a *British* accent:

“I shall have a glass of brandy, and for you, Onslow?” She looked down at her driver, “I suppose you’ll want your usual, hmm?” She called out, “And a dry sherry for my companion!”

All eyes on the woman now.

She dropped her hat on the counter, “And after the day I’ve had! Am I married? Just who the hell does he think he is? *Oi!*” She snapped her fingers, “Publican!”

“That’s alright, Mrs. Ricklesby. Maybe it’s best if we find another pub.”

“Don’t be stupid, Onslow. We’re already here. *Oi!*” She raised her voice, “Publican!” She rapped her knuckles on the bar, “Christ, where the hell is the bloody bar man? What does a girl have to do to get some service ‘round here?”

An old man emerged from behind a wooden pillar wearing a white shirt and black trousers. His long white beard was frayed, his head covered by a small black leather skullcap; he said, “You’re not from around here, are you?”

“I most certainly am not!”

His stooped height brought his line of vision to her breasts. “I can see that.”

“I say!” The woman blanched at this. “I’ll have a brandy, and for my companion a—”

“Dry sherry. Yes,” the old man folded bony arms across a concave chest, “I heard you the first time.”

“Well?” She snapped her fingers, “Get to it then. Don’t just stand there gaping at me like an idiot!”¹¹⁰

“I’m sorry, miss.” The old man spoke with a Yiddish accent, “But state law says all ladies must drink in ladies lounge.”

“That’s stupid.”

“That’s the law.”

She locked eyes with the old man. “I said,” she spaced out each word, “a glass of brandy and a dry sherry for my companion.”

“That’s alright, Missus.” Onslow touched her elbow, “I’m not thirsty.”

“Nonsense, Onslow.” She glared at the old man, “The drinks?”

“I’m sorry,” the old man said, “but the law is the law.”

“Ignore the law! That law is stupid and antiquated, no doubt older than you are. Now bring me my drink!”

The other patrons of the bar, men dressed in white shirts and black trousers, stared: who would cave first, the old man or the woman?

“Oh for heaven’s sake. Onslow! Hand me my billfold.”

Her driver handed her a small black leather case she went to elaborate lengths to unzip and open. She pulled something from the case and slapped her hand down on the bar. “Now can I have those drinks?”

When she removed her hand, the old man saw an ornate portrait of Edmund Barton and he raised his eyebrows.¹¹¹ “I’ll tell you what,” he changed his tune, “you find a man in here, any man at all, and if he orders the drink, I will serve him and you can drink as much as you like, but not here at the bar, alright?”

“Onslow!” The woman did not smile. “Order our drinks.”

“Not him.” The old man held up a hand knotted with crooked fingers. “Any man other than him.”

“Oh for Christ’s sake! Now you’re just being difficult!” The woman glanced around and saw black faces alongside white, swarthy men covered in beards framed by sidelocks. They all stood there, gaping at her.

She turned to her right and saw two young men—a blond next to an Aborigine—both of them staring wide-eyed at her chest.

“Oi! You two!” She snapped her fingers. “Eyes up here, boys.”

Prindy and Felix, mouths wide open, raised their heads.

“You!” She thrust money at the blond, “Order me a glass of brandy, a glass of sherry, and how about something for yourself, hmm?”

Felix looked down at the banknote and shoved his own money back into his wallet. “Bitter’d be nice.” He jerked a thumb over his shoulder. “What about me mate?”

The woman shifted her gaze from white to black. “You want a bitter as well?”

“Cider, miss.” Prindy said, “I’ll have a cider.”

The woman glanced at the blond, “Well? Go on, then.”

Felix said, “Glass of brandy, glass of sherry, a pint of bitter and a cider, please.”

The old man behind the bar shuffled off and the woman smiled, “Well done.” She slipped the portrait of Edmund Barton to the blond. “So what’s your name?”

*

Later, and away from the bar, the two boys sat with the woman on the balcony near a giant green fern dangling from an arch laced with iron.

“My father was a Methodist, you see. Very religious. Stifflingly so. He came from Hertfordshire.” The woman took a sip from her glass. “We all came from Hertfordshire.” She caught them staring at her breasts and she asked, “Are either of you listening to me, or are you just staring at my tits?”

The blond looked away while the other shifted his gaze. “You said you’re from England?”

“By way of Scotland and Queensland, that’s right.” She took another drink. “I’ve been right across the Top End!”

“And your name, miss? What did you say it was?”

“Oh good heavens! Did I forget to mention that? I say! Where are my manners?” The woman cleared her throat. “My name is Mindi MacCallum Ricklesby. *Doctor* MacCallum Ricklesby, but please, you may call me *Missus* Ricklesby.” She held out her right hand, limp and demure. “How do you do?”

*

Missus Ricklesby sent Prindy back down to the bar and, when he returned, she let her saga unfold: “Daddy MacCallum was a religious man, like all these Christian missionaries running around the outback, and like any devout missionary, he had no sense of humour and positively no respect for women.” She took a sip and eyed the two boys; eager and attentive, she couldn’t tell if they were listening. “Daddy thought all women were vagabonds or goldiggers, even the wives and mothers. Everything drenched in sin. He called women a necessary nuisance, not even good enough to be called evil. He didn’t encourage learning, not for me and not for my sisters. I have three of them, you know.”

“How did you end up here?”

“In Wyndham,” she gulped her drink, “or in Australia?”

“Here, miss.” Felix said, “In this pub.”

“Oh you mean *here* here, well,” she straightened herself up. “I came out here in pilgrimage to the Kimberley Institute of Science and Agriculture. But just like dear old Daddy, they too have no respect for women, especially *learned* women.”

“That doesn’t explain how you got here, miss.”

“That’s *missus*, and I’m here because of Malcolm Level. That man,” she gritted her teeth, “has driven me to drink!”

A series of facial expressions passed between Prindy and Felix before Felix went back to the bar for another round.

“So what’s this about Malcolm Level?” Prindy had never heard of him. “Is he your husband?”

“Husband, ha! Don’t be ridiculous. I’ve not a thing to do with Malcolm Level romantically, not even in the slightest. That man is an odious, condescending beast!”

“Is he a policeman?”

“He’s a professor!”

“Is that right?”

She nodded, “Of Geology.”

“What’d he do to you?”

“He did nothing. He did more than nothing. He ignored me. He just sat there while I talked and looked right through me as if I didn’t exist. Never have I been so blatantly disrespected, and by another British subject! Do you know, when I completed my presentation, the only thing he asked is if I was married. Can you believe it? He paid me no heed, none whatsoever. All he was interested in was whether or not there was a ring on my finger.” She finished another drink. “I don’t know why I even bothered.”

“You should never be bothered, miss.” Felix returned, setting drinks out on the table. “And what does Mr. Ricklesby have to say about all of this?”

“*Reverend* Ricklesby is dead.” She smirked, “Has been for years.”

“I’m sorry, miss.”

“Missus,” she stared off, deep in thought, bringing the new drink to her lips while Felix and Prindy glanced at each other.

“What did you tell him? This professor fella,” Prindy asked, “what did you tell him that he didn’t hear?”

“I told him I thought there might be diamonds out here, but he dismissed me by asking about a dead husband he knows nothing about.”

Felix was piqued, “Did you say diamonds, miss?”

“Oh yes! Yes I did. Oh, I know it has to be kept hush-hush. We don’t want to *say* that’s what I’m doing, that would spark too much interest, but that’s it entirely.” She took another drink. “I’m looking for diamonds.”

Both Felix and Prindy took a moment to digest this; Felix raised his eyebrows twice and Prindy said: “Where are these diamonds?”

“How the hell would I know? That’s what I wanted him for.”

“You mean Malcolm Level?”

“Hmm,” she nodded. “Precisely.”

“What’s he got to do with ‘em?” Prindy asked, “Does he have the diamonds?”

“No.” She laughed at this. “Of course not.”

“Then what’d’ya need him for?”

The woman held her drink close to her lips and, without tone, said, “I wanted him to help me find them.”

Prindy and Felix once again glanced at each other, turning back to the woman with slack facial expressions, soft with compassion.

*

The next day, they loaded the beige ute with her gear and their gear, packing enough food, drinks and mixers to last at least a fortnight. In the early, brimming light of dawn, they drove that first day for hours, venturing far beyond the dusty suburbs and farms south of Wyndham and Durack City.

“So boys,” Mindi was seated on the passenger side to the left of Felix. “How many Kimberleys are there? I was in New York once, and they had at least half a dozen boroughs there. How many are here?”

Felix looked over the top of his sunglasses at the rear view mirror, making eye contact with Prindy in the back. “There are two Kimberleys, miss. East and West.”

“Ah, yes. Of course. Just like Berlin.”¹¹² She turned to Prindy seated behind her, letting her eyes wander down the bridge of his nose, across his lips, down his neck and broad shoulders. She imagined bulging biceps and plateau-like pectorals beneath his tight-fitting button up shirt. She cocked her head and smiled.

Felix saw her looking at Prindy and he frowned. “Where we going, miss?”

“That’s a very good question, Felix.” She pulled out a folded map. “I’ve made some notes based on soil deposits and rock samples from this area. I believe there might be some kimberlite or lamprolite or some evidence of mineral abundance here.”

“Where?” Prindy glanced over her shoulder to look at the map. “How will you know if there are diamonds there?”

“We’ll have to prospect for them, just like they do for gold.”

“Will there be diamonds layin’ ‘round out there?”

“No, of course not. Otherwise there’d be thousands of people out here already. To the untrained eye—eyes like yours and his—you’ll of course see nothing. It’s all about where to look.”

“Have you ever found diamonds before?”

“That’s not important, Ben. What’s important is that we get here before nightfall,” she pointed to a spot on the map. “How long do you think that will take?”

Already driving for many hours, Felix told her to ask Prindy, who took the map from her to unfold it fully. With her pointing at various notes scribbled in reds, blues, greens and black, he calculated the distance, “Three more hours. Maybe more, maybe less.”

“Three more hours? Are you sure?”

“Give or take a few, yeah.”

Mindi snatched the map from him, “Just drive until the sun starts to set and we’ll put up camp where I’ve marked it.” She then wrestled with the map in an attempt to refold it.

*

They set up camp at dusk, Prindy started a small fire and put up a couple of tents—one for them and one for her—while Felix cooked a supper of treacle and lamb packed in ice the night before their departure.

“So boys, tomorrow,” Mindi dug into a duffel bag, “I want to be out of here and on our way before sunrise. Do you know,” she pulled out a hairbrush and a beauty case, “about what time that is? At what hour does the sun rise in this strange land?”¹¹³

Felix poked at the lamb on the fire. “In the early morning, miss.”

“Somewhere in here,” she dumped out her bag, “I’ve got an alarm clock, but I can’t find the bloody thing. Did either of you pack a clock?”

They answered her in unison, “No.”

“Very well, then.” She pulled up her shirt sleeve. “We’ll just rise with the sun, I suppose.” She looked at the watch strapped to her wrist. “So Felix,” she unlatched the watch, “did you come from Germany or some other part of Europe?”

“I was born on the boat, miss,” Felix watched her unstrap the leather band, “in the ports at Wyndham.”

“I see.” Mindi put the watch up to her ear. “Your family, did they sail from Mauritius or the Seychelles?”

“Mauritius.”

“Ah,” She shook her watch and brought it to her ear again. “And where are you parents now? Are they still with us?”

“They are.”

“Still happily married, then?” She tapped on the watch.

“Yes, miss, just not to each other.”

“Oh?” She held the watch up to the light of the fire. “So they’re divorced, are they?”

“Yes.”

“Well, I’ll say,” she scowled at the accessory, “Now how about that.” She leaned in to the light of the fire. “How very odd indeed.”

“Everything alright, miss?”

“Yes, everything is fine. It just seems my watch has stopped after twelve.” She held the watch up to her ear for a brief listen. “Well, a lot of bloody good that’ll do us.” She dropped the wristwatch into her duffel bag, then zipped it up and kicked it off into the darkness. “Did we pack anything to drink?”

Felix told her there was some Scotch in the back of the ute. She retrieved a bottle and returned to the fire. “So boys,” she screwed the top off, “shall we have a drink?” She drank straight from the bottle and said, “I like to earn a buzz before supper,” then took another drink.

Felix furrowed his brow as Prindy rolled something fluffy and green into a couple of cigarettes, handing one to Felix.

“What’s all this industry then?” The woman propped the bottle against a log. “You brought your own, did you?”

“We,” Felix inhaled, “are smoking pot.” He blew out a cloud. “You got a problem with that?”

“What about that other stuff?”

“*Nu?*”

“I don’t know what it’s called but I heard it’s fashioned into a sort of gum that can be quite intoxicating. It’s a black Aborigine thing.” She turned to Prindy. “Have you heard anything about any sort of black magic chewing gum?”

Prindy immediately thought of *pituri*; he said, “Can’t think of nothing that’s your business, miss.”

“Missus, Ben. How many times must I tell you? Don’t you know how it works when two people get married?”

“But you’re not married, miss, are you?”

“Not anymore, I’m not. There’s been no one since the Reverend died years ago. You see, Ben, I’m a different kind of woman now.” She locked eyes with Felix. “I’m not a woman who wishes to burden herself with the holy bonds of matrimony. Not now, anyway. Not anymore.” She shifted her gaze to Prindy. “What about you, Ben, hmm? What about your parents?”

Prindy took a toke, “Dad’s Afghan,” he held the smoke in for a moment. “Mum’s Doolbung,” he exhaled.

“Doolbung? What the hell is that? A black tribe long since extinct or something?”

“We don’t consider ourselves part of a tribe, miss. That’s more a Jewish thing.”¹¹⁴

“You’re not a Jew, Ben, are you?”

“Nnh-nnh.”

“Are you a Christian?”

“No,” he replied. “I was educated up to it, but I gave it away, pretty early on, in fact.”

“Why?”

“I found I could do better.”

“Well, to a good pair of Christian ears like mine,” she smirked, “that sort of thing can be deemed highly offensive.”

“Well, miss, a man must make use of what he has. There’s no point putting on a pair of boots to walk to town if you can do it just as good, if not better, in your own bare feet, now is there?”¹¹⁵

“Mmm.” Mindi asked, “How old are you two?”

They answered her in unison: “Twenty-one.”

“So young,” she took another drink, staring at them in the shadowy light of the fire.

Felix said, “Lamb’s ready.”

*

The next morning, Felix awakened to the cackle of cockatoos. He blinked the sleep out of his eyes and found himself alone. He slipped into a pair of dungarees and emerged from the tent. Prindy was squatted near a bucket, washing his face. Barefoot and topless, his pants were unbuckled and loose.

“She not out yet?”

“She just went back in a while ago.”

Felix looked at the other tent: it was unzipped. “You start up breakfast?”

Prindy splashed water onto his neck. “Weetbix and Vegemite’re in one of ‘em trunks.”

The woman did not emerge from her tent. She remained unseen for most of the morning. The boys left camp to make their way around to a private spot. Here, behind the bushes, they dug shallow holes with their heels and squatted over them, clutching tissues.

“We should’ve packed some brisket.” Felix tightened his midsection, “Lamb don’t always agree with me.”

“Could’ve, should’ve,” Prindy sighed with release, “but didn’t.”

“*Oi*, Ben, what if we’d brought some cider, *nu*? That Dimple does me guts in.”

“You’re a lightweight, mate. Jews can’t drink like blackfellas.” Prindy pushed out a pellet. “You should stick to smokin’ from now on.”

They were in the midst of wiping when the woman appeared. She came out through the bushes dressed in a windbreaker she’d put on over a nightgown made of silk. Her back to the sun, they were able to view the silhouette of her legs through the fabric.

Felix nudged Prindy. “She ain’t got any knickers on!”

“*Nu*?” Prindy moved his hand upward. “I can see that, mate.”

The woman did not acknowledge them. Her toenails painted red, she pulled her nightgown up to her hips and, with legs parted, squatted over a rock to have a piddle in front of the boys.¹¹⁶ She kept her eyes closed as she drenched the burnt-red soil beneath her, wetting the sides of her feet.

Felix and Prindy stared. She held her forehead in her hands and coughed, squirting out one last burst before she rose up. Dropping her nightgown, the woman yawned and turned to wander back through the bushes to camp.

“*Nu*?” Felix turned to his mate. “She sure took a long time, hey?”

“You know how it is with her.” Prindy wiped, “She’ll wake up in a minute and yell at us.”

“Boys.” They heard her: “Boys!” She shouted: “*Boys!*”

“See? What’d I tell ya’?” Prindy dumped soiled tissues behind a rock. “There she goes again, off in a panic.” Prindy was the first back to camp. “No need to shout, miss. We’s was just over there. Didn’t you see us?”

“Ah, Ben, there you are!” The woman was dressed now; the nightgown and the windbreaker were gone, replaced with a buttoned shirt, rolled sleeves and laced boots. “You and Felix must carry supplies. We’ll need a sieve and some pans.” She tried to pull a trunk from the back of the ute. “Bloody hell!” She was unsuccessful. “I’m such a weakling, Ben. Can you lift that for me, please?”

Prindy hauled out the trunk. “Where do you want it, miss?”

“Here,” she snapped her fingers and Prindy dropped the trunk. Mindi bent down to jerk the latch open. She pulled out canteens, lanterns, a saddle, some flares, rope, camouflaged

netting, canned vegetables and a butcher knife. She tossed all of these—except the butcher knife—over her shoulder where they landed on the ground near Prindy's feet.

“Do you know what you're looking for, miss?”

She looked around. “Where's the blond?”

“I'm right here, miss.”

“Felix!” She turned on him, the knife in her hand. “You're the one who knocked over that bucket of water, aren't you? I saw splash marks in the dirt. Need I remind you we have a limited supply of water? Need I remind you that if we don't find a spigot or a well pretty soon, we will dehydrate, hmm?”

“No.” This trivial accusation angered him. “I ain't the one that did that.”

“Oh it wasn't you, was it? What about this, then, hmm?” The woman stepped over the bucket, the ground beneath it wet. She waved the butcher knife at the moistened dirt, “Is this your handiwork?”

Felix glared at the woman.

“No, miss.” Prindy kept his grey eyes on the blade, “It's mine.”

The woman turned on him, holding the knife upright.

“I must've knocked it over by accident.” Those grey eyes jumped back and forth between the woman and the blade. “It won't happen again, miss.”

“I should hope not, Ben.” She ran the tip of her finger along the edge of the knife. “This sort of callous ineptitude is detrimental to our purposes and I shan't stand for it. We're done here now anyway, and I want to get to our next area before sunset. Ben!” She pointed the knife at him. “See that Felix retrieves the equipment from this trunk and when he's done with that, load this trunk back into the ute. Now,” she pointed the knife out with each word, “let's... get... going!” She turned on her heel and walked away.

“Nu?” Felix turned to his mate, “What'd we pack that knife for?”

Prindy looked down at the trunk. “I just unloaded that.”

The woman stepped away, stepping over plants and bushes and around rocks to wander off like a wind-up toy, stopping to check the map, talk to herself, or to glance at the compass. She mumbled and stumbled and fumed. Later, whilst covered in dust and squatted over a crevice, she felt her stomach growl. She put her hand to her belly, recalling the edict she proclaimed a night earlier:

“No more cooking, Felix! Ben will do the cooking from now on.”

Felix had given her the smallest piece of lamb which, contrary to her explicit instructions, he managed to char and blacken, rendering whole chunks of meat inedible. She suspected he did this on purpose and she cursed at him while prodding rocks. And just where the hell are those boys, hmm?

“Boys! Damn it! Where the hell are—” she turned around to see them towering over her. “Ben! Christ!” She flung out her hand, “Give me a hand, will you?”

Prindy heaved her up.

“These, Felix,” she pointed at a pile of rocks, “need to be washed in the sieve.”

Felix looked down at the rocks: small boulders shorn with jagged edges. “You want us to wash this lot here?”

“Yes, Felix, that lot there. Now get to it. Ben!” She was terse, “You’re coming with me.” She started walking.

“Oi!” Felix whined, “Where’re yous going?”

The woman turned on him. “Where does it matter, Felix? I’m in charge here, so if I say ‘Ben, come with me’, then he comes with me, but if you must know, we’re going over there. My map indicates a depression, and a depression might indicate a pipe or a diamond deposit hidden down in the mantle of the earth, or have you completely forgotten the entire purpose of our little trip, hmm?” Her lips tightened into a straight line.

Felix glared at her.

“Now, if it’s alright with you, *Felix*, I’m going over there to dig in the dirt until I find some diamonds. Is that alright with you?” She arched her eyebrow and placed a hand on her hip. “Don’t worry about us, deary.” She lightened her tone, “We shall only be gone a little while.¹¹⁷ Now come along, Ben!”

Felix shook out his hat, watching the woman lead Prindy away. He set out the pan and started to lift the rocks from the pile. The first rock was large and heavy. He dropped it in the pan and started on the next rock. The next rock was bigger and heavier and he said, “Bloody hell,” and dropped it back on the pile. He poured water over the rock, using his spine as a levy to lift the pan. He shook the pan from side to side, sloshing water against the rim to knock the rocks around. The water turned brown and opaque. Felix added smaller rocks to the pan and sloshed them around. To his surprise, the rocks decomposed. He washed other rocks, shaking them in the

pan until they broke into smaller pieces. The rocks were heavy and his back hurt. Sweat soaked through his hat and shirt and he stopped numerous times to wipe perspiration from his brow.

Prindy, on the other hand, followed Mindi as she folded, unfolded and refolded the map. “Now, Ben, I must tell you,” the wind blew the map in her face, “I find Felix to be very uncooperative.” The wind sent the map curling under her chin. “Oh to hell with it!” She ripped the map in half. “We’ll just rely on gut instinct instead of this blasted map. I’ve heard you blacks are good at that, so I’m sure I don’t need to tell you anything about gut instinct, now do I?”

“I don’t know about that, miss.”

“I’ve read up on you blacks, Ben. I heard you Aborigines are like coloured people everywhere. You’ve got those hocus-pocus *voo-doo* myths about rainbow serpents and space creatures and little trickster rabbits, and we all know those are gut instinct stories, now don’t we? I mean, isn’t it just a case of *feeling* the land?”¹¹⁸

“I wouldn’t know, miss. This isn’t my land.”

“I thought you said you’re from East Kimberley?”

“I am, miss.”

“So? We’re not *that* far from Durack City.”

“East Kimberley is a big place, miss, and mum’s people are from up north past Wyndham. So this country now, miss, ain’t my country.”

“What do you mean, this *ain’t* your country? What’s this country called?”

“I’m not sure, miss. I can’t tell you what it is.”

“Doesn’t it have a name like England or Scotland or something?”

“We don’t talk about it.”

“Why? Is it a secret or something? A cryptic black man’s agreement?” She laughed at that very idea but stopped when she saw Prindy staring at her with cold, grey eyes. “Well,” she cleared her throat, “I heard you blacks were out here naked before my people arrived. Is that true, Ben, hmm? Did your people run around naked before the white man got here? When did the clothes come on, with the missionaries or with the Jews?”

“Pardon me, miss, but you and me—we’s not having this conversation.” Prindy walked ahead of her. “This ain’t our business.”

“Oh it isn’t, is it?” She rushed to keep up with him. “Just what is our business, Ben? All you’ve been doing since we left Wyndham is drool over my boobs.”

“That’s not true, miss. And we’s’re looking for diamonds. But now that you’ve gone and torn up the map, I don’t know what you’re hoping we’ll find.”

“You just keep looking, Ben, and looking where I tell you, and we’ll be just fine.” She followed after him, panting with each step. “So if this isn’t your country, do you know whose country it is? Do you know who’s in charge? Is there a king or something?”

“No, miss. I told you my mum’s place is way north of here.”

“Then let me ask you,” she stopped to drink water from a flask, “just where the bloody hell are we?” She put a hand on her hip and gazed out at the view.

Prindy also looked out at the horizon. They were far from both Wyndham and Durack; neither could be seen in the distance. Prindy saw snappy gums and sticky sap coating the brown-red pods of caustic bushes and flocks of grey warblers in flight. He saw untouched country, imagining the view at night: skyline blackened with moonlight, no electricity, no highways, no trains or twin-engine planes. He saw pristine nature ripe with bounty and a golden desert that was brittle and unforgiving, yet loyal like a Great Uncle.

“Well I don’t see what the big revelation is.” Mindi only saw dead branches, flies and mosquitoes. “Absolutely none of this looks fertile.”

“Well, no disrespect, miss,” Prindy said, “but if that’s all you see, then you may as well be blind.”

*

That night, Mindi sat between Prindy and Felix. The day had been long and she was thirsty: “I’d like a lot of drinks.” She said, “I’d like to get drunk!”¹¹⁹ She filled a ceramic mug with Scotch. “What about you, Felix, hmm?”

“What did you say, miss?” He turned to her. “I wasn’t listening.”

“Have you had anything to drink?”

“Not yet.”

“Well why not?” She screwed the top off another bottle. “Aren’t you thirsty? Come along now, Felix. I think we could all do with some libation. Don’t you agree? There’s another bottle in the *ute*, as you people so lovingly call it.”

Prindy and Felix watched the woman stagger toward the vehicle, watching her stumble to yank the door open. She put two bottles under her arms and tried to kick the door shut, then she staggered back to the fire.

“Yoo hoo,” she coo’ed at them. “Boys!” She snapped at them, too. “Hurry up with that lamb, Ben, I’m starving! Felix,” she whined, “will you help me with these bottles, please?”

Mindi did not need to twist their arms; both Prindy and Felix poured themselves a drink but on Felix’s nonverbal suggestion, they made it a point not to drink as much as she did. Instead, they kept an eye on that ceramic mug and when it looked less than full, one of them stepped in to top her up.

Felix felt it wise to keep her talking: “Can you tell us, miss, what’ll you do when you find the diamonds?”

“Well, for one thing, I’ll take whatever I find out here back to that bastard in Wyndham and I’ll shove it right into his beady little face.”

“Which bastard in Wyndham?”

“Malcolm Level.” She gagged with disgust. “Asking me if I was married!”

“Did you ever think, miss, that maybe—and I’m just sayin’—maybe *he* wanted to marry you?”

“Me and Malcolm Level, ha!” She took another drink. “That’s ridiculous. Can you imagine *me*, the daughter of a self-righteous English Methodist from Hertfordshire marrying that crusty old Jew? That would be absurd. Absolutely ridiculous!” She shook her head and laughed but, when her mirth subsided, she stared off at the fire, deep in thought.

“I reckon, he was askin’ ‘cause he was interested.”

“Oh come off it, Felix. That cranky old Jew would never marry *me*! They have little old matchmakers for old men like him. Besides,” she took a drink, “I’m too young for him. I could be his granddaughter, for Christ’s sake.”

“So, miss, once you find these diamonds, and once you shove ‘em in that old bloke’s face? What happens then?”

“Well, Ben, let’s see,” she took another drink. “I suppose when we find some diamonds or evidence of them, we’ll need to get them checked out in a lab somewhere. Checked out by someone reputable. That’s when I’d really shove those diamonds in Malcolm Level’s face but, after that, I imagine he’ll want to come out here to where ever we find the diamonds and he’ll

want to drill down into my pipes until they start pulling up big chunks of kimberlite and lamprolite.”

“Would they pull up any diamonds?” Prindy asked, “How far down do they have to go?”

“No,” she said, “and deep. Very, very deep. They’ll have to pump and thrust hard and deep into that kimberlite dyke until they hit a wall or until the drill breaks through the crust into the mantle.” She took a drink. “Which ever happens first.”

“So what are we talking about, *nu*?” Felix asked, “Six, seven hundred metres?”

“Hmm,” she nodded, “if not two or three times that.”

“And diamonds come out of that?”

“Not diamonds, but rocks that have diamonds *in* them. Indicator minerals are their clinical name and that’s what we’re looking for, rocks that *indicate* something, and that’s what they’ll pull up from the earth with their big and powerful drill.” She took another drink and looked at Prindy.

Prindy, for his part, locked his grey eyes with hers, clenching his teeth as he drank straight from a bottle.

“So,” Felix asked, “after you find these diamonds and shove ‘em in that old Jew’s face, and after they send a big drill out here to churn up some rocks, when do they find the diamonds? When do we start making money?”

“That comes much later. Once the diamonds actually *get* found, they have to be processed and refined long before they can be put on the market for sale.” She finished off her drink. “That part is a long way off.”

“So we talking days, months, weeks or years, *nu*? How long until the money rolls in?”

“Money for the diamonds? That could take a long time.” She slapped her neck, killing a nocturnal bush fly. “Theoretically.”

Felix raised his eyebrow, “Theoretically?”

“Mmm,” She grabbed another bottle of Scotch. “It could be years before we see any money for any of this.”

“Years? I thought this was a sure deal. Dig some holes, find some diamonds. Now you’re saying it could take years until we’s get paid?”

“For the diamonds, yes.”

“So when we getting paid? Sometime in 1970?”

“Access to these diamonds should be just as lucrative as the diamonds themselves, if not more so. You see, boys, I have a plan: as a Geologist-cum-Geoscientist-cum-diamond prospector extraordinaire,” she was on her feet now, “I plan not only to find these diamonds, but to sell access to them and to set myself up with a land lease-for-profit scheme in which I own the controlling shares in whatever is pulled from earth I find to be fertile—ripe—with diamonds. God only knows what else is lurking down there.” She refilled the ceramic mug. “I’ll be selling access, boys, and I’ll own the profits.”

“But,” Prindy broached a foreign concept, “how would *you* sell access to the diamonds?”

“How much money are we talking about here, *nu*?” The concept was less foreign to Felix. “A couple thousand dollars per square metre?”

“Oh God no, not that amount.” She looked at the two boys. “You really have no clue how much access is worth, do you?”

Prindy and Felix sat in the wilderness among crickets.

“Access would get a substantially higher amount than a couple thousand dollars per square metre. More like *hundreds* of thousands of dollars, if not millions.”

“It’s not like it’s really yours to sell, though.” Prindy asked, “How would *you* sell that?”

“You tell them: ‘Look here, I think there might be diamonds out here, and for six hundred thousand British pounds Sterling, I’ll give you two square metres of it so that you, the driller or the digger or the *who ever* can dig on *this* land which I, by way of discovery, will in effect own, and anything that might get pulled out of the ground, I own that, too; upwards of ninety percent of it. Possession, after all, is nine-tenths of the law,’ so if there’re any diamonds down in this mantle, and if we find them, well, at least one of us will become filthy rich. I’ll just be *rolling* in it if this all pans out the way I hope it does. It may not sound like it now, boys, but I know I’ll want that drill to come out here to bore some holes into *this*,” she held out her hands, sloshing Scotch from the mug, “my relatively *virginal* earth.” She poured the last of the Scotch into the mug, tossing the empty bottle into the darkness where it shattered on some rocks.

“Tell me, boys,” she turned on them, “do either of you have a girlfriend or some woman you’re betrothed to back in Durack, hmm?”

“Nnh-nnh.”

Prindy shook his head, “No, miss.”

“No? I’m surprised. I thought you Jews were all about getting married young and having lots of babies. But you blacks,” she plopped down, “I don’t have the foggiest idea as to what you people do.”

“Which people?” Prindy said, “Dad’s Afghan, mum’s Doolbung.”

“That means nothing to me, Ben. You’re a black Aborigine and to me you’re all the same.”

“We would be,” he stared at her, “now wouldn’t we, miss?”

Mindi stopped herself mid-drink. “Don’t look at me like that, Ben. I say the same thing about Jews.” She looked at Felix. “I don’t understand your lot, either.”

Felix glared. “What’s there to understand, *nu*?”

“Well, for one thing, you people are stubborn. Did your ancestors not see Jesus Christ two thousand years ago? No. Your people rejected him and ever since you’ve been pushed around until you get pushed into this miserable slab of Earth all the way down here. I mean, why should Australia—*Australia!* of all places—bear the brunt of your burden, hmm?”

“They let us in after all them other countries said ‘no’ and kept us out.”

“Is that what they teach you in those schools? That,” she pursed her lips, “and how to speak English?”¹²⁰

“It’s true, ain’t it?”

“It was true then, but now you and your people can go to Palestine, to Israel.”¹²¹

“Them Jews,” Felix scoffed, “they’s always fightin’ wars up there.”

“Still,” she drank, “I don’t understand you people. For that matter, Felix, I don’t understand *you*. A blond Jew with blue eyes; who ever heard of such a thing? The only thing that gives you away as a Jew is that facial hair.” She turned to Prindy, “You’re certainly not Jewish.”

“*Nu*?” Felix hadn’t shaved for days, “The last time I shaved was the day we met you at the pub. It’s ‘cause of you dragging us out here that I even have a beard.” He stroked the scruff on his face, “What’s wrong with it anyway?”

“It’s swarthy and dark. Much darker than your hair which, I must say, has gotten blonder.”

“Has it?”

“Mmm,” she drank again. “I didn’t think Jews could have blond hair. I thought Jews only had red or black hair, and all your old men are bald. Isn’t that why you people wear those funny little hats?”

Prindy and Felix answered her: “No.”

“No?” She smirked, “Guess I was mistaken.”

Prindy said, “I should say so, miss,” and took a drink.

Mindi gazed at Prindy, but her stare turned into a leer. “Everyone told me the western half was different from the rest of Australia but they didn’t tell me there’d be so many black people out here. It really is like a whole other country. Why aren’t there more Aborigines down in Melbourne or in New South Wales, hmm? What happened to all the blacks down there, Ben, do you know?”

“White man, miss, about two hundred years ago. Came upon ‘em like a disease. Your people from England, or did you forget?”

“So it’s white man’s fault there are no black people in Sydney today, is it?”

“One of ‘em,” Prindy nodded. “One of many.”

“That’s preposterous, Ben. Based on all my readings which, I can assure you, were quite extensive, you people were on the verge of collapse when we found you. But I still don’t quite understand why there would be so many more of you up in Durack and in Blossom and in places like that when you hardly see any blacks down in Brisbane or New South Wales.”

“You don’t know the history.”

“Of course I know the history, Ben. I read up on it and there was nothing about any of what you’re saying in there.”

“I’m not talking ‘bout the history from the history books, miss.”

“I know,” Mindi said, “why the Jews are here, and how they got here, but I don’t quite understand it. Was there a bribe—a big one—or was it those pictures of emaciated people from those camps in the tropics that set a light? I just don’t know. And then I see your people, Ben, and I see all those black faces running around out here and Dear Jesus! I think I’m in Africa or Tamil Nadu or some other really black place. It is simply uncanny. Did they know this part of the country was filled with Aborigines when they said yes to that Jewish scheme? What did you think about all these Jews when you were little?”

Prindy thought about his mother and about his uncles and his cousins and his male affines. He thought of risen kites and of an ongoing sense of familial responsibility and he said, “The first thing I remember hearing about the Jews is that they’d lost one.”

“The little lost Jewish boy?” Felix nodded, “Everyone knows *that* story.”

“What the story? How does it go?”

“It’s a sad story, miss. Told to kids to give ‘em nightmares.”

“Tell me.” She said, “I’m an expert on nightmares ever since I came to Australia.”¹²²

“When we was kids,” Prindy told her, “they told us this story about a little Jewish boy who got lost from his parents on one of ‘em boats. He came all the way over with his mum and dad from them camps the British set up on Mauritius during the war. But they got to Wyndham when the Japs flew in to drop bombs on the ports.”

“Did that actually happen?”

“They say it happened all the time until they dropped those big bombs on the Japs.”¹²³

“So whatever happened to that little Jewish boy? Was he was killed?”

“The story went he was picked up off the boat and dropped in an orphanage somewhere between Wyndham and Durack, but the thing is, the orphanage doubled as a *chevrah kadisha*. Do you know what that is?”

“Not a clue.”

Felix said, “It’s a burial society.”

“Where they took the dead people, miss.” Prindy said, “Corpses.”

“They took corpses to the orphanage?” She turned on Felix. “What the hell is wrong with you people?”

“*Nu?* They were shorthanded.”

“Shorthanded? Ha! More like underhanded, but they’ve been saying that about Jews for centuries.”

“It was the Anglicans, miss. They were telling us to mind the sisters or they’d ship us off to the morgue like the other long lost Jewish boys growing up next to dead bodies.”

“Were any of those stories true?”

Prindy shrugged, “Who knows?”

“Some of them were true.” Felix said, “How many times did you hear about somebody who knew somebody who was related to somebody who said his long lost cousin was that long

lost Jewish boy? We were telling that story back in year three. The only reason the Anglicans told you that story was to keep you black kids in line.”

She turned on Prindy, “Why would the Anglicans tell you anything? I thought you said you grew up with Felix and the Jews?”

“I did, but before I came across the road I was at the Anglican compound with the Vicar and them big fat teachers.”¹²⁴

“And then you ran away to the Jews?”

“I knew the Vicar wouldn’t come looking for me there.”

“Did he?”

“If he did, he never found me. I dropped out of year twelve with Felix.”

“Were you the only Aborigine in the class?”

“Yeah, but not for long. The Rabbi let everyone in after the Vicar got angry about it.”

“What about your parents? What did your parents say about the Jews?”

“They didn’t say anything, miss.” Prindy said, “We just knew they were here and we accepted it.”

She nodded and said, “I see.” She realized she was mesmerized by his gey eyes; to look at Prindy was at a young black face—he was cute—and she wanted him to undress, to disrobe, to see his naked, nude flesh. In Felix, she saw impatience, insolence and aggravation. He irritated her and she thought he was an idiot, yet she was drawn to his arrogance. Felix was a strapping lad in her eyes, his blue eyes shimmering azul. He was also dumb, blond, Jewish and stupid, but she knew both boys could do her some good and she intended to use them both to her full advantage.

After dinner, she looked up at the stars and said, “Good Lord, I’m lit!” She belched, “It sure is romantic out here, now isn’t it?”

Prindy took that as their cue. “We best get a good night’s sleep, miss, if you want to be out of here before dawn.”

“Oh stuff it, Ben. I’m too drunk right now to think about tomorrow. Isn’t that right, Felix?”

“I wouldn’t know how drunk you are, miss.”

“I can assure you, Felix, that I am very drunk indeed.”

“Well, I’m tired.” Prindy stood up. “I reckon I’ll turn in.”

“What about the fire?” She asked, “How will you put it out?”

Her answer came without hesitation: both Felix and Prindy unbuckled their belts and pulled out their genitals, emptying their bladders down on to the fire.

“Oh my goodness!” Mindi was shocked, yet she stared. Both boys were circumcised and impressive in width and girth. Prindy was two-toned; the glans of his penis pink but his shaft was as black and as dark as his lips. “Well, I say,” she sweltered, “I see you two are very big boys indeed.”

Prindy and Felix returned themselves to their trousers, buttoning their flies and rebuckling their belts.

“You still thirsty?”

Mindi looked at the ceramic mug; it was empty. “Please sir.” She looked up at the blond, “Can I have some more?”

Felix threw open a trunk. “Here, miss,” he handed her another bottle. “We’s gots plenty.”

Mindi curled up with the Scotch. “Reverend Dimple will keep me warm tonight.”*

“Good,” Felix said, “glad it ain’t me you’re relying on, then.” He and Prindy ducked into their tent, leaving the woman alone outside in the dark.

*

The sun came up the next morning just as a bark was thrown aside, landing near a collection of red, orange-tinted stones. Four tiny legs and a prickly tail emerged from beneath as a lizard—the Jew lizard—used its claws to hook onto a stone, climbing onto a rock to lift a diamond-shaped head and puff out its prickly scales and a frilly beard. He opened his yellow mouth and flicked out a long serpentine tongue, snapping up a bush fly before those squat legs scurried over another boulder where he snapped up the purple body of a translucent golden-orb spider.

* Potential corporate tie-in with Dimple Scotch:



The Jew lizard leapt down on to the red earth, his hooked claws cutting up chunks of soil. The lizard dashed between bushes and squeezed through rocks and branches like a shape-shifter, halting at the stench of a fire doused-out with urine. The Jew lizard flattened himself and inhaled the noxious odour of charred lamb and seared grizzle; people had been here and had left their mark. The Jew lizard shifted his beady black eyes all around him. He scurried upward for higher ground, running up another rock and then, with a shock, it found itself face to face with an actual human, near enough to smell the scent of alcohol wheezing in and out of her mouth.

The Jew lizard flicked out his long serpentine tongue, awakening the woman, who came out of a deep sleep, opening her big brown eyes to see, first thing in the morning, the sight of a scaly dark lizard covered in spiky horns staring back at her.

The Jew lizard hissed, the woman screamed, and Felix and Prindy came out of their tent clad in nothing more than white, yellow-speckled underpants.

“What’s a matter, miss?”

Mindi was on her feet. “I saw a dragon, Ben! A *dragon!*” She moved behind him. “*There*, on *that* rock.” She shoved him towards a grey boulder.

Prindy crouched down. “There ain’t no dragon here, miss. How big was it?”

“It was big enough, I tell you.” She turned to Felix standing shirtless next to her. His blond hair rumpled and floppy, she noticed a large pole in his underwear and she sweltered.

“Whatever you saw, miss,” Prindy looked at the rocks, “it’s gone now.”

Mindi made eye contact with Felix. “It certainly looked like a dragon and it tried to bite me.” She brought a hand to her face to stroke her cheek. Staring at Felix, she kissed her hand and coo’ed on herself.

Felix sneered.

“They’re harmless, them lizards.” Prindy stood up, “You should sleep in your own tent tonight, miss.”

“Hmm.” Her eyes consumed Felix, looking him up and down. “Yes!”

Felix snarled and raised his lip.

“Ben!” Mindi said, “Put the kettle on and make us some breakfast. Is it me, or is anyone else,” she kept her eyes on Felix, “hungry?”

Prindy struck a match, “I’m starving, miss.”

Felix looked the woman straight in the eye, “I’m *not* hungry.”

“Well,” she pouted, “that’s a shame.”

Felix stared at her for a moment, then moved away.

*

Prindy drove for hours while Mindi dozed in the front, like she always did; her head bobbing up and down with each nap lasting longer than the nap before. Mindi eventually nodded off entirely. She fell asleep. Behind her, Felix smoked cigarettes, blowing smoke out towards the back of her head.

“*Oi*, Felix!” She was not lucid. “Out the window, if you don’t mind.”

Felix took another drag, dumping his cigarette into an empty can of DB—Durack Bitter. “All good, miss.” He lit another, “So long as you pay us, and pay us what you owe us, then all will end well.”

“Don’t you worry, Felix. You’ll get exactly what you deserve.” She shook the fog off, wiping it away for a bright sun and a blue sky. “My God, don’t they have any plants out here?”

“You want plants, miss?”

“I want something, yes. I mean, look at this place. We’ve been driving for I don’t know how long—weeks now—and there’s been nothing but bugs, logs and branches. I haven’t even seen a kangaroo or an emu since we left Durack. What the hell is going on out here? Is everything on hiatus, or did we enter a time warp? Where are the trees? Where is the plant life? It *does* rain out here sometimes, doesn’t it?”

“It washes out probably,” Prindy steered, “in the wet.”¹²⁵

“Still, I’d like to see some trees, some greenery. Some sign of visible life!”

“You wanna see some trees, miss?” Prindy swerved the beige ute, tossing Mindi around in the passenger seat.

“Jesus H. Christ, Ben! Have you lost your bloody mind?”

“You said you wanted some trees, miss.” Prindy veered around a fallen husk of boab. “That’s where we’s goin’.”

Ahead of them, a tropical oasis, a lush, green explosion perched on the reddish-orange horizon like an ornament, rose up in front of them. Prindy drove through thick scrub, bringing them out to a grassy verge. He brought the ute to a halt and pulled the key from the ignition.

Encircled with moss, a pool of water shone emerald with reflection, the water knotted by silver streams churning perilous coils into gurgling, light rapids.

The three of them stared at the faint glimmer hovering over the pool, the sound of the water akin to laughter as it tumbled over a high wall of ferny rocks.¹²⁶

“It’s so still,” Mindi said, “it’s like looking at a mirror.”¹²⁷

Felix grunted. He said, “It’s beautiful,” then lit a spliff.

Prindy got out of the ute and walked over to the edge of the pool. He unlaced his boot, pulled his foot out and peeled off his sock, inching up to the water to dip his toe in.

“*Nu?*” Felix watched him, “Is it warm?”

Prindy cupped his hand into the pool, bringing a ladle to his lips for a taste. When he looked at the others, Felix asked him, “It all the same long o’ catfish, *nu?*”

“Beats the hell out of me.” Prindy unlaced his other boot, “Tastes different over here.”¹²⁸ Prindy peeled off his dusty shirt and shorts, shrugged off a singlet and dumped his underwear, then dived into the water to vanish beneath dark submergence.¹²⁹

Felix and Mindi watched Prindy swim out to the middle of the pool. Mindi stood gaping slack-jawed at the sight of his wet and black backside rising up out of the water as if to wink at her before plunging down deep into the silvery wake that spread out behind him in small ripples.¹³⁰

“Is it safe to go in there?” She asked, “What if he’s eaten by a crocodile?”

“*Nu?*” Felix pulled his shirt out of his pants. “I doubt there’re any crocs in there, but if there are,” he unrolled a shirtsleeve, “they’d go for the savoury white lady first.”¹³¹

Mindi looked out at Prindy, sweltering at the sight of his firm black butt rising up out of the water. “I, too,” she said, “shall have a swim.”

She was quick with her clothes. Already topless aside from a flimsy blouse, she took off her hat and let her hair down. She sat on the ground to struggle with her tight pants. “These blasted things were made for skinny little Indians, or for fat ones with happy little servant *wallahs* to pull them off.” She looked up at Felix. “Be my *wallah*, won’t you?” She kicked her legs up at him. “Free me!”

Red-faced, Felix put the spliff between his lips and pulled those khaki jodhpurs clear off the woman.

Mindi rose to her feet to pull off her blouse. Revealing a lacey brassiere, she caught Felix staring at her chest. “I see you’re not embarrassed by my lady parts anymore, are you?”

Felix gave her a twisted smile. “I’m not used to the fancy *shmancy* ways of the aristocracy, miss.”¹³²

She reached her hands back to fiddle with the clasp of her bra. She made an effort, she bit her lip, and then, exacerbated, she said, “Fooey!” and turned to Felix. “Unhook me.”

Felix did as he was told: he unhooked the clasp, letting the bra fall away from her breasts. Mindi slid dirty hands down curving hips to remove her panties, exposing little, scraggly tufts that stood out like patches of ink painted upon ivory. She saw Felix gazing at her and she laughed.¹³³

“What’s the matter?” She winked. “You’ve seen me naked hundreds of times already.” She moved toward the sandy beach that stuck out like a lip from the edge of the pool. “Well,” she turned around, “aren’t you coming?”

Felix unbuttoned his other sleeve. “Don’t wait for me, miss.”

There was a splash; Prindy had swum to the rapids where, standing in calf-deep water,¹³⁴ he climbed out onto a projection of rock shaded by an overhanging tree.¹³⁵ Dark and buff, Mindi saw his firm and wet naked body and she gasped:

“He looks like a Negro Adonis!”¹³⁶ She drooled, “He *is* stunning, don’t you think?”

Felix exhaled, stabbing the ground with what was left of the spliff. He watched the woman move toward the edge of the pool, watched her flop down into the silvery water to thrash about in a spray of iridescence.¹³⁷ In the water, she rolled over like a dugong, looking back at Felix standing on the lip-like shore. He turned his back to the woman. He took his shirt off and bent over to remove his pants. He swam in toward the waterfall, and then she watched him climb out of the water behind the moist scrim of mist, and then there they were: both boys naked, wet, black and white and side-by-side. Mindi felt herself swelter. The water was cool—not warm—and gripping. She felt it reach up between her legs to pull from beneath.¹³⁸ Both boys dived out, their various-coloured butts plunging into mirrored tranquility, coming up in a burst of wet skin to tread water.

Mindi ripened. She felt something sensuous pull at her and she rolled over to swim away. The woman wasn’t looking at the two water-treaders now, but she knew they were looking at her with tight, eager mouths.¹³⁹ She wanted to toy with the boys and she kicked her legs to push

herself up out of the water, spinning her wet body in the sun. The boys saw her naked. They saw her pasty whiteness contrasted with her sunburnt face and neck. They saw her drooping breasts and the dimmed copper of her crotch.¹⁴⁰ She saw them watching her and she smirked. She swam over to the sandy shore to emerge from the water in full view of the boys—she wanted them to look at her—and they did. They watched her recline on the sand. They watched her lift her hand to wave at them.

“Yoo hoo!” She looked much older on the shore. “Come over here, boys, and let’s have some lunch!”

Both Prindy and Felix dived into the water to cut across that pool in a fit of strokes and splashes. The woman covered her eyes when they came out, shielding her vision from the sight of their wet genitals, preferring to *feel* rather than see.

They sat on either side of her and she said, “Well hello.” She felt dry sand sticking to her. “Oh dear,” she became hoarse. “I do believe my sugary box is coated.”¹⁴¹ She moved her head closer to Prindy, entwining her hand in his. “You’re very quiet.”

Felix, on the other side, saw this. Something intense had gripped this woman; her eyes closed and her breath came deep. She felt a hand run over her face. She hoped that hand belonged to Ben, and she moved so that her lips touched his fingers.¹⁴² Felix didn’t like the expectant smile spreading across her lips and he lit a cigarette as the woman moved her head on to Prindy’s bare thigh.

Mindi opened her eyes to smile at Prindy, “You’re beautiful.” She moved his arms across her fleshy rolls and said, “Come here.”¹⁴³ She reached up to his chin, “I want to kiss you once right on the mouth. It would be lovely to keep you, but I’ve got to be a good girl and keep my touchy-feely hands *off* the hired help.”¹⁴⁴ She snaked her palm around the back of Prindy’s neck, pulling him in, a little clumsily at first, but she felt him respond and she was tickled. She reached out to grasp his flaccid, two-toned manhood—she knew what she wanted—but Prindy had run out of ideas, and this surprised her.¹⁴⁵ She pulled away and looked into his grey eyes. She took his black hand and placed it near her throat, waiting for him to move it, to touch her, to stroke and caress her, but his black hand remained immobile—paralyzed—until she moved it for him, spreading her arms and legs wide as her breasts rolled toward the edges of her splotchy torso.

She smiled into those grey eyes, but Prindy was green in his black face, and sweaty. A sudden illness had taken hold of him, nausea consumed him and, already wavering, he crawled

over to the moist green bushes, ferns, most of them, and puked straight into nature. Bending over on his hands and knees, his butt now faced her. A second round of regurgitation rose up within him, bursting out in a torrent of vomit that was accompanied by a palatable spate of flatulence; Prindy farted at her and she made an incredulous face at his manly stink.¹⁴⁶

Mindi then turned to Felix: “Felix! Oh, Felix!” She seized the blond, kissing him on his neck, his chin, his lips, his face, his ears, his shoulders, chest and nipples. She would’ve gone lower, but Felix pushed her away.

“Oh what is it now?” She leered at him. “Today you don’t want any?”

Felix clutched at his stomach.

“Oh no!” She felt his face, his skin was clammy, and as her arms closed around his taut neck, nausea gripped him violently—inexplicably, incredibly and completely—and Felix puked all over her; all over her face and neck, all down her arms and breasts, covering her bare belly, both thighs and down between her legs.

Mindi shrieked, but Felix smirked at her. He said, “I’m not sorry,” and spewed forth yet again, this time in a projectile fashion.¹⁴⁷

Mindi awakened suddenly and completely with a pain throbbing through her head. Snatched right out of the dream, she found herself seated upright next to Felix behind the wheel. She blinked her eyes and shook her head. She held up her hand and said, “Give me that map!”

Seated behind her, Prindy hesitated, glancing at the driver in the rear view mirror.

“Say, miss,” Felix said, “I reckon we shouldn’t use that map anymore, especially since you ripped it up in a fit of anger.”

Mindi glared at the blond, “You ought to stick to driving while I stick to prospecting, alright? It is me who is the expert here, Felix. *Me*. Not you and certainly,” she leered at Prindy, “not you. So,” she came back to Felix, “here’s how it works: *I’m* in charge, so when I say ‘drive on,’ we drive on, no matter which one you is driving, alright? And when I say ‘stop here,’ we stop here. Do I make myself clear?”

“Do you want me to stop here?” Felix pressed down on the brake.

Mindi clenched her jaw. “Now you’re just being smart.”

“Is that a yes? You’re the one in charge.”

“Don’t be smart, Felix. I don’t like it.”

“So it’s a no, then, is it?”

Prindy stifled a giggle under his breath.

“You think this is funny, do you?” Mindi turned on him. “You think this is some kind of joke?”

Prindy cleared his throat.

Mindi turned on Felix. “You think we’re out here for shits and giggles, don’t you, hmm?” She leaned in closer. “Hmm?” She sizzled, “Hmm?”

“No, miss.” Felix felt the full brunt of her British accent, “Not at all.”

“Then don’t come back at me with a smart retort, alright.” She removed her hat, letting her dry, dirty hair fall down around her shoulders, “I’ve had a dreadful night’s sleep these past couple of days.”

“*Nu?*” Felix did not skip a beat. “You’re hung over again, are ya’?”

“I most certainly am not!” She pulled her hair up and clipped it. “How dare you speak to me like that?” She put the hat on her head. “What gives *you* the right to say that, hmm?”

“It’s true.”

“It is not true. Now take it back and apologize!”

“It *is* true, ain’t it, Ben?” Felix lowered his sunglasses to make eye contact with Prindy in the rear view mirror.

“Oh no, mate.” Prindy shook his head. “You’re on your own on this one.”

Felix gave him a look: Thanks a lot.

“Now see,” Mindi said, “even Ben agrees with me, and for that reason alone you should apologize.”

“For what, *nu?* For you getting drunk, or for you being hung over?”

“For disrespecting me, God damn you! I am a lady and I am in charge here, alright? And I’m not going to listen to you sit there and insult me. In fact, I’ve half a mind to stop this bloody car and just leave you out here.”

“You’ve *half* a mind to leave me out here? What good’s that gonna do? I could find my way back from here.”

“Ha! Don’t be daft, Felix. We’re days from Durack and I haven’t seen so much as a black’s camp for miles, let alone a station or a homestead. You’re as good as dead if I leave you out here.”

“That’s what you think, but I’d know how to get back. Hey Ben,” Felix eyed Prindy in the rear view mirror, “you reckon I could make it back to Durack from way out here, *nu*?”

“What, on your own? Nah,” Prindy shook his head, “I reckon the Pookarakka would get you.”

“Pookarakka *shmookarakka*.”

“Pookarakka?” This phrase captivated her. “What’s that? Some sort of animal?”

“He’s not a what, miss, but a who, and he’s got wild, red eyes and,” Felix saw Prindy glaring at him in the rearview mirror, “that’s all I can tell you, miss.”

“Well that’s nothing.” She turned to Prindy. “What can you tell me about this Pookarakka, hmm?”

“I can’t tell you anything, miss.” Prindy stared at her. “He’s absolutely none of your business.”

“Oh God! What’s gotten into you? Is it that grass you’re smoking? What is this Pookrakka thing, hmm? Did he eat that little lost Jewish boy or something? I’ve heard some of you blacks eat people.”

Prindy’s grey eyes turned red.

“Mindi,” Felix saw this and stepped in, “may I call you, Mindi?”

The woman turned on him, her face tight. “I say, just who the bloody hell do you think you are, calling me by my first name, hmm? No, Felix. You may *not* call me Mindi. I am either *doctor* or *missus*. We’ve been over this a hundred times but you two repeatedly ignore me.”

“With all due respect, miss, you did just call my mate a cannibal.”

“I asked a question. I didn’t say he is a cannibal.” She turned to Prindy. “You don’t eat people, Ben, do you?”

“No.”

“See?” She turned to Felix. “No harm done.”

“How would you like it if someone came to your country asking if you eat people, *nu*? Ever think of that, miss?”

“Don’t be ridiculous, Felix. England has no history of cannibalism.”

“You’re being real nasty, *Missus* Mindi Ricklesby.”

She smirked, “Mindi *MacCallum* Ricklesby.”¹⁴⁸

“With all due respect, miss, your name should be Mindi Can’t-Shut-Her-Up Cackleby.” Mindi blanched and Felix said, “We could leave you out here just as easily. This place ain’t yours, but you act like we’s belong to you.”

“Yeah,” Prindy said, “and you don’t own those diamonds!”

“It’s not your country, either, Felix. You were born on a boat. You were imported, just like all the other Jews up here.”

“That’s why my birth certificate says ‘Wyndham, WA’, is it?”

“This country still belongs to *my* country. Try as you might, Felix, but Australia is *not* a republic. That’s *my* queen on the face of your money.”

“Money, money, money. That’s all you Christian people think about, ain’t it?”

“Actually, I thought money, money, money was more a Jewish thing. It’s not like we want to own people but, in that regard,” she nodded at Prindy, “we still own you.”

Prindy scoffed, “Ain’t nobody owns me but me, miss.”

“You wouldn’t really leave me out here, now would you?” Felix turned to Mindi, “Not after all the fun we’s having.”

“Oh I would.” She nodded. “You’re nothing more than the hired help. Same goes for you, too, Ben. But you,” she leered at Felix, “you’re the one who’s being an insolent little shit this afternoon.”

“*Me*? You’re the one who’s hung over, and I’m not so little, miss. I’m actually quite big, or were you ogling at something else the other night when we’s pissed out the fire?”

“That is it!” The woman slapped her hands on the dashboard, “Pull over! Stop this car at once!”

Felix slammed on the brakes, halting the ute on the side of the road.

“Alright, Felix,” Mindi threw her door open. “if you’re so bloody smart then you—without the help of a map—lead the way. Take us now, oh wise and presumably sober Felix, *please* take us to the nearest depression and show us where the diamonds are. Well now,” she clapped her hands three times. “Go on, then.” She placed her hands on her hips. “Get to it, hmm?”

Both boys came out of the ute. “Is this really necessary, miss?” Prindy slammed his door. “I think you’ve made your point now.”

“Well I don’t, and as Felix said, I’m in charge, so now I say *Felix*, smart and brilliant genius Felix, take us to it!”

Felix came around the front of the ute wiping sunglasses on the corner of his shirt. “Say what now?”

“You’re so bloody smart. Lead the way. Go on. We’re all waiting for you. You just said you think you can find your way back to Durack City from here, so you ought to be able to find some pesky little diamonds first. So off you go.”

Felix glanced at Prindy, who shrugged his shoulders. “Right.” Felix slipped the sunglasses on. “Follow me.”

Prindy lowered his head to hide his smirk as he followed after while Mindi rolled her eyes and shook out her hat, stepping in line behind them. “And just where the bloody hell are we going, hmm? You think after just a few weeks hovering around my expertise you can take off and find some diamonds? You wouldn’t even know them if you found them.” She shoved her dirty hair back into her hat. “Just what is your plan, hmm?”

“You said ‘lead the way’, miss, and we’re going this way.” Felix held his hand out, “I’m leadin’.”

Three hours later, they came to the edge of a slope. Walking single file, they stood at the top of a precipice. Down below, a dried out river stretched ahead as regal bar-shouldered doves mingled with yellow honeyeaters and flat-headed chats, flying between branches of snappy gums and eucalyptus all slanted and bent in the same direction.

Mindi noticed a trail of ants feasting on the headless corpse of a decomposing reptile caked in blood. “Dear God! Where have you brought me?”

“You see how it goes like that?” Felix moved his hand in a downward arc. “When you said ‘go and find us some diamonds,’ well maybe we should look ‘round here?”

Mindi looked the place over, much of it shaded by a canopy of trees. “Have you been here before?” She kicked at the soil; the sand was soft and smooth. “Did you know this was here the whole time?”

“*Nu?* You said you wanted a depression, well here you go.” Felix held out his hands. “A depression.”

She stepped over tree branches and shards of rock. She climbed on to a flat-topped boulder to gaze out over the distance. “It’s just as I expected. This isn’t a depression at all.”

“It isn’t?” Felix pulled off his sunglasses, “Then just what the bloody hell is it, *nu*?”

Prindy shielded his eyes from the sun to look up at the woman; she was smiling, “You’re pleased, miss?”

“Oh, I’m very pleased. Yes indeed!” She leapt off the rock, landing in front of the two boys. “I don’t know how you did it, Felix, but you did it, you little shit!” She grabbed him by the shoulders and kissed him on the lips.

“*Ichsah!*” Felix wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. “What the bloody hell was that for?”

“It’s more than a depression, Felix. I think you’ve just found the top of a pipe!”

“You’re kidding.”

“Come on, boys!” She got out a pair of gloves. “Get those pans and sieves. Did one of you pack the brush?” She started moving. “We’ve got some digging to do!”

Prindy dropped a bulky backpack from his shoulders to rifle through it, bringing out a brush and a pick-axe. “Here,” he handed them to Felix. “Try not to kill her with ‘em.”

They found her crouched over a small, slender valley of rocks shorn in miniature. One by one, she grabbed rocks and, with either one hand or both, she brought the hardened chunk close to her face where she squinted at it only to either toss the rock away or to place it in a pile for a more thorough examination later.

Prindy asked her, “What do you think you found, miss?”

The woman stopped and, from her crouched position, turned around like a crab, “How many times must I tell you, Ben, I am *Doctor* Ricklesby, or if you can’t manage that, then I am *Missus* Ricklesby. I am not a ‘miss’. Are we understood?”

Prindy said, “Yes, miss,” without hesitation. “Oh, sorry miss. I meant to call you missus.”

Mindi returned her attention back to that fissure of rocks. “The pick-axe and the brush!” She held her hand out, opening and closing her gloved palm three times. “Give them to me!”

Felix climbed over and, with a grunt, held out the pick-axe and the brush. She snatched them from him and wielded the pick-axe. With a flick of her wrist, she slammed it down, smashing it into the smooth face of a grey-black cluster, shattering the speckled rock into many pieces.

She said, “Didn’t think so,” and kicked the shattered bits away with the toe of her boot. She stood up, turned and bent over, revealing a dark spot running down the crease at the back of her pants.

Felix poked Prindy. “Looks wet down there, hey?”

“Eww!” Prindy snarled. “That’s disgusting!”

Mindi stood up, inadvertently pulling the shirt from her pants to expose the top of her rear end. Felix and Prindy cringed to look away.

“Now boys!” She put both hands on her hips. “I want you to wash these rocks, but this time I’m going to supervise you. For all I know, you’ve been dumping kimberlite samples all over the place simply because neither of you have any clue as to what we’re even looking for. I am utterly convinced that you two pretty little faces have been nodding and ‘uh-huh’ing these past few weeks just to appease me. Well boys, not anymore. Felix! Bring those rocks over here. Ben!” She snapped her fingers. “Get the pan ready with some water, and don’t get smart with me, either. You’re not like Felix, so don’t even start.”

Prindy held his tongue, giving some thought to bashing the pan right over her head. Felix went over to the pile of rocks, grabbed two, one with each hand, then lifted them, but not very far; he dropped a rock on his toe.

“Fuck!”

Prindy had both eyes on his mate. “What happened?”

“Oh for heaven’s sakes!” Mindi turned on them. “What is it now?”

“I dropped one of your rocks on my foot is what happened.”

“Oh God, Felix!” Those gloved hands went straight to her hips. “How could you be so stupid?” She said ‘stupid’ like an aristocrat: “*Stoo*-pid.”

Felix hated her fully in that moment. “I didn’t know they’d be so heavy.”

“They’re rocks, Felix. What did you think they’d be? Light as a feather?” She threw her head back in haughty laughter. “That would be absolutely ridiculous! Light as a feather!” Without moving her hands from her hips, she turned to walk away, cackling like a cockatoo.

“How’s your foot?” Prindy went to Felix. “Did you break anything?”

“I’ll break *her* in a minute, she keeps this up.” Felix watched the woman straddle over a fallen trunk of a ghost gum, disappearing into the shade. “Where’s she off to now?”

“Who cares? She’s deranged”

“She’s bloody moody.” Felix snorted, “As moody as a blacklady.”

They heard her laughter reverberate off the rocks; the echo rousing a flock of crimson finches into skyward flight.

“She don’t laugh like no black lady.” Prindy said, “She laughs like a white lady.”

“You ask me,” Felix rubbed his toe through his shoe, “she laughs like the devil. These perfect little white ladies are always like that, dirty minded as they come.”¹⁴⁹

Grasping that brush and that pick-axe, Mindi left the boys to lament over Felix’s injured toe. “Light as a feather!” She cackled. “Felix is so stupid! Just who does he think he is, hmm?” She fumed under her breath, reminding herself that she was in Western Australia, where anything might happen. Back in England, everything had already been done, often by one’s very own relatives, but everything was topsy-turvy down here in the Antipodes.¹⁵⁰

Blinded by the sun, she scanned the ground for signs of kimberlite and lamprolite, stopping to bend over in one spot only to stand up and walk on a few meters to stop again to squat down and scavenge for rocks in another. At one point, she lifted a rock as big as her head and a lizard, long and dark green and covered with horns and spikes, leapt out from underneath, scaring the woman, who dropped the rock as the lizard scurried away.

She pulled the hat from her head. Flies, thousands of them, swarmed around her, landing on her face and lips. She felt a bush fly crawl up her nose and she sneezed, shoving a finger into her nostril. She spotted a tree of eucalypt. She reached up to caress the long slender leaves, running her fingers along thin branches, clasping her palm around a limb. With a snap, she yanked a long, leafy twig off the tree. Her fingers dotted with translucent sap, she used this severed limb to shoo away the bush flies.

She soldiered on, carrying the torn branch in front of her, swatting it from side to side and across her shoulders and neck. Her eyes, peeled like a vulture’s, canvassed the ground. She fancied herself an expert on what to look for, but she was not certain she was either in nor anywhere near any sort of depression or pipe. She got down closer to the soil to scoop dirt into her hand. The sand felt loose and soft. Behind her, a dry river flowed north. She turned south and said, “Let’s just see where you come from then, shall we?”

Ahead of her, she noticed a giant, enormous boulder wedged into the horizon. The riverbed, if she could call it that, had narrowed into a series of creeks that formed a patchwork of indented tracks crisscrossing the red earth. Some of them swam around the enormous boulder,

some swam underit. The top of the boulder was shoved into a ridge where it sliced a hill caked in bright yellows and oranges, purples and reds, as if someone had centuries earlier poured buckets of bright paint over a mountain. The colours had long since faded into a drier, subtler shade she knew could be reactivated with the advent of water.

The creek beds ran away from this hill of many colours. A fat little lizard scurried out from around the rock. The Jew lizard—a squat creature covered in horns—used hooked claws to scurry over the bony roots of a sprawling ghost gum, running toward a wall of rock interrupted by a thin gap set between two heavy boulders. The Jew lizard slithered through the thin gap, hip-hopping on a zig-zag course between giant rocks. What had that squat little creature seen? What did that little Jew lizard know?¹⁵¹

Mindi straightened her back and shoulders and, with torn limb of eucalypt in hand, she stormed through that thin gap. Through to the other side, she found herself inside a giant ring of rocks as wide as a cricket mound.

She gasped at this and said, “No,” and felt her stomach sink.

Silence pervaded this giant ring and the silence was numbing.¹⁵² The ring flourished with plots of green grass and mulla-mulla and clumps of rubbery ferns motionless in the bright sun.¹⁵³ The rise was steep and the undergrowth dense, gathered here to weigh on her like a judge and jury.¹⁵⁴ She knew this was not her place, but she noticed a line of rocks, thousands of them piled atop each other, sticking out from the copper-orange dirt. To her, this vision sparkled as bright as a bauble and she said, “I think I know where that river comes from now!”

She got the pick-axe ready and moved toward those shiny rocks, rust-coloured and textured like slate. She dismissed those rocks, glossing over them in search of shard-like edges. She wanted colourful rocks that were grey or near-black and speckled with chunky clusters of white and gold. She wanted rocks freckled by bits of orange, and she liked them big and heavy and at least four grams per centimetre in size.

Mindi used that pick-axe to move what she felt were puny, lesser rocks out of the way. She used the sharp end of the pick-axe to scrape the dirt off a gritty, mottled clot of rock. She saw light-grey speckled with warm colours: yellow, gold, orange and white. She scraped faster. She couldn't scrape fast enough and, discarding the pick-axe, she clawed at the earth with her bare hands, tearing her fingernails. The rock was bigger than she expected and wedged deeper than she thought. Instead of exhuming it, she brought out that brush and began to wipe at it. She

soon discovered those warm colours were indeed *in* the rock and not, as she feared, the dried remains of painted ochre.

“Praise Jesus!” She was thrilled. “I do believe a *Eureka* may be in order!” She used the pick-axe in an attempt to jerk the rock free, but her efforts failed and she fell flat on her backside, the jagged spine of an embedded root coming up between the twin rumps of her buttocks.

“*Oi!*” She rolled on to her hip to push down the top part of her pants; the bruise already turning purple. “That’s going to hurt in the morning for damn sure.” She glanced up and, just ahead of her, she saw a squat, fat lizard lined with prickly scales flicking a long serpentine tongue out of a wide, yellow mouth. The lizard lifted a hooked claw and cocked a diamond-shaped head, puffing out a frilly beard to hiss at her.

The woman shrieked and pushed herself away, rolling across uneven rock. On her other hip, she pushed matted hair out of her face and, right there in front of her, she spotted another squat lizard with the same frilly beard as the one before it. This lizard also cocked its diamond-shaped head and also puffed out its beard to hiss at her.

The woman screamed and scrambled to her feet. Upright and off the ground, she felt dizzy and she swayed like a buoy, righting herself with a shake of her head. She blinked her eyes and looked for the lizards, but they had disappeared. The sun above her was bright and she put a hand over her eyes. She heard a twig snap and she turned around.

And then she saw him: a black man with a bushy beard and a torso carved with stripes of white paint.

He glared at the woman, his face creased with wrinkles—he looked *into* her—and she was enchanted. He spoke to her in *Language* without moving his lips. He pointed at the gap she’d stormed through, the gap between the two boulders, and held out his hand.

“It’s nasty here.” The woman whimpered as a long bony black claw reached towards her. “I never thought it would be so nasty, or I wouldn’t have come.”¹⁵⁵

He looked into her, and she stared deep into his wild, red eyes...

*

“Nah, mate, you’re way off. The way I see it,” Prindy held a spliff, “the top six will be—and in this order—either West Sussex or Yorkshire at number six, at number five will be Leeds.

Number four'll be Sri Lanka, and depending on that match between Ontario and British Columbia, I'd bet one of 'em Canadian teams for number two or three."

"*Nu?* What about number one?"

"That's easy." Prindy took a toke and passed the spliff. "I reckon that'll be Belmopan this year."

"*Nu?*" Felix took a drag. "You always say that."

"*Nu?*" Prindy mocked his mate. "They're the best."

"By how many runs, *nu?*" Felix took another drag. "How many wickets?"

"In the grand final, or in the last qualifying test match?"

"Wait a tick," Felix took another hit and held the smoke in. "You left out High Wycombe and Daylesford and all 'em other Aussie teams." He let out a plume of smoke, "What about Duckworth's?"

"Duckworth's, yeah, forgot about them. Scratch that list, then. I reckon Duckworth's'll be higher up than Sri Lanka or them Canadian teams. It won't change the top spot, though. I reckon it's like they always say: 'Never bet against Belmopan.'"

"I said that, mate." Felix snatched the spliff from Prindy. "*They* never said that. That was me."

"*Nu?*" Prindy held a bottle. "They're the best." He took a drink. "Have been for years."

They heard a twig snap and they turned around to see the woman emerge from the darkness.

Felix said, "Well look who's back."

"Where'd you go, miss?" Prindy asked, "You just disappeared when we's wasn't looking, hey?"

The woman was disheveled, her hair a mess. She did not make eye contact with Prindy or with Felix. She stared straight ahead and moved toward the fire. Prindy and Felix had to step apart to let her through as she walked over to a nearby log where, without lifting her eyes from the fire, she sat down.

Prindy furrowed his brow, "You alright, miss?" He waited for her to respond, but she stared in silence at the fire.

"Hey?" Felix whistled at her, "Hey *doctor!*"

The woman did not flinch. She kept her eyes on the fire.

“Mindi!” Felix snapped his fingers. “*Doctor Ricklesby?*” He picked up a small pebble and tossed it at her, hitting her just above her right breast. “Where’d you run off to today, *nu?*”

The woman did not move. She kept her eyes trained on the fire.

“Hey, miss? You feelin’ alright?” Prindy held the bottle out toward her. “You want a drink, miss?”

That got her attention and she shifted her eyes to the Scotch without moving her head. She stuck her arm out and snatched the bottle out of Prindy’s hand. She took a sip, then a few sips, and then she held the bottle up to take a good, long drink, nearly finishing the Scotch in a single gulp, returning her gaze back to the fire.

“What do you reckon she’s gone and dropped one of ‘em rocks on her head, *nu?*”

They watched the woman stare into the fire. She stared without blinking and did not avert her gaze, not even when she lifted that bottle of Scotch to her lips for another drink. She kept her eyes affixed to the crackling fire.

Felix poked his friend with his elbow, “Why not take her out and have a night with her?”

“Knock it off, mate.”

“You’re the one she’s hot and bothered for. She fancies you.”

Prindy and Felix talked to the woman, then they talked about her as if she were not there. Felix made a crude joke, Prindy laughed, but the woman remained aloof and unresponsive.

“Say now, would you like that, miss?” Felix asked her, “Would you like to go around here with me mate like you do, or would you rather he finish himself off tonight, *nu?*”

“Aw fuck off, mate!” Prindy knocked Felix to the ground where they pushed and shoved at each other. Felix grunted and Prindy kicked and then they heard her:

“Boys!”

They stopped to pull apart and saw the woman standing above them. She stepped out of her shoes and, using her toes, began to remove her socks. Prindy, lying on the ground, was riveted by her heightened image, and that’s when he saw a large stain of blood seeping through the fabric of her khaki shirt.

She said, “I shall now remove my corset.”

And Felix grunted, “*Nu?*”

Western Australia

1965

Baron looked at his father lying in a sterile white bed. Kurt Freedel appeared peaceful, at rest attached to tubes and machines, unmoved from slumber. Outside, rain assaulted the window, pounding at the glass hidden behind a set of Venetian blinds. The rain did not rouse or wake Kurt, the howling wind did not disturb him; he remained unresponsive and his vegetation continued unperturbed.

Another tropical storm had brewed in over the Arafura Sea, much like the cyclone—Cyclone Ruth—that turned left south of Timor to lay siege to the Gulf of Cambridge and the ports of Wyndham before sweeping over the Freeland League, blowing cars and vehicles clear off the four-lane expressway.¹⁵⁶ The damage was incalculable and the storm eventually pattered out north of the Saw Ranges long after she threw the truck Kurt was driving across the road by a margin later measured at well over three hundred meters. Kurt was lucky to be alive. Others were mangled, torn and bloodied, while many more were never located in the wreckage strewn on either side of the highway; six schoolchildren, boys from a progressively Orthodox *yeshiva* * located in the southern suburbs of Wyndham, had gone missing in the wake of the storm, leading panic-stricken parents to light candles at vigils at both synagogues and churches throughout East Kimberley.

He had no reason to be on that road. If he had just listened, he never would have gone there in the first place. He never listens. Once he sets his mind to something, he does it until it's done. He's a stubborn old man and look where it's put him.

Baron heard this from his mother. Liesel blamed the coma her husband was in on his stubbornness and on God until a wave of hysteria rolled in like a tide beholden to lunar whim: stable and scolding one moment, woe and pity the next. Liesel reverted to her natural, yet increasingly accusatory Yiddish to curse the wet season in general, that cyclone in particular, and the God-forsaken East Kimberley she now claimed she never wanted to come to in the first place. Her blame ultimately led to the Divine, whom she beseeched to return her ill and presumably sleeping husband to full health and faculty. Her prayers demanded swift action and

* "*yeshiva*" – a Jewish school devoted to the study of Torah and Judaic scholarship.

an instant recovery, birthing within her a quiet and determined stoicism that, despite its notable cracks, flew in the face of medical fact.

“You know, Baron, if your father doesn’t make it out of this, you’ll be the man of the house.” Liesel focused on the cannula plugged into her husband’s nostrils. “Maybe you should pray for him.”

“I haven’t prayed for anything in years, mother.”

“*Nu?*” She said, “I’d say now’s a good time to start back up again.” Her chin quivered, her lip trembled and her eyes watered as another tide rolled in. “I can’t lose another one, Baron. I can’t!”

Baron dropped his head into his hands. Father unresponsive, mother a mess; *this* was too much for him and he wanted to be somewhere else—not here—then his sense of guilt seeped in.

The door to the room opened and he felt a tap on his shoulder. Baron lifted his head to a young black woman handing him a small cup of water.

“Don’t worry, mum.” She wore a long dress and a long-sleeved turtleneck. “He’s strong. He’ll come out of this.”

Liesel cried at the sound of the endearment. She started quietly, her tears insignificant and unaccompanied by an ostentatious display of grief. Her muted decorum did not last for long and her despondent outburst plunged the whole room into a heavy and tense silence.¹⁵⁷

“How could He do this to me?”

Baron clenched his jaw. He knew the He she referred to was the Eternal One, *Elohim* above. She’d been deploring Him for decades now, her unilateral requests for an audience—if not a direct and holy answer prepared solely for her—were frequent and tinged with vitriol.

“If he dies,” Liesel blew her nose, “then you’ll be the oldest man in the family. You’ll have to say *kadish* for him, and then a *yahrzeit*. You understand that, don’t you?”¹⁵⁸

Baron glanced at his mother. She’d said this to him many times, leaping from one sensational emotion to another: anguish and gloom giving way to fear and anger. Her bleary, bloodshot eyes glared at the rain pounding on the windows and she growled:

“God damn you, Ruth. God damn all cyclones and God damn this stupid, wet place!”

Baron re-hid his face from view, rolling his closed eyes.

* “*kadish*” – Jewish prayers typically associated with mourning; “*yahrzeit*” – the anniversary of a death of a close relative where it is customary to recite a “*kadish*.”

The door opened and a nurse came in. "I beg your pardon, but there's a telegram for B. Freedel."

All eyes turned to that nurse, Liesel's the most sharply. The nurse met each line of vision with a smile, turning to Kurt in the bed.

"He's not B. Freedel?" She picked up the chart hanging on the foot of the bed. "His name starts with a K."

Baron raised a hand, "I'm B. Freedel."

The nurse smiled. "We have a telegram for you."

Baron followed the nurse out to the desk where she handed him a small slip of paper:

"B Freedel:

"At Institute.

"Please report ASAP.

"Opportunity awaits.

"Yours, Prof ML."

"When did this arrive?"

"A few minutes ago."

Baron wadded the telegram between his fingers and went back to his father's room. He said nothing to his mother or to the young black woman and returned to the chair he'd occupied moments earlier.

"Nu, Baron? What was in the telegram?"

"It's from the Institute."

"Nu?" This annoyed his mother. "What do they want?"

"It's about work."

"Nu? They shouldn't be bothering you. Did you tell them not to bother you?"

"What did they want?" The young woman asked, "Do they need you?"

"He said 'ASAP,' as soon as possible."

"Well," the young woman nodded, "you'd better go, then."

"What about your father?" Liesel was quick with the hysterics. "You can't just leave your father like this!"

“He’s been like this for weeks now, mother.”

“Sixteen days, eight hours and thirty-four minutes.” Liesel wiped her nose. “But who’s counting?”

“Your father will be fine.” The young woman pointed toward the door. “Doctors,” she said, “nurses.”

“What if he wakes up?” Liesel cried, “What if he wakes up and wants to see you?”

Baron looked from his mother’s puffy face to his quiet, sleeping father. The Royal Flying Doctors had airlifted Kurt from the scene of the accident and, upon his arrival at Steinberg Memorial, his mother had taken up residence at her husband’s side. Baron stayed with his mother in the hospital but on occasion and unlike his mother, he left the hospital to eat, work or bathe. Each departure heralded the histrionics of paternal—maternal—separation with Liesel succumbing to a deluge of tears, showering her son with a thick stream of guilt he knew would never wear off, not even with the coming of the Messiah.

“He’s in hospital, Baron.” The young woman said, “They’ll know what to do.”

Baron looked at his mother hovering over his father like the caricature of a Biblical heroine. “Yes.” He nodded, “Yes, alright.” He felt for a set of keys in his pocket. “I’ve been summoned, mother. I have to go.”

“But your father, Baron! What about your father?” His mother was near-shrill. “You can’t just leave him here!”

“He’ll be fine, mother.”

“What about me, *nu*? What about me?” At that moment, a single thought came to her mind: She had let go of his hand!

Liesel unraveled fully, her sobs taking on a type of living presence.

“Miriya will stay with you until I come back, mother.”

Liesel sniveled, “How long will you be?”

“Not sure, but Miri will stay with you just like she did the other night, alright?”

Liesel wanted to argue. She wanted to plead with Baron, but she huffed and switched to Yiddish, “Fine, then.” She said, “Just leave me here all alone to rot in this God-forsaken hospital.”

“You’re not alone, mother.” Baron slid his arm into a coat sleeve, “There are heaps of doctors here, and Miri will stay with you until I get back. She has the telegram for me at the Institute. This is what we did the other night and everything was fine. You remember?”

Liesel wiped her nose. “What if he wakes up, *nu*?”

“Then Miri will telegram me and I’ll drop everything and come right back here, alright?”

Liesel stared at her son and said, “Just go, then,” in a voice that spoke crisp and clear English.

Baron said goodbye to the young black woman and hugged his mother; resentful, she remained unresponsive. He kissed his father on the forehead and left the room, stopping at the nurse’s station to check they had his telegram at the Institute should there be a change in his father’s condition.¹⁵⁹ A few minutes later, he steered a Falcon north to drive toward Wyndham.

*

Baron parked the Ford to sprint through the rain to the verandah, rushing up a flight of stairs to the foyer of an office. Menachem,¹⁶⁰ the administrator for the Geosciences faculty, looked up from his desk.

“You’re wet.” He was surprised to see Baron. “How’s your father?”

“Where is he?” Baron removed his coat. “Is he here?”

Menachem pointed with his pen. “In there.”

Baron hung his coat on a hat rack and rapped his knuckle on a wooden door, pushing it open. Inside, he found the Professor behind his desk, his chair swiveled toward the window. The Professor held a pipe to his lips attempting to strike a match against a strip of flint. A flame flickered, but the Professor was unable to take the flavoured tobacco:

“Oh bloody damned hell!”

“You wanted to see me sir?” Baron watched the Professor turn in the swivel chair. “I got your telegram at the hospital.”

“Yes, finally!” The Professor pulled out a pocket watch he snapped open to consult. “How’s your father?”

“There’s no change in his condition.”

“And your mother?” The Professor held the pipe away from his lips. “How’s she? I’m not tearing you away at some critical juncture, I hope?”

“No, sir. She’s fine. There’s no change in her condition, either. And I thank you for the distraction. If it were up to her, I’d never leave the hospital. What did you want to see me about? What’s this opportunity you mentioned in the telegram?”

“Ah, yes, *that*. Come with me.” The Professor led Baron down a hall and down a flight of stairs to another building surrounded by verandahs. He unlocked a door to a laboratory and turned on a light, revealing a table covered with rocks.

“I’ve had a visitor, Baron. Two of them, in fact. They think they’ve found something in the desert down past Mt Evelyn.” The Professor picked up a rock twice the size of his fist. “You see these little flakes? Those white bits?”

Baron squinted, “Lime?”

“Possibly, but,” the Professor dropped that rock to pick up another, “you see on this one, the flakes are shiny and black, and on that one, the flakes are orange?”

Baron looked over the rocks, noticing the vast majority contained a multi-coloured palate of flakes. “Yeah, so?”

“I want you to check them.”

Baron made a face; according to the Professor, he was a gifted student; the notion that he would check some rocks struck him as well below the caliber of his capabilities. “*This* is the opportunity you were talking about? Some rocks with flakes in them?”

“Precisely, yes.”

“Why not have one of the second years check these out?”

“Therein lies the dilemma, Baron. I don’t want too many players involved in this. It’s best if we keep this quiet.”

“Why?” Baron looked at the table. He noticed dark flakes imbedded in a large piece of rock. He leaned in closer and took off his glasses, wiping them with a cloth pulled from a pocket. Spectacles clean, he took a closer look, “What do you think is in these rocks?”

“That’s the whole point, Baron. The two that brought them in here seem to think these are samples of kimberlite and lamprolite. Some of these rocks certainly feel heavy enough for chromium or diopside, so if they’re that heavy, why not cut them up to see what’s in them to make sure. I recommend using the spectrometer.”

Baron stared at the rocks lying inert on the table. He thought of his father lying inert in that sterile white bed, hooked up to tubes and machines and he said, “You couldn’t get an undergrad for this?”

“Not if there’s kimberlite in them. If these rocks have in them what I think they might, then I only want my people involved. That’s why I prefer to keep this quiet, and I prefer we keep this for ourselves and not share it with the Institute. Not for now, at least.”

“You think there’s uranium in these rocks?”

“Not uranium, Baron, but diamonds!”

“Diamonds?” Baron looked down at the table, “In these rocks?”

“Hmm.” The Professor brought the pipe to his lips. “Check them for me.” He fumbled with some matches. “Start with that big rock near the edge there.”

*

Donning goggles over horn-rimmed glasses, Baron used a hammer and chisel to break a rock that split apart along preordained cracks, causing a ridge to thrust out like a chunky, crooked shelf. Baron took the rock to a saw, clamping it into a holder lined up with a cyclical blade. He closed the lid and flipped a switch, cranking the knob on the side to send it toward the blade, slicing the rock in a single deft move. The slab fell into a catch tray. Baron locked the slab into another platform lined up with a different, diamond-encrusted blade that sliced the slab into a thin strip. Baron glued this strip onto a glass slide he placed under a microscope. He removed his goggles and adjusted the lens to zoom in. Under glass, the terrain of the rock looked harsh, rigid, jagged and speckled, a patchwork of dents and craters dotted with white-green flakes wedged into grey stone.

Baron pulled back from the eye-piece to blink a few times, then leaned in for another look. The light coming up through the thin-section was tinted gold and asparkle with pink. Baron smiled; the proverbial trail of breadcrumbs had been found. Once, this vast portion of rock had been viscous liquid buried deep in the mantle and hardened over the course of eons. Now, centuries later, Baron wanted to destroy this rock using a sledge hammer, breaking it into smaller pieces he placed into a large sieve. He covered the sieve and pressed a button to spin the rocks at high speed, waiting for heavier minerals to roll out to the edge. The spinning stopped after a few

minutes and Baron raised the cover. He retrieved a small piece of rock from the margins and, lifting his horn-rimmed glasses, squinted at a shiny, bright pink lopsided bauble just visible to his naked eye.

Baron measured the mass of this bauble and the percentage of minerals and, in the end, it was all but undeniable: there were concentrations of diopside and lamprolite and a possible trace of chromium in these rocks. Given their concentration, there was a good chance there might be a vast wealth of minerals hidden beneath the earth these rocks were pulled from.

Baron made a list and took the lift back up to the Geosciences faculty. Menachem was behind his desk when Baron came into the foyer to push his way through the wooden door emblazoned with the name of his mentor: Professor Malcolm Level.

"I think I've found something, sir, possibly some high concentrations of pyrope and fosterite and some other minerals beyond that. I've made a list. I also think there might be some uranium among these samples, but I'd have to take them to the other lab to test for radiation."

Baron Freedel looked up from the folder. Professor Malcolm Level was, as always, seated behind his desk attempting to light a pipe with some matches but, seated in front of the desk, Baron saw two other people: one black, the other blond and white, both of whom turned his way now.

Baron recognized them instantly.

"Oh please, Baron. Sometimes I think you are so consumed by some urgent need to locate uranium you'll find it just about anywhere."

Baron did not hear the Professor, instead he stared at the two people seated in front of the desk.

Ben Prindy and Felix Morose recognized Baron Freedel just as instantly as he recognized them, though he looked different—older—with a beard and a pair of horn-rimmed glasses.

"*These* were the two I was telling you about, Baron." Malcolm Level rose from the swivel chair. "Allow me to make everyone's acquaintances. This, who just came in, is my gifted student, Baron Freedel. And this, Baron, is Fe—"

"I know who these people are, sir." Baron never once lifted his eyes from the pair in front of the desk.

"Oh? Are you previously acquainted?" This brought a smile to the Professor's face. "It is a small world, now isn't? How do you know each other? You've met before?"

"We're Jewish." Baron shifted his vision from blond to black. "We grew up together."

"Of course you're Jewish." The Professor was delighted. "This is Wyndham, after all, isn't it. The three of you, you're all Jewish?"

"They are," Prindy was quick. "But I'm not."

"No?" The Professor tried to light tobacco. "Me neither."

Felix flinched. "You're not Jewish?"

"Not Jewish." The flame went out. "No."

"No?" Felix asked, "Not even half a Jew?"

"Not in the slightest." The Professor moved the pipe between his lips. "Whatever gave you the idea I was Jewish?"

"We was told you was Jewish."

"Who told you that?"

"*Nu?*" Felix said, "A little birdie in the desert."

"Well your little birdie was incorrect, I'm afraid. Lapsed Presbyterian," he struck a match, "and not Jewish."

"Ah," Felix nodded.

At this point, the conversation hit a lull, which Baron diverted when he asked them: "Why are you here?"

"Oh, Baron, did I not explain earlier?" His flame went out. "These are the two who brought in those rocks."

"You're joking." Baron's jaw went slack. "What are yous two doing with those rocks?"

"We found them."

"I don't understand." Baron pushed his eyebrows together, "How would you even know what to look for?"

"What's a matter?" That familiar tone, that familiar face; Felix fell right back into it all too easily, "You don't like it?"

"Yous two didn't even finish high school."*

"What's that got to do with it?" Prindy asked, "You don't think we found all them rocks?"

* This is a grammatical nuance particular to Australian slang: an "s" or an "se" is put on the end of the singular "you" as a suffix indicating more than one "you" – similar to "*atem*" ("אתם") in Hebrew.

“How would you even know what to look for? How would you even know there was something valuable in *any* rocks?”

“*Nu?*” Felix said, “What’s it to you if we found something?”

Baron leered at the blond, then turned to the Professor.

“Well, gentlemen,” the Professor said, “I asked Baron to check your rocks in the lab. Presumably he has returned with the results. You said you found something in their samples?”

“Yes, Baron.” Felix smirked, “Tell us, what *did* you find in our rocks? Did you find some indicator minerals?”

Baron scowled, “Do you even know what that means?”

“*Nu*, Baron? It doesn’t take a genius to find some rocks.”

Baron handed the folder to the Professor. “Do you need me for anything else, sir?”

The Professor took a seat, opening the folder to look over Baron’s list. He honed in on the grams, weights and percentages cross referenced with mass and measurements and said, “Well, gentlemen, I can tell you there’s probably something underneath those rocks. Do you remember where you found them?”

Felix nodded, “We do.”

“Specific coordinates; longitude and latitude and that sort of thing?”

“We got a ute.” Prindy said, “We can drive you there.”

There was a knock at the door and Menachem, the administrator for the Geosciences faculty, stepped in. “Professor, sir, sorry to interrupt, but there’s a communiqué from Sir Barnaby.”

“A communiqué? Good Lord. What does he want now?”

“Your undivided attention, sir.” Menachem handed the Professor a small strip of paper. “He’s demanding an immediate response.”

The Professor placed the unlit pipe between his lips and opened the note. His eyes read over the small document and he said, “Gentlemen, I’m sorry.” He pushed out of his swivel chair. “I really must deal with this. Please stay here to await my return. I shan’t be more than a half an hour.” The Professor stepped around the desk and said, “Baron will look after you,” then he swept from the office with Menachem in tow.

Left behind, Baron, Prindy and Felix stared at each other for a good long time. Prindy thought Baron looked older and thinner, but he was still clad in a *yeshiva* uniform of white shirt

and black trousers. His ginger-colored beard looked freshly trimmed but his eyes looked glazed, and Prindy knew it then: he'd seen something in those rocks.

Felix, on the other hand, viewed a Baron Freedel hardly unchanged from the image he had long since relegated to memory. Baron was older and taller but still weighted to the earth by a paunch ill-concealed by a low-hanging belt wedged beneath a bulging gut. Baron was fatter than Felix remembered him, and just as annoying. Felix salivated at the opportunities this unexpected reunion offered him and grew warm at the thought. This time, as always, he had the upper hand; they'd found rocks with diamonds in them. Small world, hey Baron?

Baron, for his part, stood there looking at them with pursed lips. "I haven't heard from or seen you two in years—almost ten of them—and then you just rock up here and tell me you were wandering in the desert when—look at that—you stumble over some 'indicator minerals'," he mimed quotation marks. "You don't have any idea what that means, do you?"

"*Nu?*" Felix smirked, "Does it matter?"

"*You* know what they are," Prindy said, "and that's why we bring 'em to you. Did you find anything in 'em?"

Baron retrieved the folder. "Even if I did," he sat on the edge of the Professor's desk, "I could tell you I didn't. I could tell you everything written down in here is patently useless and neither one of you would know the difference, would you?"

"Well this is new." Prindy turned to Felix. "I don't remember him having an attitude, do you?"

"I remember you being fat and religious. You still take that stuff seriously? Seems weird we'd run into you here at this science place."

"At this science place?" Baron did not dull his contempt. "Do you even know what this science place is called? Do you two know anything or did you just come in here to make my life more difficult than it already is?"

"*Nu*, Baron. Struck a nerve, have I?"

"You're an asshole, Felix."

"This place is called KISA." Prindy spelled it out: "K—I—S—A, KISA."

"Yeah." Felix snapped his fingers, "That's it. Besides, what does it matter who we are or where we've come from? What matters is *you* found something in them rocks. That's what your little report says there, doesn't it?"

“We’s also remember where’s we found ‘em, too.”

“Damnit, Ben.” Felix whacked Prindy on the shoulder. “Don’t tell him that.”

“Why not? We already told that professor we knows where we got ‘em.”

“We can tell the old man that, but not him, *not* Baron. We don’t want Baron Freedel around whatever we found out there.”

“Who said you found anything?”

“*Nu?*” Felix turned on Baron, “Did you find some indicator minerals in our rocks?”

“*Nu?*” Baron mocked him. “Why should I tell you?”

“Well why not? We go a long ways back.”

“Do we? You haven’t asked about me the whole time you’ve been here, so how far back do we really go?”

“*Nu?*”

“To be fair, you haven’t asked about us neither.”

“Why would I, Ben? I haven’t heard from yous in years. I imagine life hasn’t changed much since high school. You drink in the pubs during the day and screw around with dock women at night, if the birds are anything to go on. What I can’t seem to wrap my head around is how you two suddenly have an interest in,” here again he mimed quotation marks, “‘indicator minerals’.”

“OK, Baron,” Prindy asked, “what’s been happening with you? How you going?”

“Oh life’s been grand, Ben. I actually finished high school and if either of you had been around then, you’d know I got a scholarship before I graduated, which is how I got here to this science place listening to you two go on about some rocks you found in the desert rather than staying with my father who, in case you’re wondering, is lying in a coma back in Durack while the girl I’m engaged to keeps an eye on my mum so I can come up here to comb through your rocks. So, if it’s all the same to you, why don’t you tell me what the hell is going on here, *nu?*”

“*Nu.* You’ve been busy, hey?”

“Yes, Felix, quite. In fact, I’m so busy I really don’t have time for this polite conversation.”

“You’re not going to ask how I’ve been?”

Baron sneered, “How you been?”

“Oh you know,” Felix shrugged, “been drinking.”

“Your mother must be proud.” Baron turned to Prindy, “You?”

“Well, I’ll tell you one thing,” Prindy’s eyes were wide, “I sure as shit ain’t gettin’ married.”

“Yeah,” Felix asked, “how did *that* happen? Did you go to a matchmaker?”

“I did not.”

“*Nu*? Who is she, then? Mail order bride from some transit camp in the Seychelles, or did you ship her in from Mauritius?”

“What do you care? I thought you were here because of some rocks.”

Prindy asked, “Did you find anything in them rocks?”

Baron thought about his answer to this question. He thought about what he’d seen under the microscope. He thought about his Honour’s thesis and the work he did for the Professor. He thought about Felix and Prindy; Felix had picked on him back in school while Prindy, as Baron remembered it, switched sides just like Russia and Italy during the war, and now here they were sitting in front of him a lifetime later. Baron stared down at Prindy—*Benjamin* Prindy—and, for a moment, he wished his crazy old loon of a mother had named him Joseph.¹⁶¹ He thought about his father and that sterile white bed and about those mounting medical bills—intensive care at Steinberg Memorial did not come cheap—and he said:

“I want in.”

Felix and Prindy looked up and Baron said, “I want a third of whatever you think you’ve found, and I want you to show me where you found them.”

Prindy raised his eyebrow, “That means we found something, doesn’t it?”

“Possibly, but I’m not telling you anything until you two let me in.”

“What do you mean,” Felix frowned, “let you in?”

“Whatever you think you found out there in that desert,” Baron said, “I want part of it.”

“You mean,” Prindy asked, “split it three ways?”

“Yep.” Baron did not nod. “But by the time we dig up whatever you think is out there, you’ll have to split up what you still might not find at least six or seven times, if not eight or nine, before you start making money on any,” again he mimed quotation marks, “‘indicator minerals’. That doesn’t matter to me, though, so long as I’m in from the very beginning of the formal exploration process.”

“So you think there’s money in them rocks?”

“What do you think, Felix? I’m telling you what I want. Maybe if you two finished school, you’d be able to piece together what I’m saying.”

“*Nu*, Baron? You telling us you think we’re stupid?”

“No, Felix. I’m telling you I want a third of whatever *we* find out there, and I want it right now from the very start, or else I’ll just keep my little report to myself.”

“Bloody bollocks fuck that. Unh-nnh. We’re not giving you a third of our diamonds.”

Baron shrugged. “Suit yourself, Felix, but if you don’t go through us, who you going to turn to, Uni Adelaide? You’ll need a domestic travel permit, and you need money to buy one of those, and I know you’ve got plenty of that. But do you really think they’re going to let a Jew and blackfella run loose in South Australia with some rocks? For all you know you’ve stumbled onto some uranium. Even if you get a travel permit, you know what those *goyim* in the South are like. They’ll just run off with your rocks and dig up whatever yous two think you’ve found out there and keep it for themselves, leaving you two out in the cold the very moment yous two rock up.”¹⁶²

“*Nu*, Baron. That’s why we came to you.”

“In a way,” Prindy said, “it’s good we’s run into you.”

“Is it? I don’t think yous two knew I would be here when you rocked up.”

“Look, Baron,” Felix pushed himself to the edge of his seat; Baron flinched, and Felix smirked, “why don’t you tell us what you found in our rocks, let us know how much it’s worth, and since you think we’re arseholes, let us be on our way, *nu*?”

“I think you’re an arsehole, Felix.” Baron looked at Prindy. “You I have no issue with, aside from the fact that Felix bought you years ago.”

“Bought me? What you sayin’? That I’m his slave?”

“Relax, Ben.” Baron moved around the Professor’s desk. “This isn’t America.”¹⁶³

“You’re not still cross with us, are you? Not after all these years?”

“Yeah.” Felix said, “It’s different this time.”

Baron eased back in the swivel chair and thought about the elements he’d inspected under high resolution; these two idiots had no clue what they were on to. “Yes, you’re right, Ben. This time it *is* different.” He put his feet up on the Professor’s desk. “This time you need me, so you’d better play nice or I might just ready this little report,” he waved the folder, “for the incinerator.”

“*Nu*?” Felix was nonplussed. “We’s don’t need you. We need that old professor.”

“And he needs me, ergo *you* need me, too.”

“That’s bloody bullocks, Baron, and you know it.”

“Or I could just set this folder on fire. Which do you prefer?”

“What’s that professor going to say when he comes back in here and we’s tell him you threatened to start a fire with that?” Prindy nodded toward the folder. “You think he’ll take kindly to you sittin’ in his chair with your feet up on his desk?”

“You think he’ll take unkindly to it?”

“I would.”

“Well, fortunately for me, you don’t know him the way I do.”

“*Nu?*” Felix growled, “Where is he anyway?”

“He’ll be gone for a while.”

“How do you know?”

“Communiqués from Sir Barnaby always take a while.”

“*Nu*, Baron. Who’s Sir Barnaby? I’ve never heard of him.”

“Why would you? You’re not a private benefactor of atomic research.”

“Say what now?”

“Doesn’t matter, Felix. I’m here, so you’ll have to deal with me. I’m the one with the mineral report and, unlike you two, I actually know what I’m looking for. I also know whether or not you two have found it. You two, on the other hand, have just rocked up here with some rocks.”

“Yeah.” Prindy said, “Them’re our rocks.”

Baron furrowed his brow. “Are they?”

“They bloody hell sure as shit ain’t yours.”

“I wouldn’t be so sure, Felix. I’ve seen no proof of ownership.”

“You sayin’ you gonna keep them rocks for yourself?”

“What I’m saying is yous need me to tell you what’s in them, since you two clearly have no idea what to look for. Then you’re going to show me and the Professor and a whole heap of other people where you found them, and then we’re going to find some way to extract all of that, but for now, right here, *you* Felix, for perhaps the first time ever, need me, so I suggest you start treating me nicely and I suggest you let me in on whatever little scheme yous two are concocting.”

“I’ll treat you the bloody damn way it suits, and I sure as shit ain’t gonna let you in on our diamonds. No, unh-nnh. I can always take those rocks someplace else. You’re not the only science place in Wyndham.”

“That’s where you’re wrong, Felix. We *are* the only science place not just in Wyndham, but in all of East Kimberley.”

“*Nu?* There are other people we could take them to. People more smarter than you.”

“More smarter, Felix?” Baron cocked his head, “Really?”

Prindy chimed in: “Where’re our rocks?”

“Rocks?” Baron feigned confusion. “I don’t know anything about any rocks. Do you two know anything about rocks?”

“*Nu?*” Felix grunted, “We brought ‘em in here.”

“Where are they now?”

Prindy said, “You have them.”

Baron snapped his fingers, “Exactly.”

“*Nu?* What have you done with them?”

Baron fanned himself with the folder. “Wouldn’t you like to know?”

“Them are our rocks, Baron. You can’t just take them.”

“And I didn’t, Ben. From what I understand, you two brought them in here for me to check.”

“*Nu?*” Felix pointed at the folder, “You gonna tell us what’s in your little report there?”

“Of course I will.”

“*Nu?*”

“Just as soon as the two of you let me in for a third of whatever value might be here,” Baron waved the folder.

“What about that old man?” Prindy put a thumb over his shoulder. “What’s he got to say about all this?”

“Don’t worry about him. I’ll handle him. What you need to think about is what I might have here, and you need to let me in on a third of it before I decide whether or not to tell you anything.”

“*Nu?* This is horseshit. We’re not letting you in.”

“You say that now, Felix, but you just don’t know what might be in my little report. Just out of curiosity, what do you think you found out there in that big red desert?”

“*Nu*? We told you already.” Felix said, “Indicator minerals.”

“Can you even name an indicator mineral?”

“*Nu*?”

“Just one.” Baron said, “Name it.”

Felix blanched, Baron waited, and the room fell silent as the rain outside grew denser and stronger, picking up after a dark roll of thunder.

Prindy said, “Chromium.”

“Chromium, of course.” Baron lifted his feet off the desk to sit up in the swivel chair, “Took you long enough. Let’s take a look.” Baron opened the folder to peruse his list. He nodded a few times and said “Yep”, “Uh-huh”, “Mmm-hmm”, and an elongated “Yes” at irregular intervals. “My results,” he glanced up, “are conclusive!”

“*Nu*, Baron? Are you gonna tell us what we found?”

“No, Felix. I’m not going to tell you what *I* found, not until you two let me in on a third of it.”

“Fuck that.”

“Like I said, you’ll be letting in a whole heap of other people beyond little old me by the time we dig up whatever’s down there, and since I’m the one with the report, the decision is up to you. Either you can let me in now, or I can force my way in later with some other people, or I can just keep your rocks, burn this report, and run off on my own into that desert. If you two can find some rocks, then there’s no reason someone like me can’t do it. Did you even find those rocks, or did you have someone out there helping you?” Baron watched Prindy and Felix look at each other before they turned away from one another to cough and clear throats. “Well if you did, I’m sure you screwed them out of the deal, just like the selfish asshole we know you to be.”

“*Nu*, Baron,” Felix glowered. “What’d you find in those rocks?”

“What I found, Felix, is a third of whatever you think *you* found.” In that instant, Baron envisioned his father lying in that sterile white bed. “You keep this up and I’ll take you for half of it.”

“Those are our rocks, Baron, and whatever you found in them, that’s ours, too. Possession is nine-tenths of the law.”

“You’re right, Felix, and I currently possess the rocks, and since you’ve no proof they’re yours, I can just keep those rocks locked up in the lab.”

“*Nu*, Baron. You’d do that to us?”

“*Nu*, Felix. Why not? We go way back.”

The conversation hit the lull it had bypassed earlier as Baron reclined at leisure in the Professor’s swivel chair, goading Felix and Prindy to accept the cold dish he now served them. He almost smirked; maybe this day would turn out better than he’d expected!

Felix fumed; Baron Freedel was even more annoying, and more fatter, than he’d ever remembered and he wanted to lunge across that desk to knock that fat little redhead down onto the floor so he could beat the shit out of him with that God damn swivel chair!

Prindy, on the other hand, was impressed with Baron. He was a young man now, taller than when he’d last seen him, and far more confident than he’d ever been before. Prindy leaned over to Felix to whisper in his ear. Baron watched Prindy consult with Felix. He heard them stifle their voices and heard Felix grunt, indicating what Baron presumed was a negative response to something Prindy said. This went on for a couple of minutes, Prindy whispering and Felix grunting while Baron watched.

They finally pulled apart and Prindy looked across at Baron while Felix, with a scowl, turned to look away.

“So, Baron, it’s been a long time, hasn’t it? You’re engaged now.” Prindy nodded, “Congrats, mate.”

Baron also nodded. “Noted.”

“*Blech!*” Felix scoffed. “Who cares?”

“Shut up, you stupid fool! *I* care.” Prindy stared Felix down, turning back to Baron. “When’s yous gettin’ hitched?”

“We haven’t set a date yet.”

“Oh?” Prindy asked, “So it’s recent news then, is it?”

“It’s not old news.”

“*Nu*, Baron. Who is she? Some sort of albino Verbover reject with an inbred birth defect?”¹⁶⁴

“Actually no, Felix, she isn’t, and I take exception to that.”

“*Nu*?” Felix grunted: where the hell are my rocks? “Who is she, then? Some old Orthodox lady?”

“Do you really give a shit?”

“Of course I do.” Now tell me, you fat dumb fuck: where the fuck’re our rocks? “That’s why I’m asking.”

“Well, Felix, if you must know, she’s a convert.”

“A convert?”

“Mmm.” Baron nodded, “And black.”

“Black?” They said that at the same time and Prindy asked, “As in *blackfella* black?”

“Yep.”

“What’s her name?” Prindy could not think of any female relation that had converted. “Where’s she from?”

“Her name is Miri.”

“Miri?” Prindy made a face. “As in Miriwong?”

“As in Miriyam.”

Prindy shook his head. “Don’t know that name.”

“They called her something else back at the mission.”

“What’d they call her?”

“Mary.” Baron said, “They used to call her Mary.”

“Mmm,” Prindy did not move his lips. “So you want in, do you? You want in on our land lease-for-profit scheme?”

Baron winced, “How do you even know what a that is? Who told you about this?”

“A little birdie out in the desert, *nu*. What’s it to you?”

“Well, Felix, if you want to know what’s in here,” Baron raised the folder, “then you’ll keep talking while I sit here and listen.” He sat back in the Professor’s chair. “Go on, then. A land lease-for-profit scheme and a third of whatever *this* is,” Baron waved the folder. “I’m listening.”

Felix grumbled and fidgeted, but Prindy moved forward, coughing slightly to clear his throat...

THE APOCRYPHA: A Prologue to Part Six

South Australia

1995

Dingo carried a box in his arms and a duffle bag over his shoulder. The building ahead of him, the hall of residence, was a prefabricated structure covered in the front by concrete lattice shielding the main staircase from protrusive sunlight and other natural elements. His parents, on his mother's insistence, had sent their first-born to Adelaide where he enrolled at the Sports Training Academy, an up-and-coming institute of increasing prestige best known for launching athletes into the Olympics and beyond.

Dingo was shown to a narrow room on the second floor. The room was furnished with a wooden chair and a thin, foam mattress atop a slim bed frame made of bars and wire. A wooden dresser stood near the door opposite a window and a built-in desk wedged against the wall. Dingo took two steps in and dropped his duffel bag onto the heavily-stained carpet. A gecko—a small green lizard—leapt out from under the dresser. The poor little green fella, Dingo thought, no doubt he felt the duffel bag hit the floor; must've been like an earthquake to him. Dingo followed the lizard as it scurried toward a crack in the floorboard beneath the built-in desk. He set the box on the desk and pushed apart the stale curtains to look out the window.

Davoren Park was flat and green. Dingo saw a footy pitch and a car park. From his second-floor vantage point, he saw the bushy green heights of tall eucalyptus trees sprouting along the fence that paralleled the road—Petherton Road—marking the edge of campus.¹⁶⁵ He sighed, “So I’m going to live here now, am I?”

Dingo looked to his left. A calendar pinned to a pegboard hung from a hook nailed into the wall. Opened to the first month of the year, the photo featured multicultural Academy students dressed alike in the red trim of black and yellow uniforms, their faces alight with bright, photogenic smiles. He looked at the calendar; the fourth Friday was highlighted: Australia Day. Dingo scoffed; he and most of his relations called that day by a different name. Dingo assumed the vast majority of blackfellas did the same, including and especially the blackfellas dominating the student rolls at the Academy. He thought it odd the Academy calendar would note that day as

such and he flipped the calendar to February. He saw the nineteenth was marked in red and gold: Chinese New Year. Dingo made a face; just what the hell kind of school is this?

Dingo heard the slam of a car door and turned back to the window. Down in the car park, he saw a blackfella moving toward the hall. Dressed in shorts and a pair of athletic thongs, he was tall, broad-shouldered and muscular. The shirt he wore clung to his chest. His nipples, Dingo saw, poked the fabric of his shirt like the pins on the pegboard. Dingo watched him walking next to an older man—perhaps that was his father or uncle or some other older relative—then they were obscured by leafy branches blocking the view of the path leading to the entrance.

Well, well, well, Dingo smiled. Maybe this won't be so bad after all.

*



Dressed in shorts and a pair of athletic thongs he was tall, broad-shouldered and muscular.

*

Dingo woke up a few weeks later entangled in a pair of muscular, black biceps. He crawled out from these arms and from the slim, wiry bed to throw on a singlet and a pair of shorts. He slipped his bare feet into a pair athletic thongs two sizes too big for him and clunked down the hall to the bathroom. He returned a few minutes later and found his new boyfriend seated naked in front of his computer.

“What,” Dingo closed the door to his room, “are you doing?”

“I wanted to look at something.”

Dingo knew exactly what this new boyfriend was looking for. This always happened: once they figured out who he was and who he was related to—who his father was—their interest would either increase ten-fold and transform into something not altogether pleasant, or they’d back off, frightened away by the rumored myth and legend of Dingo’s immediate relations.

Dingo came up behind the nudity seated at the computer to look over the bare, black shoulder. To his surprise, the new boyfriend was not reading up on his father:

“Baron Freedel – born Baron Friedl on 7 July 1943 in transit to Wyndham, Western Australia (Kimberley (click here for digital disambiguation)). Baron Freedel is a world-renowned atomic physicist specializing in numerous fields, nuclear miniaturization among them. He has been a member of the Geosciences faculty at Kimberley Institute of Science and Agriculture (KISA (click here for digital disambiguation)) since 1966.

Dingo did not get to finish reading the brief entry. His new boyfriend clicked the link for KISA, causing the discs in the computer to spin. Dingo heard them whirling in the drive, then the entry for the Kimberley Institute of Science and Agriculture came up on the screen. Dingo turned away, opening his closet to look for a shirt.

“Hey mate,” the boyfriend asked him, “do’s you know Felix Morose?”

Dingo slipped into a pair of blue jeans. “Why?” He zipped up the crotch. “What’s it say on *Nineveh*?” He pulled a shirt over his head and punched his arms through the sleeve and came over to look at the computer:

“Felix Morose – born on 18 August 1943 in transit to Wyndham, Western Australia (Kimberley (click here for digital disambiguation)). Morose discovered indicator minerals with business partner Ben Prindy (Benjamin P Prindy (click here for digital disambiguation)) in the South Argyle region of Kimberley in 1964. With Prindy, Morose founded a land-for-lease company in January 1967. Morose

later diversified into other mining endeavors and secondary services for miners and the mining industry.

“In 1977, Felix Morose was implicated in the Royal Commission into allegations of cheating in the sport of International Super Test Cricket. ((click here for digital disambiguation)). The Royal Commission, which began in 1975, was sealed from public in 1978 by order of the Attorney General, a decision later ratified by the Prime Minister in 1980 and upheld by the Supreme Court in 1981. Prior to the sealing, Felix Morose was alleged to have directly bribed a number of cricket players, team captains and umpires in an elaborate match-fixing scheme starting in 1973.

“In 1982, Felix Morose donated four million dollars to several different departments of the Kimberley Institute of Science and Agriculture—“

“So,” the boyfriend asked, “do you know him?”

Dingo leaned over his boyfriend to click the mouse. The discs in the drive whirled and spun, then stopped on a new entry on the screen:

“Benjamin P Prindy – born Prendergrast Percival Percy in June of 1943 or in July of 1944 in Western Australia (specific date and location unknown). Benjamin Prindy is an investor, industrialist and philanthropist from Blossom, Western Australia (Kimberley (click here for digital disambiguation)). Prindy discovered indicator minerals with business partner Felix Morose (Felix Morose (click here for digital disambiguation)) in the South Argyle region of Kimberley in 1964. With Morose, Prindy founded a land-for-lease company in January 1967. As of 1999, Prindy owns several different companies in Kimberley and Western Australia: the Kimberley Technical Corporation, EK Imports and Distributors, Cambridge Irrigation Systems and Argyle Industrial Investments. Benjamin Prindy also maintains controlling shares in Durack City International Airport and the Wyndham Ports Authority.

“Benjamin Prindy is not legally married. His partner, Savitra Rajan Veluram (Savitra Rajan Veluram (click here for digital disambiguation)) is from Madurai in—”

“Ben Prindy?” The boyfriend also skimmed over the entry. “Is he one of your relations?” Dingo reached over his boyfriend’s shoulder to click another link, forcing the *Nineveh* discs to whirl and spin.

“So, mate, you’re, like,” the new boyfriend figured it out, “super rich, hey?”

The whirling ceased, and the discs stopped.

Dingo looked this new boyfriend in the eye. Mixed-race, half Maltese and muscular, Dingo saw he now had dollar signs dancing in his light-blue eyes. Dingo looked back at the computer:

“Savitra Rajan Veluram – born on 21 December 1950 in Madurai in Tamil Nadu in the British Raj (Travancore (click here for digital disambiguation)). Savitra Rajan Veluram has been arrested for drunk and disorderly conduct, possession of a controlled or banned narcotic and for resisting arrest. She was sentenced to a four month jail sentence for public intoxication and other council-level offenses of indecorum by a reprobate court in Broome, Western Australia, in 1969.”¹⁶⁶

Dingo was surprised at the incompleteness of the entry; it read as if the only thing his mother had ever done in life was smuggle drugs or resist arrest. The entry did not mention Dingo, nor any of his sisters, nor did it mention any type of relationship between his mother and father. The *Nineveh* entry for his mother was, in Dingo’s estimation, a digitized police record available to anyone with a disc drive and a subscription to *Nineveh*, the digital encyclopedia “Summing the world up in four discs!”¹⁶⁷

“People,” Dingo said, “should be able to control the information other people have access to.”

“Yeah, mate.” The boyfriend turned to Dingo, his eyes wide and sincere. “Your family’s loaded, though, and that lady,” he nodded at the computer, “she’s sounds alright.”

“She’s not alright.” Dingo clicked on the link for Travancore just to get the entry about his mother off the screen. “That’s private. There should be someone who hides this stuff from the public.”

“Maybe you should do something about it, hey?” The boyfriend said, “Maybe that’s your calling!”

“Oh please. Don’t let’s be ridiculous.” Dingo decided right then and there to dump this new boyfriend. “I reckon you’ll say just about anything to me at this point, now wouldn’t you, *nu?*”

Australian Capital Territory

2015

Using his mobile phone, Dingo took a look at the internet whilst waiting for Batsheva inside her new office. He, like her, was pleased; this new office was hers now, but it had belonged to someone else the day before. She had obtained it with his help. The press had at one point described him as her lap dog, appropriately named, they'd said—for he'd followed her out from the incandescent depths of suburban Kimberley to the heights of national power—and while that may indeed be true, Dingo knew it was his job to see she kept what she now had.

Dingo scrolled through the biography for Batsheva as it appeared online at the *Library of Alexandria*, a free web-based encyclopedia allowing users to edit any content with recent updates and current information.¹⁶⁸ Dingo's handiwork—one of his many duties—was to oversee an international team of cybersleuths who systematically scoured the public domain in search of information thought to be beyond the parameters of his control. Coders from Portuguese Macau had, on Dingo's order, hacked into the San Francisco-based server for the *Library of Alexandria* and, after several swipes and clicks, cleansed those databases of anything he and his people believed potentially compromising to the campaign.¹⁶⁹ Names deemed too chary or suspicious were stricken from every record. Dates and times about meetings with people not easily explained to compulsory voters were eliminated from existence; Dingo had seen to it. The *Library of Alexandria* entries were then massaged—beaten—according to his will for her benefit, then re-released for public consumption:

“Aboriginal Perspectives on the candidacy of Batsheva Freedel:

“Batsheva Freedel is a proud Indigenous woman. She was raised by her aunt, Aunty Rifkah Freedel, the acclaimed cellist for the Durack City Symphony Orchestra, and her uncle, Antwone Andersen, a native of Albany, Western Australia. Batsheva was raised according to her mother's Aboriginal culture and is widely respected and deferred to across all segments of Aboriginal society. She speaks more than six different local Indigenous languages but, out of a profound respect for local Elders past and present, Batsheva respects the right of Aboriginal non-disclosure regarding the public discourse of specific Aboriginal

cultural affairs. Batsheva Freedel is identified and recognized as an esteemed member of both the local Aboriginal community of Kimberley and the national Indigenous community at large.

“In 2012, Batsheva Freedel was named the third-most prominent Indigenous Australian after Ben Prindy, the owner and CEO of Argyle Industrial, and Marcia Langton, the Convention Coordinator overseeing the committees tasked with the investigation of proposed changes to the Australian constitution in regards to Aboriginal recognition.

“Jewish Perspectives of the candidacy of Batsheva Freedel:

“Batsheva Freedel is a proud Jewish woman and a respected member of the Jewish community in Kimberley. Both the Verbover and Lubavitch rabbimates have recognized and commended her ‘near-divine’ talents and have recognized her individual intellect and commitment to the longevity of traditional Jewish values in Australia. The Great Verbover Rebbe of South Durack has publicly praised Batsheva as a Jewish scholar of no-higher acclaim for her gender and generation.

“Bathseva has been commended by both the Lubavitch Rabbi and by Chabad of East Kimberley, the world’s largest Chabad organization, for her independent and pioneering efforts at encouraging young women to lead fulfilling Jewish lives in accordance with Orthodox Judaism. Batsheva’s example has lead to a larger movement of ba’alot tshuva in local communities. Batsheva is fluent in English and Hebrew and has expressed a fondness for Yiddish poetry in translation.”¹⁷⁰

Dingo understood the need for discretion for what had for years been called “it.” They could only hint at “it,” yet “it” had to be known without “it” looking too obvious. You couldn’t very well have David doing Nathan’s job, Batsheva had said, not if you had a choice. Dingo, as it happened, enabled the distinction:

“Education:

“Batsheva Freedel was educated until the age of 18 under the tutelage of a private, dual curriculum, culturally holistic smicha located in Wyndham, Kimberley. After successful completion of state-regulated secondary exams, Batsheva enrolled in the Women’s Studies program at Unaipon College, a predominately Aboriginal university with campuses in Blossom and Durack City. After her Honours degree at the age of 22, Batsheva enrolled in a joint MBA program focusing on Business Management and Public Policy at the Gittleman School of Commerce and Government located on the KISA satellite campus in Ivanhoe.”¹⁷¹

“Philanthropic Work:

“In 2010, Batsheva Freedel established the—”

“Dinesh!”

“Yep!” Dingo turned in his seat.

“What’s up with the clean sweep?” Batsheva stepped quickly into the room. She was flanked by underlings and other trusted girls from the *smicha* in Wyndham. “Any fuss?”

Dingo was confident. “None whatsoever.”

“What’s it say on *L of A*?”

“The usual: where you were born, where you grew up. Reads like a press release now.”

“Anything about my mother?”

“Nothing about women’s business. Mentions you were raised by your aunty, and there’s a link to her page, but it only talks about the orchestra. It leaves out the specifics.”

“What about the benefactor?”

“He’s out too. Almost as extinct as a Jew lizard.”

“I can’t have him showing up around here.”

“He won’t. My dad and your granddad no doubt tied him to a pole in South Carlton.”

“And that’s a good thing.” She turned to an underling, “Bring me those pumps.” To Dingo she said, “I reckon it was easier to put State Progress in a coalition with the Double AW than it was to get Felix sidelined. How’d you pull that off?”

“I called good old Honest Abe for some pointers.”

“I never thought he’d actually stay away from all this.”

“That’s what PSN is for, watching maiden speeches from home.”

Batsheva said, “Mmm,” without moving her lips.

The underling returned with a pair of dark blue pumps. Dingo watched Batsheva slip into the pumps; they were soon obscured by the skirt reaching down to her ankles. Tempered modesty, Batsheva called it: dark blue pumps with a long skirt. She stood up straight to button her coat and tug at her sleeves. Her grandmother had given her a string of pearls she claimed her great grandfather had given her after Liesel died in 1972. They were white and Dingo watched her adjust them around her neck. When finished, she stood before him. She did not smile. In character for the masses, she donned a serious look and tone.

She asked him, “Am I presentable?”

He said, “You are.”

She nodded once, “Ta.”

A civil servant opened a door, “Mr Prindy, sir?”

Dingo turned, “Yes?”

“It’s time, sir.”

Dingo glanced at his watch: just a few minutes past nine. “So it is.” He rose from his seat. “You ready?”

Shorter than him, Batsheva looked up, “You gave my speech to the bloke with the teleprompter?”

Dingo nodded, “I did.”

“Great.” She readjusted her pearls. “At least I’ll be subtitled, then.”

Dingo came around her desk to pause with her just ahead of the door guarded on the other side by security personnel. A short walk hallway awaited them; Dingo could hear through the door the clamor of the press corps down the hall. Dingo envisioned reporters and camera crews elbowing the public and other invited guests out of the way for a clear shot. He realized this was likely the last moment they’d have before she’d step out into that long hallway and, ultimately, onto that famous green carpet. It was here—in this moment—that he looked at Batsheva, watching her let out a slow, controlled breath.

“Nu?” She glared at him, “What are you looking at?”

Dingo *nouk*’ed and nodded towards the door. “The House awaits.”

“And so,” Batsheva exhaled another controlled breath, “to the House I go.”

Dingo rapped his knuckle on the door. It was opened from the outside and Batsheva saw, down the hall, the nation’s media armed with microphones and flashbulbs waiting just past the cabinet rooms. She took one last glance at Dingo, who smirked at her and said, “Have fun in there!”

Batsheva rolled her eyes, glancing through the door at the people calling for her—calling *on* her—and she said, “Well, it’s about bloody fuckin’ time.” She stood up straight, then moved forward while Dingo, ever loyal, followed soon after...

PART FOUR: Once Upon A Time, A Cricket Match

Western Australia

1975

Baron Freedel opened the rear door to unstrap and lift his youngest daughter from the car. She wrapped a pair of arms around his neck as he locked the vehicle. Baron re-grasped the hand of his eldest to lead them into the foyer of the Isadore and Zaida Feldstine Assisted Living Facility, located next to the Emergency Ward for Steinberg Memorial just across the Victoria Highway from the lagoon. Outside, Baron smelled the humid scent of a drained swamp coupled with the stench of petrol fumes and tar. Inside, the air was fresh and cool and regulated by machinery, the industrial glare of Durack wiped clean by shiny white tiles and inviting art framed in gray and eggshell. The two girls, in concert with their mother, had likened the interior of the facility to a hotel, Miri christening it a luxurious temple devoted to the longevity of life. Their eldest daughter, the more articulate and reflective of the two, had called it what it was: a home for old people.

The nurse—a black woman dressed in a white uniform—glanced up from her desk. “G’day, professor. Who’ve you brought in today?” The nurse winked at the small girl held in her father’s arms. “Is one of those for me?”

“The way these two go at it, you can have both of them.”

The nurse asked if they were here to see his father. She of course knew the answer; Professor Freedel had no other reason to bring his daughters to this place and the nurse enquired after Mrs Freedel.

“She’s coming later in the other car to take these two away so Opa and I can spend some time together.” Baron dropped his youngest into a plush white settee. “Do I need to sign in?”

“That’s alright.” The nurse pressed a hidden button. “You can go in.”

To the nurse he said, “Thank you, Mary.” To his daughters: “Come on, girls.”¹⁷²

His eldest daughter, dressed in a collared cardigan, dark skirt and dark stockings, moved through the double doors that marked not only the transition from foyer to facility, but also the border between shiny white tile and plush white carpeting.

His youngest daughter squirmed and pouted in the white settee, “But I just got here.”

Baron raised both eyebrows. This fatherly stare proved sufficient motivation for his daughter who climbed out of the seat to move across the room just like her sister. Baron followed the girls and found his father, Kurt, dressed in a robe and slippers and seated upright in a wheelchair, his lap covered by a blanket.

His eldest daughter asked, "How long's he been like this?"

"Shhh." Baron put a finger to his lips. "He's just sleeping." He told the girls to sit in the recliner on the other side of the room and pulled a chair up next to his father. Baron imagined his eldest daughter might have some vague recollection of her Opa's voice, tinged as it once was by a slight Prussian brogue the heat of the red desert had all but baked out of him. His youngest, however, had probably never seen her grandfather more than passively alert. She had never met the vibrant immigrant who was kind and eager, despite her grandmother's slow but determined emotional decline and mental collapse. His youngest never knew the good humored, stubborn old man who had smiled rather than admit defeat at the onslaught of the wet and the clear wash-out it wrought nearly every year on his tiny little homestead where, in obligation to an obscure Talmudic tractate, he left gleanings in the corners for the poor and impoverished.¹⁷³ His youngest daughter only knew a small, frail old man who had lost his voice during the course of her short lifetime. She could not remember a grandfather who could walk or, at the very least, stand on his own two feet. They only knew this cumbersome invalid, this decrepit figure who spoke in hushed whispers from a seated position.

Baron turned on the television to appease his daughters. The sound of the knob clicking awakened Kurt who opened his eyes and moved his head. Baron greeted his father, telling him he'd brought Rifkah and Devorah, nodding to two girls seated in the recliner.¹⁷⁴ Kurt turned his head, casting a glazed look on the two youngsters staring back at him. His son asked which channel was ABC, flipping the knob through Channels Seven, Eight, Nine and Network Ten.¹⁷⁵ Baron's youngest daughter complained while his eldest insisted they watch an animated programme.

Baron ignored both of them, "Your mother will be here soon to take you to your lessons." He found the channel he was looking for, landing on the Technicolor image of the brand new Opera House sparkling silver in the sun; behind it, a large concrete structure sat atop the neighboring cliffs. "Look, girls!" He pointed at the screen, "There's a big sugar cube on the telly!"

His eldest said, "That's not a sugar cube." Rifkah squinted at the large concrete structure looming over the Opera House, "It's too grey to be sugar."

His youngest asked, "What is it?"

"I'm not sure." Baron stared. "Probably a multi-level car park." He turned to his father, "What do you suppose it is, Opa?"¹⁷⁶

Kurt glanced at the television, but the sugar cube had vanished from the screen, replaced by the image of spectators filling the stands at the Sydney Cricket Ground. He raised his left hand to tug at the back of his son's coat. Baron turned to his father, giving him his complete attention. Kurt asked for the sports section from today's *Durack City Register*.

Baron looked about the room. He found the paper still wrapped in blue twine on top of the dresser. He unclipped the twine to let the paper unscroll itself, catching a glimpse of the front page:

Holt Bolts! Hasluck Deposed! Fairhall Installed!

*Hashemite Forces Reclaim Temple Mount*¹⁷⁷

"Here we are." Baron flipped to the back page; the headline: *New Scandal Blights Cricket Zimbabwe*. Baron spread the sports pages across a wheeled table he moved closer to his father. "Do you need your glasses?"

Kurt shook his head to indicate he wanted his magnifying glass instead of his bifocals.

Baron brought both to Kurt, who used them to view the Super Test division rankings listed in tables starting on page seventy-seven. "Which league is at the top now, Opa?"

Kurt tapped his answer, pointing the business end of the magnifying glass at the table for Division One: the Britannia League.

"The Premiers, of course." Baron glossed over the tables ranking other teams from other Super Test divisions, pausing on Division Two: the Dominion League. Few Australian teams were doing well this season, Toorak having been routed by South Africa's Cape Provinces at an invitational in Sutton Scarsdale in Derbyshire. "What's the top ten look like?"

The top ten was located at the top of page seventy-eight; Belmopan, as always, was ranked first; that came as no surprise to anyone.

"Snowdonia at number three?" That, however, was a surprise to Baron. "Did you see that?"

Kurt shifted his magnifying glass over to the top ten rankings where he saw Harrow ranked at number four, followed by Gloucestershire and York at five and six.

“Snowdonia didn’t even beat Glamorgan last week. How could they be number three? And Zanzibar at number seven? Raffles usually does better than Zanzibar. See there,” Baron pointed at the page, “number eight: Raffles of Singapore.” He looked at the television, “Who’s on today? Orkney versus Valetta?”

Kurt didn’t know, nor did he care, he just liked having the brand new colour television turned on. He looked over the newspaper, using the magnifying glass to expand the lower half of the Super Test top ten. It meant nothing to Kurt that West Sussex, a Division One team from England, was ranked at number nine just above one of the non-Deccan Teams of Division Three, Bhopal. He looked up at the television to see his son fiddling with the knob.

“Does anyone know how to turn on the sound?” Baron glanced over at his daughters. “Devorah! Get your feet off the furniture!”

Kurt turned his head to see two little black girls—his granddaughters—sitting together in the recliner. The older of the two was darker than the other, yet she had faint red hair just like Liesel. Her sister, the younger girl, sat slumped in the chair with a leg lobbed over the side. Her long skirt crushed up beneath her, she poked at her older sister, goading her to respond. The older sister, sitting upright, tried to ignore her younger sibling.

Kurt sighed; he didn’t know which granddaughter was which.

“...and today’s match between the Daylesford Golden Panthers and the Durack City Bearded Dragons follows on the heels of Duckworth’s stunning defeat three weeks ago when O’Kelly knocked the turban right off their batsman’s head in Colombo.”

Baron had switched on the volume for the television:

*“The Duckworth’s batsman in question wasn’t wearing a turban at that match, John, but that wasn’t the only advantage Duckworth’s had going into their invitational. You just cannot overlook the fact that their star batsman was literally knocked out at the start of the second over.”*¹⁷⁸

On the television, the scene shifted to a cricket pitch in Sri Lanka. At the Pavilion End, a slim Indian dressed in white stood with his bat ready to strike. At the Press Box End, a heavy-set bowler also dressed in white lumbered toward the pitch, picking up speed as he raised his arm to bowl the red Kookaburra down on to the pitch where it bounced straight up at the head of Sachin

Varadarajan, Duckworth's local batting prodigy famous for his good looks and a cult following back in Delhi.¹⁷⁹

The red ball hit the batsman between the eyes and Baron moaned, "That has got to hurt!" He watched the batsman stumble back on his feet, trampling the wickets and stumps behind him as the umpire declared him out. The poor fellow collapsed right there on the cricket pitch and Baron said, "That can't possibly be kosher."

"That still doesn't change the fact, John, that the fast-bowler for Daylesford is a very precise bowler."

"That's what you say, Bill, but I have it on good authority that captains from the Crown League plan to voice their concerns with the ICC about O'Kelly's aggressive bodyline tactics at their next meeting in London."

"Off the record? That's nothing more than conjecture coming from disgruntled Division Three team captains."

*"Mushtaq Mohammad, the captain for Lahore; he's on the record and he doesn't mind my telling our viewers here in Australia that he intends to bring up O'Kelly's controversial tactics with the cricket authorities in London at their scheduling seminar in December."*¹⁸⁰

"Be that as it may, John, that does not alter the fact that Daylesford has so far trounced not only Duckworth's of Delhi but also Gibraltar, Bermuda, Middlesex, Brisbane and Cambridge, all of whom are historically superior teams, and that's surprising, especially regarding Duckworth's of Delhi, one of the finest teams to come out of the British Raj. I haven't seen anything like this since the emergence of Nassau at the end of the 1969 season. I've heard other people—and John you're one of them—compare Daylesford this season to the ascendancy of Belmopan in the fifties."

"Let's not get ahead of ourselves, Bill. Daylesford is a good team, but they're not Belmopan good. Teams like Daylesford don't often have seasons like this."

"Yes, and in other test matches last week, we saw Division Two's Hooded Plovers of Port Davey against the Dorset Cavaliers of Division One at the Hobart Oval on Thursday—that match going to the Cavaliers of the Britannia League. This was followed by a surprising upset at the hands of Dover in their test match against Raffles of Singapore in Coventry, who came out ahead by ten stunning centuries! South Africa's West Provinces faced off against Division Three's Kowloon Bay on Friday in Durban, tipping the scales once again towards the Hong

Kong favorite, who move on to a South Australian invitational next month against Sandringham. Also in the Dominion League, Parramatta moves against Fremantle later today in Perth, followed by a Division One standoff between Leeds and Surrey tomorrow in Wales at the Cardiff Invitational.”

“And don’t forget the match between Premier League Gloucestershire hosting Imperial League world champion Belmopan on Monday.”

“Oh I won’t, John. I’m looking forward to that test match particularly because—”

“Devorah!” Baron raised his voice, “Feet on the floor! Now!”

The younger child wriggled her leg down on to the plush white carpet, nudging her elder sibling in the back.

“And stop hitting you sister!”

Kurt looked over at the two girls; neither child had acknowledged him.

“Well hello everybody.”

Kurt turned and saw Mrs Baron Freedel standing in the doorway. Her skin was black and her dress was high-cut, long and dark blue. She wore a matching hat with her hair pulled back from her face and tied up above the nape of her neck hidden as it was by a silk scarf imported from Lanvin in Paris. She wore pumps made of fine Italian leather and dark stockings that covered the skin of her legs. Her presence was magnetic. Kurt could smell her perfume, also imported from Lanvin, and he smiled.

Miriyam always looked tall to him but she in fact stood at normal height. *Shomer negiyah* dictated to her a uniform of cloaked modesty: no visible arms or legs, no visible elbows or knees, no visible ankles, and she must always cover up bare feet and toes.* Most women hid behind *frum* using a dreary palette of unimaginative and nondescript fabrics that lacked any pretense of sophistication.* Miri had shunned these benign and passionless fashions of cottoned flannel and polyester, exchanging them for imported silk, velour and taffeta. She had told her husband a decade earlier she would never don a wig, and her hat alone had taxed their family purse by four fiscal digits.

“Have they been behaving?” She stepped into the room and set her shopping bags upon a nearby credenza, “Or have they been getting into trouble?”

* “*Shomer negiyah*” – שומר נגיעה - the rules regarding modesty and physical touching/behaviour among Orthodox Jews.

* “*Frum*” is a Yiddish word that typically refers to all things stereotypically attributable to religiously observant Jews.

“Rifkah’s been fine.” Baron said, “It’s Devorah who’s been the pest.”

“Good thing I came here to take them off your hands, then.” She leaned in to kiss her husband on the lips and her father-in-law on the cheek.

“Look, girls!” Baron turned to his daughters, “Mummy’s here to take yous to your lessons.”

Kurt reached out to touch Baron’s arm. Baron gave his father his full attention, leaning in to hear him whisper.

“Miri’s not staying, Opa. She’s leaving us to take Rifkah to cello and Devorah to *Lashon HaKodesh*. Isn’t that right, girls?”

Devorah squirmed in the recliner, poking at her sister. “I hate *Lashon HaKodesh*.”

Rifkah did not respond. Instead, she stared at the television.

Miri also looked at the TV. “What’s this, then?”

“Super Test cricket.”

“Ah, yes.” Miri nodded. “Dragons playing?”

“Actually, they *are* playing.”

“Oh?” Miri feigned interest, “Against who? Edinburgh?”

“Daylesford.” Baron said, “From country Victoria.”

“I see.” Miri put a hand on the back of Baron’s chair. “Who’s going to win?”

“Daylesford.” Baron said, “They just said they’re on a winning streak.”

“Hmm.” Miri tilted her head as she, along with her husband and father-in-law, watched the cricket match on free-to-air commercial television live from Sydney.

New South Wales

1975

Twenty-four people stood ready in position: two teams of eleven and a pair of umpires. Tilted off-centre, the cricket pitch ran somewhat parallel to lines of latitude: the Paddington End running north towards the neighborhood just beyond Moore Park with the Randwick End aimed south toward Lang Road.

The fast bowler for Daylesford, Shamus O’Kelly, was a terrifying figure with an auburn beard reminiscent of a heritage hailing from County Armagh. Known for a deceiving run-up and a deceptive grasp, his bowling style was known to fool seasoned batsmen the world over. O’Kelly ran-walked toward the pitch, his grip on the red ball held firmly in his hand. Within two meters of the pitch, expert observers claimed his face became knotted and ugly and that his massive body shook and rumbled. His arm shot straight up to bowl a short ball with a quick delivery that bounced toward the batsmen’s head at breakneck speed.

The batsman for Durack, a Doolbung man called Freddie Chulung, stepped forward to swing whilst twisting his body away from the trajectory of that heavy red ball. He misjudged the shot and the red ball struck Freddie, pounding into his shoulder to land on the off side. The wicket, for their part, remained intact.

The umpire held out his right arm to call it: no ball.

Freddie re-erected himself, rubbing his shoulder. He glared at the rotund figure down the Paddington End, “Jesus H Christ, O’Kelly! Are you trying to hurt me?”

The fast-bowler offered no verbal response, but as he stepped away, the scowl on his face was sheepish.¹⁸¹

The captain for Daylesford, Francis Heenan, a sharp blond also descended from the Emerald Isle, called out across the pitch.¹⁸² Freddie breathed a sigh of relief as Heenan retired O’Kelly, swapping him for Bren Carruthers, the ambidextrous right-arm leg spin bowler famous for clockwise googlies. Freddie watched Carruthers come in from the outfield and thought of his partner, the other batsman on the crease, a Miriwong man called Teddy Hawthorne. Freddie sighed; Teddy was younger than him and less experienced. Freddie feared a slaughter, envisioning crooked stumps and befallen wickets; Carruthers would wipe Teddy from the pitch in a matter of seconds.

Unlike O'Kelly, Carruthers was slim and slender. Far away past the Randwick End, he started his run with small, little steps before he dashed into a sprint. Raising his arm, Carruthers bent his wrist, spinning the ball clockwise as it left his grip. The red cricket ball spun in the sun, slamming down less than a meter from Teddy. The red ball bounced and Teddy took a swipe, missing his shot as the incoming Kookaburra sailed between his bat and pads, knocking the bails clear off their stumps.

The umpire signalled him out by raising his right arm to point his index finger.

Teddy threw his bat to the ground, "Bloody cunt bastard!"

Bren Carruthers winked at the bowled batsmen. He said, "All the best, mate," and spun a red ball on the tip of his middle finger.

Teddy was replaced by an even younger and less experienced nineteen year old half-Aboriginal half-Melanesian batsman nicknamed "Nick-Nick." Nick-Nick carried a brand new bat to the Paddington End, nodding an acknowledgement to Freddie Chulung, the esteemed elder of the Durack City Cricket Club now up to bat.

Freddie crouched into position, holding his bat upright and ready for quarrel. He watched Bren Carruthers stomp his feet, dragging the soles of his shoes through green turf. Carruthers started his run with small steps. At four yards out, he charged at the pitch, his right arm raised high and held straight toward the sun. The red ball left his grip as his wrist bent counter-clockwise. Teddy kept his eyes on the spinning ball. He swung his bat, striking leathered cork to willow-wood, knocking the Kookaburra up and over the infield before it landed in the outfield where it rolled to the boundary to score an extra four points for the Bearded Dragons on top of eleven runs.

Nick-Nick was next up to bat. He carried a Warsop Stebbing imported special from England and stepped into place. He tapped the bat on the ground four times, glaring at Bren Carruthers running toward the pitch. Carruthers bowled and the red ball bounced, flying right past Nick-Nick and into the waiting arms of the wicket-keeper, who tossed it back.

The umpire held out his right arm: no ball.

Carruthers bowled the second ball higher and faster, slamming it down where it bounced up in a curve, causing the Melanesian to duck backwards as the Kookaburra cannoned past his head. The third ball bounced high, but Nick-Nick hit it low, cracking the ball out towards the boundary. The Daylesford fieldsmen chased after that ball. Various Golden Panthers dived after

it in an inept attempt to halt its progress. The Daylesford fielder situated at the deep midwicket position, Nathaniel Spencer-White, ran after the ball as it rolled along the green turf. Gaining on it, he leaned down to scoop the ball, but he dropped it, then lunged onto his belly in a pathetic and unsuccessful effort to re-collect that round, leather-wrapped cork. Freddie and Nick-Nick, in the meantime, scored several points running back and forth to tap their bats to the ground ahead of the wickets they were defending.

Bren Carruthers was not pleased and he said, “I want a new ball!”

Nick-Nick responded by throwing his trusty Warsop Stebbing to the ground, “Then I want a new bat!”

The Super Test match was halted for an extended length of time as various people—Dominion League officials, the umpires, cricket ground personnel—raced around behind the scenes. In the ensuing delay, the team captains, both the captain for the Durack City Bearded Dragons as well as Francis Heenan for Daylesford, approached one another for a brief on-the-pitch yarn. It was not clear what the captains discussed, but after less than a minute, they shook hands and, without smiling, parted ways to return to their respective teams. With a nod, Nick-Nick took charge of another bat—a Grey-Nicholls 100 Scoop—and crouched down to stare daggers at Carruthers running up from the Randwick End.

Carruthers slammed the red ball down on the pitch at a speed later measured over a hundred and sixty kilometers an hour. It bounced up to hit Nick-Nick right in the shin just below his knee.

The cheering crowds in the stands fell silent with an “Ooooh,” but Nick-Nick said “Fuck!” as a massive flash of pain coursed through his leg.

The umpires came together for a conference as Shamus O’Kelly, now relegated to a long off position deep in the outfield, rumbled over:

“*Oi!* Yous!” The fast bowler presented an expletive-laced argument regarding where the ball had hit the pitch, insisting the ball had struck within the line of the leg stump. O’Kelly claimed it would’ve hit the wicket had Nick-Nick’s shin not gotten in the way. Nick-Nick, for his part, claimed he might never walk again, then he mumbled something in *Language* and cursed at O’Kelly:

“You’ve been aiming at us all day, you dumb drunk fat-ass white Irish fuckwit cunt!”

“Oi!” Shamus O’Kelly rumbled toward the Melanesian. “Who’s you callin’ fat, ya’ slant-eyed little yellow half-caste picaninny bastard!”

“You, you fat dumb ugly Irish cunt!” Nick-Nick slapped his chest. “I’m calling *you* fat, you fuckwitted fat white Irish bastard!”

From the other end of the pitch, Freddie watched Nick-Nick and O’Kelly push and shove at each other and he sighed, Here we go again.

The conference of umpires broke apart as one of them approached the main bank of television cameras installed and operated by the Australian Broadcasting Commission. Stern with expressionless face, the umpire stood before the cameras with both hands held behind his back. He waited until he had the world’s attention, then raised his right hand to extend his index finger.

“Law thirty-six has been violated.” He said, “The batsman for Durack is out.”

Nick-Nick, now restrained by teammates, said “Fuck!” and tried to take another swipe at Shamus O’Kelly, who responded by taunting the nineteen year old:

“Leg before wicket, mate, and that ain’t cricket!”

“Fuck you, you fat dumb drunk Irish cunt!” Nick-Nick spat at the fast-bowler, placing another hex on the hefty redhead.

And then the clock struck four and it was time for tea.

*

The captain for Durack rearranged the batting order at the start of the new inning, retiring Nick-Nick to bring another batsman, Ambrosio de Wong, to the crease. Macau-born but raised in Wyndham, Ambrosio was neither Jewish nor Aboriginal. He wore an Akubra hat and had smooth skin, smooth black hair and a smooth sweeping technique with a slender bat. Neither large nor tall, Ambrosio scored twenty-nine runs inside of twenty minutes, slicing through a pair of overs with a passive stoicism that did not inspire any fear or concern on the part of the next bowler for Daylesford.

Back up to bowl, Shamus O’Kelly headed out to begin his laconic run-walk fast bowl, all the while chuckling to himself; he’d eaten chicken parmigianas bigger than this little Chinaman hiding behind a cricket bat down the Paddington End. He scraped his feet and drew himself up,

securing the red Kookaburra betwixt his thumb and forefingers. He took a series of small steps, then pounded toward the wicket like an angry ginger-bearded giant.¹⁸³ Ambrosio watched O’Kelly’s face twist with rage. He tightened his grip on the bat as O’Kelly shot his arm straight into the air, slamming the ball down midway up the pitch.

The ball bounced and Ambrosio ducked, but the red Kookaburra hit him in the ribs and he fell over. Teddy, Freddie and Nick-Nick, along with other Durack players, rushed over to Ambrosio, who refused their assistance as well as the help of medical professionals on hand for just such a mishap. Instead, he climbed back up for another round.

“You hit me with that ball again,” Ambrosio pointed the bat at the redhead, “and you’ll regret it.”

Shamus O’Kelly watched the little Chinaman clutch at his side, noting the sparkle, brief yet shiny, of a pink diamond pierced to his left ear.¹⁸⁴

“Can’t understand ya’ mate.” O’Kelly hollered back, “Don’t speak Chinese.”

Ambrosio tapped the toe of his white shoe. “You gonna bowl or talk shit, *nu*?”

O’Kelly slammed another fast ball down onto the pitch. Ambrosio kept his eye on that red ball, watching it bounce up in a straight line. He took a hard, crisp, sharp swing and felt the red ball strike the bat. The ball flew straight down the pitch, nailing the Daylesford fast bowler right in the face, shattering his grimaced brow to knock him out cold. Shamus fell like Goliath, and some of the spectators in the stands fell silent while many others erupted into cheers of elation.

Ambrosio looked at the bat in his hands and felt the vibrations of the ball strike reverberating along the wood. At that moment, Freddie Chulung ran up to tap his bat on the white line ahead of the wickets.

“What are you waiting for, *nu*?” He said, “*Run!*”

Ambrosio watched Freddie sprint back toward the other end of the pitch, taking in the sight of an unconscious, sweater-clad fast bowler lying flat on his back just beyond the stumps. Ambrosio tipped his floppy hat and said, “*Tome isso, bunda gorda*,” before he too ran to the other end of the pitch, trading places with Freddie to score a number of runs as a flotilla of physios scrambled over to tend to the now dormant fast bowler.*

* “*Tome isso, bunda gorda*” is Portuguese for “Take that, fat ass.”

*

Kimberley-based mining magnate Felix Morose shouted a round of drinks for everyone at the Platinum Bar in the Members Stand, lighting a celebratory Cohiba Lancero with a flip top Zippo lighter he'd kept in his left pocket for, he'd claimed, over ten years.¹⁸⁵

"And that," he told those gathered around, "is how you go from one point two million to three point six!"

Felix toked in self-satisfaction, knowing his big win would be in all the national newspapers tomorrow along with the back page news of a Daylesford upset at the hands of Durack City. The Golden Panthers had been knocked out of Super Test contention and Felix bellowed, making disparaging remarks linking the people of Daylesford to tranquilized equine creatures they were rumored to keep as pets and lovers, "Just like those Port Davey Jews down in Tasmania!"

A waitress brought him a drink, a clear cocktail reeking of gin and vermouth and garnished with a green olive impaled on a yellow. It looked miniscule and impotent and Felix said, "I didn't order this," but he drank it anyway. "That was pithy. Who sent that over?"

The waitress told him the drink was sent by Sir Humphrey.

"And which one of these ugly bastards is Sir Humphrey?"

"I'm Sir Humphrey, Mr Morose."

Felix took a look at the person who stepped forward and thought: This man is not a Jew.

"Sir Humphrey Trevethan," proffered his hand. "I'm pleased to make your acquaintance."

Felix Morose looked this man up and down; he wore a pin-striped suit and a polka-dotted bowtie. He had a whiskery mustache, a big nose and big protrusive ears and Felix thought: Old Australian Money.

"Why on earth," Felix asked him, "would you send me a martini?" To the waitress, he said, "Bring me a Scotch—Dimple if you've got it—and a pint of DB."

"To congratulate you," Sir Humphrey did not smile. "Your win is quite magnanimous."

"My most recent ex-wife," Felix took a drag from his cigar, "is fond of martinis."

Sir Humphrey furrowed his brow, "Your most recent?"

"I have more than one."

“Oh.”

Felix exhaled. “How many do you have?”

“Well,” Sir Humphrey was taken aback and he cleared his throat. “Your win is quite unprecedented. Indeed it is spectacular. I’m told you’ve nearly bankrupted both the betting houses and the bookies, and only a man with the mark of a John Wren can pull that off.”¹⁸⁶ Sir Humphrey spoke with a tone, “I sent that drink over to congratulate you on your spectacular win.”

“Then let me congratulate you, sir, on your spectacular loss.”

Sir Humphrey flinched.

“I know exactly who you are and I have it on good authority that you put all your money on Daylesford.” Felix blew out a cloud of smoke. “Did I bankrupt you as well?”

“I should certainly say you did not, *Mister Morose*.”

Felix shrugged, “I’m not one for titles either, *Mister Trevethan*.”

Sir Humphrey leered at Felix who, nonchalant, continued to toke on that Cohiba Lancero.

After a prolonged silence, Sir Humphrey said, “There’s something unusual about today’s match. Wouldn’t you agree, Mr Morose?”

“One team lost, the other team won.” Felix took a drag, “I don’t see what’s so unusual about that.”

“Yes, but one team hasn’t won a test match in years. Don’t you think it’s unusual that they’ve won one now, and against a much better team?”

The waitress returned and Felix downed the Scotch in a single gulp before tackling that pint of Durack Bitter. “Are you from Daylesford or something?”

“Shepparton.”

“*Nu?*” Felix sipped at the foam, “What do you care about Daylesford? Shepparton was knocked out months ago.”

“Yes, and the fact that Durack is still in is in and of itself a trifle unusual, don’t you think?”

“You want to know what I think?” Felix put the cigar between his lips. “I think you’ve lost more money than you think you should’ve and you’re upset about it.”

“And you’ve won by too much, if I may be so bold, Mr Morose, as did Durack, and all of the sudden. Something unusual happened down on that pitch today, and I’m inclined to be suspicious about it.”

“You can be anything you want to be, Sir Humphrey, I’m not fussed. That’s why I bought you and everyone else in this bar a drink, to help you get over your magnanimous losses.”

“It’s quite an upset, Mr Morose, and I for one am not thirsty.”

“Fine,” Felix glared, and the two men eyeballed each other; Felix toked on his cigar and said, “Suit yourself.”

“You’re Jewish, Mr Morose, and you’re from Durack City, is that right?”

“I am.”

“So I’d be certain to know you have the proper travel permits to be this far out of your state, do you not, Mr Morose?”¹⁸⁷

“*Nu?*” Felix narrowed his eyes, “What’s it to you?”

Sir Humphrey gave a cursory smile. “Good day to you, Mr Morose,” he bowed.

Felix said, “Ta,” as he watched the pin-stripes turn to leave. Later he asked someone, “Who was that stupid man?”

Sir Humphrey Trevethan stormed from the Platinum Bar and from the cricket ground. Once in private in his car, he fumed. “Take me back to the hotel, Teakle. I need to ring up Yarralumla before supper and I expect it to be quite a long call.”

The chauffeur put the Statesmen Caprice into gear. “Good match, sir?”

“Bloody hell not!” Sir Humphrey was peeved. “I lost a hundred thousand pounds on that bloody match.”

“You mean to say Daylesford lost, sir?”

“What I mean to say, Teakle, is someone cheated.”

“That’s no good, sir.” The Caprice turned left on Oxford Street. “That’s almost as bad as betting in British Pounds Sterling, now isn’t it?”

Sir Humphrey glowered at the back of his chauffeur’s head. “Just drive the bloody car, will you, Teakle?”¹⁸⁸

“Can do, sir.” The chauffeur nodded, “Can do.”

Australian Capital Territory

1976

The wife of the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia rose to the dais to thank the invited guests for attending this particular garden party, given in honour of a very esteemed and distinguished American visitor.

Listening to this, Celia glanced down at her gloved hand. The stitching on the white cloth was unraveling at the seams and she opened her purse to retrieve an extra pair, removing the defective white glove by pulling at each of her fingers.

There was a tap on her shoulder and she froze.

“Miss Corres-Patkin?”

“Yes?”

“There’s a call for you. If you’ll follow me, please.”

Celia slipped her bare hand into a new glove, “Alright.”

She was taken to a phone attached to a long wire and lead to a pantry near the kitchen to take the call in private, “Yes?”

“Celia? Celia Corres-Patkin, from *Women’s Weekly*?”

“Yes,” she removed a stud from her earlobe. “Who’s this, please?”

“This is your boss, Kerry Packer.”

Celia felt her stomach drop. She’d never met Kerry Packer, but he was indeed her boss—his company owned the magazine—and she thought, He knows I’ve removed the glove.

“Why hello, sir,” she said, “this is quite an honour.”

“Yes, thrilling. Look, Celia, I needed you a half an hour ago.”

Celia made a face, “Sir?”

“You’re blond, aren’t you?”

“Sir.”

“Look, Celia, I’ve had a word with Rupert Murdoch. I’m sure you know who he is, and what I need from you now is very specific. Can I get your word that you’ll do this for me?”

“Do *what*, sir? What is it you want?”

“First of all, drop this ‘sir’ business. My friends call me Kerry. Second of all, Celia, I like you already. Ita told me she thought this might happen.”

“Ita?” She asked, “Ita Buttrose?”

“Look, Celia, I needed you over at Parliament House ten minutes ago. I need you to drop whatever it is you’re doing and to get over there right away.”

“I’m covering a story for your magazine at the moment, sir.”

“What story?”

“I’m at the Lodge, sir, covering a garden party for Joanne Woodward Vidal.”

“Bloody hell, who gives a shit about her?”

“Well, sir, your editor-in-chief at the magazine for one. She put me on the assignment.”

“I’ll fix up Ita, Celia. What I need from you is to ditch the Lodge and get over to Parliament House. There’s a bigger story going on over there, a much more important story, and I want you on it.”

“Don’t think your readers will want to know what the First Lady of the United States has to say about the Civil Rights Act her husband reluctantly signed into law at the end of last year?”¹⁸⁹

“I don’t think anyone gives two bloody shits what that pansy is signing into or out of law, but they care about cricket, and that’s why I need you to drop everything and get over to Parliament House right away.”

“Cricket, sir?”

“Yes, Celia. The Attorney General is planning to announce the launch of a Royal Commission looking into cheating in cricket and I need you to cover it.”

“You want me to cover cricket, sir? I don’t quite see how cheating in cricket is relevant to the readers of *Women’s Weekly*.”

“Forget the magazine, Celia, you’re not covering this story for Ita.”

“It’s for one of your other newspapers, is it?”

“I’ve had a word with Rupert Murdoch—I meant to say this earlier—and if the ABC won’t let me broadcast the cricket on Channel Nine, then I’ll air the Royal Commission investigating cricket as a matter of public service, and I need a blond woman—an attractive blond woman to cover it—and she needs to be in Canberra an hour ago and you, Celia, you fit that bill.”

“You need me to cover a story for Channel Nine, sir? A story about cricket?”

“Yes, Celia. That is exactly what I need from you.”

“What about the magazine?”

“Forget the magazine. You can say goodbye to print journalism, Celia.” Kerry Packer, the multimillionaire boss she’d never ever met, told her, “I’m putting you on television.”

Celia went quiet on her end of the phone, “Television, sir?”

“There’ll be a film crew waiting for you out the front of Parliament when you get there. Good bloke; his name’s Geoffrey Mansfield. Think you can handle it?”

“Well,” Celia felt confidence brim within her, “I have one question.” She noticed her gloved hands, “Two, actually.”

“I’m all ears.”

“It’s 1976, do I really need to wear these white gloves when I’m on assignment?”

“Yes. Next question.”

“How am I supposed to get to Parliament House? Are you sending a car for me?”

“Don’t be ridiculous. It’s not that far. You can walk there.”

“I’m not walking from the Lodge to Parliament in a pair of heels wearing white gloves and hat, Mr Packer, not if you’re planning to put me on television after I get there.”

“I want this job done right, Celia.”

“Then send a car and I’ll be on my way.”

“I believe they have buses in Canberra.”

“They have cabs too, Mr Packer. Otherwise I’ll stay here and cover the garden party.”

Celia heard her distant boss, a man she’d never met or spoken to until today, grumble down the line from Sydney and she said, “I *am* on contract, sir.”

“Fine.” He caved. “I’ll send a car.”

“Good. Thank you.”

“You better be worth it, Celia.”

Celia flinched, then balked. She pulled the phone away from her head, looked at it, then hung up without saying goodbye.

She returned the small stud to her ear and stepped out from the pantry, asking a member of the household staff to guide her to the front of the Lodge. As promised, the boss she’d never met sent a yellow, silver top taxi that traveled southwest on Adelaide Avenue, turning right at Empire Circuit to pass the embassies of Siam and Japan, then left at the Royal Greek embassy on

Turrana Street and past the Polish embassy on the right followed by the embassy of Israel on the left.¹⁹⁰

The taxi slowed as they inched toward a large mass of protestors blocking an intersection.

Celia asked the driver, “What’s all this about?” She knew the American Embassy, a classic Georgian adaptation built with brick, sat on a grassy knoll that looked down upon the protestors blocking Arkana Street. “What are they protesting, Americans in Cuba?”¹⁹¹

The taxi driver said, “They’ve been protesting outside that High Commission for thirty years now.”

“Ah!” Celia saw the protestors were aimed not at the American Embassy on the hill but at the building across the street. “Which High Commission? South Africa?”

“India, ma’am. That’s the High Commission for the British Raj.”¹⁹²

“Oh, I see.” Celia saw protestors with tape covering their mouths. She saw many more waving placards. “What are they protesting?”

“If memory serves,” the driver said, “they’re protesting the death of some Indian.”

“Who?” Celia saw some of the protestors holding signs with giant letters painted in red. “Gandhi? I’ve never heard of him.”

“Me neither. All I know is he died in jail a long time ago and these people are still upset about it. I just wish they wouldn’t muck up the traffic.” He honked his horn and leaned out his window, “*Oi!* Why don’t you bloody lot go home and get a job? Some of us are trying to earn a living here!”¹⁹³

Australian Capital Territory

1977

Celia Corres-Patkin stepped in front of the light ahead of the camera. She placed a small earpiece in her ear and a small notebook under her arm. Looking down, she clipped a small microphone to the lapel of her jacket and stood up straight.

“Geoffrey?” She parted her lips, “Do I have anything in my teeth?”

The cameraman leaned back from the eyepiece to look, “All clear.”

Celia applied a shade of red to her lips, smacking them together as she returned the cosmetic to her purse. “How about now?” She displayed her teeth again.

“All good.”

“When do they beam in?”

“Momentarily.” Geoffrey was hooked to an earpiece. “And they’re turning to you in five... four...” he motioned the last three numbers and pointed at her:

“Good evening, James. Today in Canberra, the Royal Commission heard testimony from a man named Mordecai Quonset, a witness we are told is expected to remain on the stand for at least another couple of days. Mordecai Quonset is one of several hundred witnesses subpoenaed to appear before the Royal Commission, which began over a year ago, but his testimony today has been quite revealing. When asked if he was aware of any money being given to cricket players in an effort to bribe them, his answer was a curt ‘yes.’

“As a result, the Royal Commission is now focusing specifically on a Super Test match between Toorak and Newcastle where they allege there is overwhelming evidence that both team captains, as well as several members of both the Toorak and Newcastle squads, were bribed to throw the outcome of the match to the Toorak team. This inevitably leads, as it did, to the next question that arose, which was who bribed these teams and, of course, why. Mr Quonset’s testimony today alleges that none other than Felix Morose, the Durack City diamond magnate, has been providing substantial funds to various cricketers to effectively cheat at cricket, and that is what turned an otherwise uneventful day of testimony here in Canberra into quite possibly *the* largest and most shocking to date in the course of this already lengthy and taxing Royal Commission.”

Celia looked at the camera, listening through the earpiece to a question posed to her from Sydney; she said, “It appears, James, that many legal observers are now saying there is no longer any doubt regarding the validity of the allegations of cheating in the sport of International Super Test Cricket. Indeed, there *has* been cheating in the sport of cricket and the focus of the Royal Commission is expectedly shifting toward a sort of *whodunit*. Investigators aren’t the only ones searching for answers. Cricket enthusiasts and other members of the public are certainly interested and with the sudden and indeed shocking mention of one of Australia’s richest men in connection to large scale bribery throughout cricket, many others are also paying close attention to the proceedings, fuelling further speculation regarding the *whys* and *hows* of this Royal Commission.

“James?”

Through the earpiece, Celia heard the anchorman: “Did the Royal Commission expect to hear the name ‘Felix Morose’ in connection to the cheating scandal?”

“No, it did not appear so. In fact, the whole room went quiet very quickly. You could hear a pin drop, as they say. A number of people were quite surprised, and it took a couple of minutes before the proceedings continued. Later, the Commissioner called for a recess until tomorrow morning, and it seemed that everyone breathed a sigh of relief when the judge rapped his gavel on that.”

New South Wales

1977

Kerry Packer switched on multiple televisions and put his feet up on his desk to ease into his chair. He opened a can of orange-flavoured Fanta and bit into a chocolate éclair as he tuned into the Channel Nine Nightly News—*his* Channel Nine Nightly News—coming in from the Law Courts in Canberra where a television news reporter—*his* television news reporter—was not wearing a pair of white gloves. Kerry Packer took another bite out of the éclair and, with chocolate drooling down his chin, picked up the phone linking his desk to the control room at Channel Nine's Willoughby headquarters.

His call was answered in less than two rings and he wasted no time barking down the line: "Why the bloody hell is she not wearing a pair of white fuckin' gloves?" Kerry Packer demanded someone tell that woman to ring him once she was off the air. He said, "I want to have a fuckin' word with her about those white fuckin' gloves!"

Later, and as requested, his employee placed an interstate call to her boss, who asked her, "Is there any good fuckin' reason why you're not wearing a pair of white fuckin' gloves on television?"

"Is there any good reason why I should be?"

"Because I fuckin' say so is as good a fuckin' reason as any."

"You use that word with me one more time, Mr Packer, and I'll hang up this phone."

"You'll do no such thing, Celia. What you'll do is you'll wear those white gloves every time you report the news for me, or I will fire you and keep you unemployed for the rest of this decade and the next if you defy me on this. Do you understand?"

On her end of the line, Celia Corres-Patkin folded an arm across her chest. "Well go on, then, Mr Packer. Go ahead and fire me, but let me make one thing clear: I am not going to wear those white gloves. You can threaten me with dismissal but frankly sir, it just looks ridiculous the way you've got the weather girl wearing those little white gloves on the air. They make her look like Minnie Mouse, and I refuse to look like an idiot on national television."

"You will wear those white gloves or I will have you blacklisted from television journalism!"

Celia rolled her eyes in Canberra, “We’ve had this conversation already, you and I, and I’ve told you many times I’m not wearing those white gloves on the air, or anywhere else for that matter.”

“I swear to God, Celia, I will fire you.”

“Then go ahead and do it, Mr Packer. I’m getting rather annoyed by these irate phone calls from you. I’m fielding offers from Channel Eight and Network Ten, you know.”

“How much are they offering you?”

“What they’re offering me, sir, is none of this nonsense, and they’ve assured me they’re not going to demand I wear a pair of white gloves on the air. This is the seventies, Mr Packer, not the fifties, and this is television, not *Women’s Weekly*.”

“You can’t leave me, Celia. Eight and Ten will never take care of you the way I do.”

“I’m not wearing those white gloves, Mr Packer, and that’s final.”

“I ought to let you go over this, Celia, but I’d be a bloody fuckin’ idiot if I did.”

“And don’t you forget it, Mr Packer.”

“Why can’t you just wear the white fuckin’ gloves?”

“For the same reason you can’t talk without the use of an expletive.” Celia glanced at her wristwatch, “Are we through, Mr Packer?”

“No, not quite. Listen, Celia, I wanted to tell you something: I’m launching another satellite into orbit and soon I’ll be broadcasting the Royal Commission live via satellite from coast to coast. Once I get that satellite up into outer space, I’m going to launch a whole new channel. It’ll be a revolution in sports news coverage, a twenty-four hour sports and news television network. I’m going to call it the Packer Sports News network—in that order, sports ahead of the news—and I’m going to put you on it in prime time. You’ll provide the daily wrap-up from Canberra, which means you’ll be one of the top anchors, and I’m going to pay you more. The public will fucking *love* you, Celia, so we’ll discuss those gloves later on when we sign the new contracts.”

“Now you listen to me, Mr Packer, you can put me on whichever program you like in whatever capacity you like, and you’ll pay me for it, too, but I’ve told you many times before I’m not going to wear those white *fuckin’* gloves on the air and that’s that! I never want to speak about those gloves again and I don’t ever want to hear you use the word *fuck* when speaking to me. Do you understand, Mr Packer?”

Kerry Packer went quiet on his end of the line. “Tell me, Celia,” he spoke in a soft voice, “when’re you going to start calling me Kerry?”

“When the next Mister Corres-Patkin allows it.”

“You defy me like this and *I’m* liable to put a ring on your finger.”

Celia scoffed. “Good day, Mr Packer.” She hung up.

Kerry Packer sat back in his chair in Sydney, staring at the idle phone in his hand. “She is a feisty one, that Celia.”¹⁹⁴ He smirked and sipped Fanta.

Australian Capital Territory

1977

The chair of the Royal Commission into allegations of cheating in the sport of International Super Test Cricket, Mr Gresley Drummond Clarkson QC, asked the witness, “Miss Shlepkoff, would you state your full name for the record, please?”¹⁹⁵

The witness was a petite woman who wore her hair down. She smiled, “My name is Lydia Shlepkoff.”

“And would you tell us please how you came to be acquainted with Mr Felix Morose?”

“He was my boss.”

“You worked for Mr Morose? What did you do for him?”

“I was one of his secretaries.”

“*One* of his secretaries?” This question came from Trevor Worland QC, one of the commissioners appointed to the panel as part of the Letters Patent. “How many secretaries did Mr Morose have?”

“I believe,” the witness pushed her lips to the side of her mouth, “he had four secretaries.”

“And as his secretary, would you say your duty was to take care of personal and administrative matters for Mr Morose?”

“Administrative matters mostly. He had a private secretary who dealt with his personal affairs.” From the stand, the witness saw that her answer caused confusion among the commissioners, who placed hands over microphones to whisper among themselves. She had to wait for them to turn back to her.

“Who was Mr Morose’s private secretary?”

“That would have been Mrs Gable.”

“Missus?” This also surprised the commissioners, who again leaned away from the microphones to consult each other.

“Yes.” Lydia said, “Mrs Gable was a married woman.” She watched the commissioners, all four of them, engage in an animated discussion that went on for a few minutes until the bespectacled Justice from Industrial Relations, John Angus Limmo,¹⁹⁶ asked her:

“Did you ever, Miss Shlepkoff, perform any duties as Mr Morose’s administrative secretary that would have ordinarily been the obligation of his personal secretary?”

“Oh, most definitely.”

“Was there any such occasion when you covered, for lack of a better term, the performance of duties usually under Miss—I mean *Missus*—Gable’s portfolio?”

“There were several occasions.”

“Thank you, Miss Shlepkoff.”

Mr Vincent Bennett QC, the fourth and final member appointed to the panel, took over, “Was there ever an occasion when you, functioning as Mr Morose’s personal secretary rather than administrative secretary, and in lieu of Miss—erm—*Missus* Gable, where you were privy to any scheme on the part of Mr Morose to bribe International Super Test Cricket?”

“No.”

The commissioner glanced up from his notes. “No?”

“Yes.”

“Yes?” The commissioner pushed eyebrows together. “Let me be more clear, Miss Shlepkoff, did you ever see your boss, Mr Felix Morose, influence or hear of him wanting to influence the outcome of cricket matches through financial means? In other words, Miss Shlepkoff, were you ever aware of a plot on the part of your boss to give money to cricketers?”

The witness thought about this question and nodded, “Yes.”

“Yes?” The commissioner flinched. “Are you able to tell us *when*?” He and the other commissioners flipped through their notes. “Can you give us a specific date?”

“I can tell you which match, but not which date.”

“In which match did your boss, Mr Felix Morose, use part of his considerable finances to influence the outcome of a Super Test cricket match?”

“The match between Christchurch and Bournemouth in Auckland.”

Vincent Bennett flipped a page in his notes. “Which year?”

“Last year, I believe.” The witness pushed her lips off to the side of her mouth again. “I could be wrong on that, though.”

The commissioners were again caught up in a muffled discussion they attempted to keep from the microphones. They consulted their notes and talked to each other in quiet but excited tones. Every now and then a word or part of a phrase was picked up on a microphone and heard

by those seated in the courtroom: “don’t bloody believe it,” “absolutely insane, this is.” The witness sat in the stand, uncrossing and re-crossing her ankles waiting to continue.

“Mordecai Quonset claimed in his testimony earlier that he never received any cash payments or any cashier’s checks from Felix Morose. He claimed he got those items from you and that you most likely received those funds from your boss, Felix Morose. Is that correct, Miss Shlepkoff?”

“No.”

“No?”

The witness shook her head, “No.”

“Miss Shlepkoff, would you care to explain your answer? I think I speak for all of us when I say we don’t quite understand.”

“Cerainly.” She smiled, “It is not correct.”

“What’s not correct?”

“*It’s* not correct.”

The collective courtroom sighed until the chair of the Royal Commission asked, “Is it incorrect, Miss Shlepkoff, or is it factually untrue?”

This puzzled her. “Is there a difference?”

“What’s not correct about it?”

“Oh,” she nodded, “I never got the money from Mr Morose.”

“You didn’t?”

“No.” She nodded, “I only picked it up off his desk.”

The people in the courtroom—general members of the public and a press gallery—erupted into muted sniggers of laughter until the chair wrapped his gavel.

The commissioner asked, “Where was your boss when you picked this cash up from his desk?”

“Let me think,” the witness brought a hand to her chin. “Most of the time he was sitting behind it.”

The people in the courtroom sniggered again, but that did not deter the bespectacled Justice: “And what were your instructions? What were you expected to do with this cash?”

“On which occasion?”

“*On which occasion?*” The bespectacled Justice turned to the commissioner nearest him to vent another refrain of contempt. “On the occasion last year when cash was provided to members of either the Christchurch or Bournemouth teams.”

“Oh,” the witness smiled, “on *that* occasion.”

The Justice sighed into his microphone.

“I was told to take the money to a hotel near the airport and to put it in a safe deposit box.”

“Which hotel?”

“The Durack City Airport Hilton.”¹⁹⁷

“And from there what happened to the cash?”

“I don’t know, sir.”

“What did you do after leaving the cash in the safe deposit box at the hotel? What did you do with the key?”

“I left it at the hotel.”

“You left it at the hotel?” The commissioner tilted his head. “That did not seem strange to you, that you would be given a large amount of cash and be told by your boss to take it to a hotel near the airport only to leave it in a safe deposit box and *not* take the key? You never thought to question your boss about this?”

“Well,” the witness thought about it for a moment. “No.” She shrugged, “I was never given instructions to take the key.”

“Do you recall how much money you were given on this occasion?”

“No.” She said, “I didn’t count it.”

“No, of course you didn’t, but can you at least confirm that your boss, Mr Felix Morose of Durack City, Western Australia, gave you instructions regarding what to do with it on this occasion?”

“Well,” she thought about it, “no. I cannot.”

The commissioner blanched. “You cannot?” He blinked many times, “But your testimony today clearly indicates—”

The chair of the Royal Commission raised his hand to silence his subordinate, “Miss Shlepkoﬀ, on this particular occasion, who gave you instructions? Who told you what to do with the money you picked up from Mr Morose’s desk?”

“That was Mr Lasker.”

“Mr Lasker and *not* your boss Mr Morose, is that correct?”

“Yes.” She nodded. “That is correct.”

“And who is Mr Lasker?”

“He was my boss’ manservant.”

“Prior to this, Miss Shlepkoff, were you told to do anything else aside from taking the money to the hotel at the airport? Were you given any additional instructions in regards to the Christchurch-Bournemouth test match?”

“I don’t think so.”

“Miss Shlepkoff, are you saying that you were not given any additional instructions? You were not, for example, told to book a pair of roundtrip airline tickets?”

“Oh that’s right!” The witness nodded. “I *was* told to book a pair of round trip airline tickets.”

“And where were those airline tickets, to where were you told to book flights, to which destinations?”

“The first flight was supposed to be from Durack City to Melbourne return, and the second ticket was between Melbourne and somewhere in New Zealand.”

“Do you remember where in New Zealand?”

“Ummm, let me think,” the witness put her chin in her palm. “Oh I remember.” She smiled up at the commissioners, “*Not* Auckland.”

“And who were these tickets for? Who was meant to fly on them? In whose name did you purchase these airline tickets?”

“Let’s see,” her eyes scanned the rafters. “I can’t recall which name I was supposed to use. We used so many different names.”

The people in the courtroom sniggered yet again, forcing the chair to rap his gavel.

“Miss Shlepkoff,” he said, “maybe it will help if I explain what we’re trying to determine here today. Now, in short, it appears that you may or may not have provided funds, perhaps unknowingly, to an individual or to individuals who then ferried those funds out of the Commonwealth where it may have been used to bribe cricket players and other cricket officials. It also appears that in your capacity as Mr Morose’s administrative secretary, that you might’ve

arranged airline tickets to make it possible for large amounts of cash to leave the country undeclared where it may have been used to advance a nefarious and illegal cause.

“What we are trying to determine today is who provided this money to you, who did you then give it to, and did that person or persons have a way and means of getting it out of the country where it was then used to bribe cricket players as well as other cricket officials. Most of this information, as you may or may not know, has already been brought to the commission’s attention. Here and now, what I’d like to know from you is were you at all aware whether or not your former boss, Mr Morose, was able to make these things happen?”

The witness parted her lips to speak but the chair stopped her, “Before you provide your answer, Miss Shlekoff, please understand that I am asking you a yes or no question. I’ve been advised that you know what this means.”

Her response was a tenuous, “Yes.”

“Let the record show that the witness has indicated in the affirmative.” The chair of the Royal Commission turned the proceedings over to his colleague.

Trevor Worland leaned in to his microphone. “Miss Shlepkoff, if you were aware that your former boss made for these things to happen, as your previous answer in the affirmative indicates, are you able to tell us which airline was used flying between Australia and New Zealand?”

At this point, the other commissioners as well as many of the spectators in the courtroom, including the witness, turned to look at Trevor Worland. Vincent Bennett also turned to his colleague to give him a nonverbal look: You’re asking about airlines?

Trevor Worland ignored them: “Which airline were you told to book the tickets on?”

“I don’t recall, but probably Qantas or Pan Am, but I’m not sure.”

“You’re not sure? And why is that?”

“I only picked up the cash.” Lydia shrugged, “I never got around to booking those airline tickets.”

Trevor Worland scoffed and it was picked up on the microphone—everyone heard it—and he said, “Your honors,” and turned to his fellow commissioners, “it is well known that the Government of this country has until earlier this year kept extensive records of Jewish persons entering or exiting the Kimberley region as part of the Menzies-era Terms of Settlement.¹⁹⁸ It is upon this foundation that I invite the Government’s investigators to supply to this commission

records that include the names of anyone leaving the Kimberley region on the dates that correspond to the dates of the 1976 Christchurch-Bournemouth test match as well as the Toorak-Newcastle test match in 1975, where it is alleged an illegal and nefarious transaction took place. Any alleged bagman hired by Mr Morose, or one of his close associates, to travel to New Zealand would be, in the first instance, authorized to travel from the Kimberley region and, in the second, to travel from Australia to New Zealand on either Qantas or Pan Am, unless of course those individuals have been enabled to circumvent Commonwealth laws.

“As for *this* particular witness,” the commissioner gazed leery at Lydia Shlepkoff, “she is neither credible nor reliable, indeed she is quite exasperating and irrelevant and I move that she be dismissed from further testimony.”

Vincent Bennett voiced his approval, “Hear, hear!”

The chair of the Royal Commission held up his hand to silence them. He looked the witness in the eye and said, “Yes or no, Miss Shlepkoff, can you tell us if the instructions you were given in regards to any cash payments or funds connected to the Christchurch-Bournemouth match in 1976, were these instructions at all similar to how cash money was provided to other teams in an effort to influence the outcomes of other Super Test matches, for example the Toorak-Newcastle test match in 1975?”

“Oh no.” The witness shook her head. “Nothing like that ever happened before.”

This answer, and the head shaking that accompanied it, confused the chair. “Miss Shlepkoff, I’m afraid I don’t quite understand. What do you mean when you say ‘nothing like that ever happened before’?”

“Oh,” she smiled, “we never did it the same way twice.”

The courtroom guffawed in concert with the press gallery.

“Did you know that *it* was going on at all?”

“Oh no, of course not,” she shook her head. “But you know, now that I think about it,” she pushed her lips off to the side of her mouth, “I think he told me to book the tickets on Air Iowa.” The witness looked up at the commissioners, “I think they fly to New Zealand, too.”

Again the courtroom descended into stifled yet audible and this time protracted laughter. The chair of the Royal Commission had to rap his gavel four times to re-establish order.

Western Australia

1977

“She never booked those bloody airline tickets.” Felix Morose said, “That’s why I fired her!”

The attorney, Reuben Spike, sat with his client in his client’s office watching the Royal Commission live on his client’s television. He’d been glued to the daily coverage of the proceedings ever since his client’s name was mentioned in testimony. “Is anything she’s saying actually true?”

“She’s a disgruntled former employee, just like that bastard Mordecai.” Felix stared at the screen, “You know Quonset wasn’t his real name?”

The attorney turned around, “It wasn’t?”

“They changed it to Crossman when they got to Australia.”¹⁹⁹

“They did that to everybody.” The attorney turned back to the broadcast, “They changed our name from Spivak to Spike.”

“I don’t know where ‘Quonset’ came from, but it sounded too *goyische* to me.” Felix gave this notion some thought and said, “I knew I never should’ve trusted the hook-nosed bastard.”

On the television, the face of Celia Corres-Patkin filled the screen: “*What began as a Royal Commission into allegations of cheating in the sport of cricket has quickly transformed into a scandal with potentially global repercussions. So far there have been at least a dozen witnesses who have indicated they either had direct or indirect knowledge that Felix Morose, the mining-magnate from East Kimberley, was allegedly bribing not only cricket players but also umpires in various test matches dating back to 1974. Investigators are restricted from looking into any allegations of cheating in cricket prior to 1974 due to the Royal Commission’s Terms of Reference, but we are told that the chair of the Royal Commission, Justice Gresley Drummond Clarkson, will be requesting an audience with both the Attorney-General and the Governor-General as well as the Prime Minister to request the Royal Commission’s mandate be expanded to allow for further investigations into the years prior to 1974. Of particular interest is a test match from March of 1974 that saw Belmopan, the International Super Test world champion, lose quite uncharacteristically to Trinidad and Tobago. There is now speculation that Felix*

Morose, one of Australia's richest men, may have bribed members of the Belmopan squad to throw the test match for Trinidad and Tobago. We are also told that the Royal Commission may want to look into the financial affairs of Felix Morose, the man legal experts say is at the heart of these new allegations."

"Turn it off." Felix said, "I don't want that shit on anymore."

"You do realize they're likely to subpoena you?" The attorney turned the volume down. "They can compel you to appear before them."

Felix lit a cigarette and took a slow drag. "If they think I'm going to Canberra," he exhaled, "you'll just have to tell them they've got another thing coming."

The attorney kept his eyes on the muted television. "I can only do that for so long," Reuben Spike turned to his client. "You know they'll eventually send a plane out here to get you, along with some federal agents."

"And then what, *nu*?" Felix smoked, "Those stupid bugger Christians won't figure anything out."

His attorney raised an arched eyebrow, "Are you sure about that?" He looked at the muted television, "Looks like they might've figured it out already."

"Not to worry. Nothing's going to happen." Felix was sweating. "It's taken them two years of bullshit testimony to get this far, it'll take 'em another two to bring charges, which they won't. They'd be stupid to do that and they bloody well know it."

Reuben Spike found his client's confidence a true mix of arrogance and denial, yet he was in thrall to Felix Morose, his most important, and most exasperating, patron. He knew well enough to follow his client's wishes, knowing Felix Morose appreciated his wishes be followed to the letter.

The lawyer turned back to the television, where the broadcast shifted to the weather. "I'll prepare a statement." He said, "Full-scale denial of involvement across the board."

"Yep." Felix stabbed the cigarette into a glass ashtray perched near the edge of his desk. "That's what I pay you for, and don't forget," he exhaled one last plume of smoke, "she's a disgruntled former employee." He pointed at his lawyer, "That's the angle I want you to take."

"You want to sue her for defamation?"

“I want her discredited. Make it look like she’s a compulsive, pathological liar who was bad at her shitty little job.” Felix saw a woman on the television standing in front of a big map of Australia, “Turn it back up, *nu*?”

“...Exmouth will see a late shower, while Port Hedland and Karratha can expect at least four milliliters of rain overnight. It’ll be windy in Broome, dry in Halls Creek and cloudy in both Durack City and Wyndham. Lajamanu, Katherine and Darwin can expect patchy clouds in the morning, clearing out to a sunny evening late Saturday.

“And that’s it for the national forecast. Back to you in the studio.”

“*Nu*?” Felix lit another cigarette, “Why the bloody hell is she wearing gloves?”²⁰⁰

His attorney shrugged, “Beats the Bleeding Jesus out of me, sir.”

Western Australia

1978

The Freedel household was busy in the morning with the cook and the kitchen staff awake at dawn to bake bread, chop fruit and to pour muesli into bowls. The children arrived to breakfast one at a time; Rifkah, the oldest, was first to arrive. She sat to the left of the head of the table, opposite her mother. The seat at the head of the table was empty; Rifkah's father had already left the house for a full day's work untangling atomic clusters in a geophysics laboratory buried beneath the state-of-the-art nuclear science centre built on the south side of the Institute's sprawling new suburban satellite campus.

Next to arrive was Daniel, the toddler, Miri and Baron's third child. He climbed onto a booster seat and, without acknowledging anyone, proceeded to stuff his face full of Weetbix, his eyes riveted to the colorful cartoons playing on the television. Miriyam, the mother, entered the room dressed in a housecoat, her black hair pulled back to reveal a puffy face not yet painted over by a thin layer of cosmetics. She gripped a cup of brewed coffee and counted her offspring seated around the table.

"Where's Devorah?" She sat down. "Is she out of bed yet?"

"I don't know," Rifkah took a bite from a slice of bread smeared with dark hazelnut, never once turning away from *Here's Humphrey* on Channel Nine.

A thin white woman entered the room carrying an infant, "*Hu ra'ev*."

Miri squinted at the *au pair*. "What's that mean?"

"He's hungry."

"Oh yes, of course." Miri set the coffee on the table and opened the top part of her robe. "You need to keep it up, Siggy." She pulled out her right breast, "There's just no other way I'll learn unless you speak to me daily in *Lashon HaKodesh*."*

The *au pair*, a thin Sephardi woman originally called Sigal, said, "*Kemuvan, giveret*,"* and placed the baby in his mother's arms.

* "*Lashon HaKodesh*" translates from Hebrew as "The Holy Tongue" and is itself a substitute name for "Hebrew". The phrase is most commonly and prevalently in use today among Orthodox Jewry and/but can be used to differentiate "Bible-based Hebrew" from "Modern Hebrew."

* "Of course, ma'am."

Devorah sauntered up to breakfast.

“And where have you been, young lady?” Miri pressed her breast into the lips of an infant. “Did Siggie not wake you up?”

Devorah scowled at her mother.

“You’re going to pull that face with me today, are you?”

Devorah flared her nostrils.

“What time,” her mother turned to the *au pair*, “did she crawl out from the wrong side of bed this morning?”

“*Chetzi sha’ah acharei shaysh.*” The *au pair* spoke sandy Hebrew, “Half past six.”²⁰¹

“What’s made you so cranky this morning, *nu*?”

Devorah scrunched up her face as the *au pair* placed a bowl filled with seedless grapes, yogurt and blueberries in front of her. Devorah gave the dish the evil Bessarabian fish-eye in a silent yet emotive display of defiance.²⁰²

“Oh I see,” Miri shook her head. “So you’re refusing to talk *and* eat today, *nu*? That’s fine by me.” She glanced at the baby clamped to her chest, “More for me and Kurt, then.”

Devorah huffed in an effort to prove to her mother and to everyone else at that table that she could conspicuously ignore all of them. She spoke in *Language* and glared at her little brother who, sitting on the other side of the table, stared at the bright images emanating from the television.

“Oh Holy Moses, Devorah!” Miri moved little Kurt to her other nipple. “Now you want to talk to me like a Great Aunty! The day hasn’t even started and you’re already in a foul mood.”

“I am not!”

“Oh you aren’t, are you?”

“No.” Devorah scowled, “Danny’s just a bratty little baby!”

Daniel, the toddler, had lighter skin than both his mother and his two older sisters. He’d been sitting at the table eating cereal whilst staring at colorful cartoons until he heard Devorah’s rhetorical salvo:

“No I’m not!”

“You still wear a diaper!” Devorah glared across the table, “And I wish you’d never been born!”

Daniel hurled a plastic spoon at his sister, but he missed and it landed on the floor behind her.

“Stop it right now, both of you!” Miri raised her voice. “You are *never* to throw things at you sister, and don’t call your brother a brat. Do you understand me?”

Devorah grunted, “He started it.”

“No!” Daniel’s vocabulary was limited. “You start it.”

“Shut up, Danny!” Devorah hissed at him, insulting him by using a word forbidden to her in *Language*.

“*Oi! Oi! Oi!*” Miri glared at her daughter, “We do not say words like that around this table. What is the matter with you?” Her daughter averted her gaze but Miri said: “Look at me when I’m talking to you!”

Devorah slowly and sheepishly turned to her mother who, according to Law, position, power and privilege, looked down upon her daughter from the lofty plateau of parental elder:

“That won’t happen again.”

Devorah cast her eyes down at the white yogurt turning purple.

“Now,” the mother knew she had everyone’s full attention, “tell me what *is* the matter.”

Devorah and Daniel leered at each other in silence for a split second before they both started talking. They called each other names and spat arguments back and forth across the table. Miri comprehended little, hearing snippets of phrases like “he pulled my hair” to “she had a lizard!”

Miri grunted, using one single word of *Language* to shut them both up. She removed little Kurt from her breast and handed him back to the *au pair* to clear the way for direct intervention. “I don’t know what’s gotten into you two today.” She turned to her eldest daughter. “Do you?”

Uninvolved, Rifkah turned to her mother. She had a dark strand of brown, ginger hair stuck to a moist dollop of milk just east of her lip. She shrugged her shoulders and pushed a pair of glasses up her nose, turning back to the colorful cartoons on the television.

“Alright, girls.” The *au pair* returned, “You finish now. *Anachnu holchoth achshav*.* Time for school.”

* “We go now” – feminine plural Hebrew: אנחנו הולכות עכשיו.

“Yes, school! You heard Siggy.” Miri clapped her hands twice, relieved to not have to deal with, at least not immediately, whatever grievance Devorah had steamed up overnight. “Off you go, then.”

Rifkah finished her cup of freshly squeezed apricot juice and hopped out her chair. Devorah, on the other hand, pouted, “I *hate* school!”

“*Nu?*” Her mother said, “You hate everything.”

“I don’t want to go.”

“*You* don’t want to be late.”

“How come Danny gets to stay home all day but I have to go to school?”

“You’re older than he is, for one thing. Now hop to it.” Miriyam spoke in *Language*, pointing toward the arched entry.

Devorah slid out of her seat, dragging her feet until Miri raised her voice: “*Devorah.!*”

“I’m going, *nu.*”

Miriyam watched her daughter follow after the *au pair*, leaving her alone with two sons, one of whom fixated on a commercial:

“...*we’re talking to Ron Barassi, coach of last year’s Grand Final champions, Tuesday at eight p.m., Packer Sports News.*”²⁰³

“Danny, *bubelah*,” Miri waited for the boy to turn to her, “can you change the channel for mummy, please, *nu?*”

Daniel climbed from his booster seat and went over to the television, turning the knob until she told him to stop.

“...*twenty-four seven; Packer Sports News*,” the image on the screen cut to Kerry Packer standing in front of an orchard of satellite dishes: “Sports and news,” he said, “in that order.” This was followed by titles and a logo—PSN written in gold—then the image on screen cut to live coverage of a Royal Commission in Canberra:

“...*and the players made it easy. They were usually on the take as well, though I never knew for sure. I was told never to ask or else strings could be pulled that would put me out of a job.*”

Miri was surprised to see the proceedings well underway this early in the morning.

“*Who gave you the money? In other words, who bribed you?*”

“*I never knew his name for sure.*”

“Can you point him out to us? Is he in this room now, for instance, or are you aware that he has testified previously?”

She then remembered Canberra was three hours ahead of Durack.

“And based on that testimony, what is his name?”

“His name is Mordecai Quonset, but that was not the name he used when he gave me the money.”

“What name did he use on that particular occasion?”

“He told me his name was Mordecai Vanunu.”²⁰⁴

“And how much money, how much cash were you given?”

“Eight thousand dollars.”

Miri did not catch the name of the witness, but she caught the name of the commissioner—Trevor Worland QC—who asked, “And what were you expected to do in exchange for this cash?”

Her mug of coffee empty, Miri rose from the table in search of a refill. She found the cook she and Baron employed on part time basis in the kitchen seated spread-eagled over a bucket scraping the skins off a pile of vegetables.

“What’s all this then, *nu*?”

The cook was annoyed by the intrusion. “Imported carrots, ma’am.” She looked up at the lady of the house. “The kids say it reminds ‘em of money when I cut ‘em up into little pieces and put ‘em on the gefilte fish.”

Miriyam Freedel looked down at her cook, looking down in particular at her crude and unladylike way of sitting—and on a stool, no less. “Very well, then.” She held up the empty mug, “Where’s the coffee?”

“Let me, ma’am.” The cook dropped the squash to heave herself up off that stool. She took the cup over to a hot urn situated near one of the eight-plate stovetop cookers.

Miri spotted the latest edition of the *Durack City Register* lying on a nearby counter. She’d forgotten they had a subscription for daily home delivery as she perused the headlines:

PM May Call Snap Election; Internal Spill Likely, MPs Speculate

*Greek Monarch Survives Domestic Referendum*²⁰⁵

“Here you go,” the cook returned with fresh coffee made just the way Mrs Freedel liked it. “Is there anything else?”

“No, no. Thank you.” Miri opened the newspaper and saw the main headline at the top of page four:

Details Emerge About the Disappearance of Egypt’s 3rd Army

Miri skimmed over the paragraphs indenting the article: “...*classified British and Soviet military intelligence... despite early gains in the Sinai... secret Israeli plan: ‘Operation Timbrel’... possible use of non-conventional, low-yield tactical nuclear devices...*”

“I’m taking this.” Miri picked up the newspaper. “I hope you don’t mind.”

The part time cook sat back down on the stool, spreading her legs to accommodate the peeling of potatoes, shallots and beetroot, “No worries, ma’am.”

Miriyaam returned to the table, opening the newspaper to the daily Jewish life section to read a rabbinical assessment involving the kosher validity of a cheese omelet made with chicken, all but ignoring the new witness called to testify at the Royal Commission in Canberra.

Australian Capital Territory

1978

A bookish man with glasses and a beard was sworn in and asked to state his name and occupation for the record: “My name is Kenneth Carboyd, and I am a forensic accountant heading up a team of discreet underwriters all hired by the Commonwealth and flown in from Sydney specifically for *this* occasion.”

“Thank you, sir.” The commissioner did not mask his contempt, “All we needed was your name and occupation. Please leave out the frills, if you don’t mind.”

Another commissioner, Vincent Bennett, asked him, “Have you ever worked for the Australian Taxation Office, Mr Carboyd?”

“No, never.”

“Have you ever been under the employ of the Government, or employed by any government agency at any point during your professional career?”

“Until today, you mean?”

The commissioner glared at the witness. “Unless asked otherwise, Mr Carboyd, I’m going to insist you restrict yourself to yes or no answers. Do you understand?”

The witness smiled, “Yes, certainly.”

“Mr Carboyd, what we want to put on record is the fact that you do not work for the Government. You are not now, nor never have been employed by the Government or by any agency of the Government, is that correct?”

“Yes, that is correct.”

“Thank you, Mr Carboyd.”

“My team and I were, however, paid to be here today.” Kenneth Carboyd was not so bookish after all. “That is to say, we are *getting* paid.”

“That is enough, Mr Carboyd. You will restrict yourself to basic yes or no answers unless instructed otherwise. Do you understand what that means?”

Kenneth Carboyd locked eyes with the commissioner. “Yes, sir, I understand.”

“Good. Speak out of turn again and we’ll have you in contempt.”

Another commissioner began, “Based on the testimonies given to this Royal Commission, in which we’ve questioned over forty team members from at least a dozen squads,

and based on evidence either obtained through discovery or provided prior to today, are you able, Mr Carboyd, to enlighten these proceedings with a number, a dollar amount, of just how much money has been used, an estimate of course, to bribe various cricket players and other officials? A rough estimate, if you will.”

Kenneth Carboyd opened his mouth to speak but caught himself. He looked up at Vincent Bennett, his speechless gaze full of question.

The commissioner waved his hand, “You may answer in long form, Mr Carboyd.”

“Thank you, sir.” The accountant said, “I can give you more than an estimate. Based on my findings, it would appear that Mordecai Quonset, or persons associated with him, have spent over four million dollars bribing cricket in the calendar year of 1976 alone. My calculations—”

“Calculations,” the commissioner interrupted him, “that are based on previous testimony and other evidences and information obtained or provided to this commission?”

“Yes.”

“And how much money was spent on these types of illegal cash exchanges in the calendar year of 1976?”

“Based on my calculations, just over four million dollars.”

“And who was getting this money? Who was it being given to?”

“Based on previous testimony and on the evidence my team and I have been privy to, it would appear that, despite their denials, various players have received cash, as have team captains and, as the previous testimony just demonstrated, some of the umpires as well.”

“So in short, what you are saying is that based on everything we’ve heard, Mordecai Quonset, a man since proven to have worked for Mr Felix Morose, on some occasions bribed just about everyone on the pitch to throw the match a certain way; is that what you’re saying?”

“Yes, your honour. It would appear that on some occasions, what you just said is true, implausible though it may sound.”

“Are you able,” the commissioner asked, “to give us a total amount, based on your expertise and estimations? How much money has Mr Morose, through Mr Quonset or other persons, dumped into the sport of cricket?”

“Well, sir, depending on how far back one goes, a general estimate—not a concrete one—would be well over ten million Australian dollars.”

“Ten million Australian dollars?” Everyone was surprised by that number. “Are you sure?”

“Yes, sir.” Kenneth Carboyd said. “I’ve submitted our findings to the commission as instructed.”

“Let the record show,” the chair of the Royal Commission held up a folder, “that the witness has indeed submitted his findings to us for review.” He set the folder down. “Thank you, Mr Carboyd.” He called for a recess, rapping his gavel twice to dismiss the proceedings. He later summoned the other commissioners to his private chambers and said, “Well, I suppose we ought to take a gander at this report.”

Gresley Drummond Clarkson looked at the other commissioners: John Angus Limmo had slipped on a pair of bifocals, Vincent Bennett had moved to the desk while Trevor Worland took a seat, crossing his legs, all of them engrossed in their copies of Carboyd’s report.

“I don’t know about any of you, but,” the chair opened his folder, “I’ve done some basic arithmetic and it looks like our friend from Durack has spent a lot of money bribing cricket. But have any of you taken note,” he looked up from the folder, “of how much money he’s *won* betting on it?”

The other commissioners looked up at Clarkson, each of them cocking their heads to the side. Vincent Bennett, for his part, said “Hmm,” without moving his lips. He and the other commissioners turned back to their copies of Carboyd’s report.

*

Four weeks later, the Royal Commission swore in a young specialist sent over to provide testimony on behalf of ASIO at the request of Queen’s Counsel, who had received *de facto* authorization from both the Attorney-General and from the Lodge to pursue this particular line of inquiry. Trevor Worland watched as the oath was administered. The young specialist from ASIO was a nameless patsy and Worland knew the poor kid would be fired later, his employers justifying their actions after-the-fact based on an otherwise negligible, yet in this case trumped-up charge of no importance.

Nevertheless, the specialist from ASIO had a purpose to serve and Vincent Bennett started with the first question: “Can you identify, please, the following person?” The

commissioner clicked a button and, on a nearby screen, illuminated the projected image of a man wearing a turtleneck, a jacket and a pair of dark sunglasses.

“Yes.” The specialist said, “That’s Mordecai Quonset.”

Vincent Bennet was not surprised by this recognition, the face of the multi-aliased bagman had been splashed across every newspaper and television in Australia, his very name nearly household. “Can you identify this particular individual, please?” The commissioner clicked the button, illuminating what appeared to be a different photograph on the screen. “Do you know who that is?”

The specialist from ASIO, along with all the other courtroom spectators—Celia Corres-Patkin among them—stared up at the picture. “Which one?”

“Let’s start with the gentleman on the left, if you like. Can you tell us who that is, please?”

The specialist mispronounced the man’s Hebraicized name and said, “I believe that’s who he is.”

“And who is this person? What does he do for a living?”

“He is currently the Deputy Minister of Defense for the State of Israel.”

“This photograph was taken in January of 1973. Was that individual, at the time, the Deputy Minister of Defense for the State of Israel?”

“He was not.”

“At the time this photograph was taken, who was he? What was he doing at that time?”

“He was the vice president for the Israel Weapons Industry.”

“And in his capacity as vice president for the Israel Weapons Industry, what were his responsibilities?”

“His primary responsibility was weapon procurement, research and development.”

“Thank you, sir. I want to focus now on the man on the right in the picture. Are you able to identify that individual for us? Can you tell us who he is, please?”

The specialist from ASIO mispronounced another Hebrew name and said, “He is a prominent nuclear physicist in Israel.”

“And what does this man do now in Israel? Do you know?”

“He is an undocumented consultant for the Atomic Energy Commission for the State of Israel.”

“What does that mean? What do you mean by the phrase ‘undocumented consultant’?”

“What that means is he is paid to provide consultations to the Atomic Energy Commission in Israel, but he himself is not actually listed as an employee of that agency.”

“What allows you to make such a claim?”

“This is based on our information regarding this matter.”

“Based on your information regarding this matter?” The commissioner asked the chair, “Who is this kid?”

“Perhaps, sir,” the chair intervened, “it will be advantageous for these proceedings if you explain to us your particular role over at the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation. What is it you do for ASIO? What is your job?”

“I’m a deputy analyst for the Near East desk.”

“That’s very helpful. Is that how you are able to identify the people in that picture?”

“Yes it is.”

“That’s very forthright of you.” The chair said, “Thank you.”

Another commissioner clicked a button to illuminate another picture. This third photograph was revealed to be a combination of the two previous pictures showing three people—the two Israelis and the man earlier identified as Mordecai Quonset—standing near each other beneath a portico at the base of an elaborate, colonial-style three-storey white building where a porter costumed in a turban held open the door of a silver Rolls Royce.

“These three gentlemen, can you tell us if they are in Australia in this picture?”

“No, sir. They are not.”

“Can you identify the location of this picture?”

“I can, sir.” The specialist from ASIO said, “I believe that is the entrance to the Raffles Hotel in Singapore. If you look closely, sir, you can see it says ‘Raffles Hotel’ at the top there.”

“I believe you are right.” The chair nodded, “Indeed it does say that, right at the very top of the building.”

Western Australia

1978

Celia Corres-Patkin stood over Geoffrey's shoulder to look at the screen on the monitor:

"I destroyed Felix Morose's second marriage."

"Are you saying you were the other woman?"

"I was the main woman. His wife was the other woman. He saw me more than he saw her."

Celia put a hand on Geoffrey's shoulder, "You know I'm just not sure I want to lead with this part. Can we fast forward to that bit about Belmopan?"

Geoffrey obliged by turning a knob to run through recorded footage. The images on the screen moved fast, the voices of Celia Corres-Patkin and the pale woman sitting across from her become high-pitched as they spoke at warp speed until Geoffrey released the knob:

"And he never bribed any of the people from Belmopan, either."

"That's it!" Celia said, "Go back to the start of it."

Geoffrey turned the knob counterclockwise, reversing the recorded footage four beats, playing it back:

"What did Felix Morose tell you about that match?"

"He said it was a fluke Belmopan lost." On the monitor, the pale woman spoke with a Russian accent, *"He said it was one of the test matches he lost money on, despite what he always says about Belmopan."*

"What does he always say about Belmopan?"

"He always say 'Never bet against Belmopan.'"

"So you're saying Felix Morose didn't bribe any of the players in the Belmopan test match against Trinidad and Tobago in 1974?"

"Probably not."

"What about the other test matches? What about the Toorak-Newcastle test match?"

"Oh he probably bribed that one. He just didn't bribe Belmopan. He never bet against Belmopan, and he never bribed any of the people from Belmopan, either."

Celia pointed at the screen, "We'll lead in with this Belmopan bit and then bring up the salacious mistress after. Can we re-edit the intro to say that?"

“Done.” Geoffrey flipped a switch, turning on another monitor. “I’ll bring it up over here.” He clicked a button to fill the screen with the image of his colleague seated to the right of large titles:

THE MYSTERIOUS FELIX MOROSE

“Good evening,” Celia Corres-Patkin looked right at the camera. “He’s rich, and he’s Jewish, but little else is known about the diamond-miner from Durack City, yet the mysterious Felix Morose is the man at the centre of the cheating scandal in International Super Test Cricket. So far, Felix Morose has managed to elude appearances both in public and at the Royal Commission looking into allegations of cheating in the sport of cricket in Canberra.

“But tonight, in the third installment of our investigative series, we’ll be talking to people who claim to know the mysterious Felix Morose personally. Tonight, we’ll be talking to Freycha Dubecheck, a woman who claims she’s known Felix Morose intimately for years. She claims the Kimberley-based mining magnate did not bribe the 1974 Super Test match between Belmopan and Trinidad and Tobago, thereby casting some doubt on the current allegations leveled against one of Australia’s richest men. Freycha Dubecheck believes she is able to make this claim because she was the other woman in Felix Morose’s life, the mistress who, in her words, destroyed what she claims was an unhappy and loveless marriage.

“Channel Nine and the Packer Sports News network wishes to advise viewers that due to the serious nature of the allegations against Felix Morose, this story has been edited in compliance with the new government guidelines regarding the reportage of the recently sealed from public Royal Commission into allegations of cheating in International Super Test cricket, as well as in accordance with Section Sixteen of the Income Tax Assessment. It is also important to note that we contacted Mr Morose numerous times, but our requests for a one-on-one interview for this story went unanswered. Please note any opinions or comments made by any individuals during this broadcast are not reflective of the opinions of Channel Nine or the Packer Sports News network.”

“OK, let’s stop it there for now.”

Geoffrey pressed a red button just as the door to the editing bay opened, “Pardon me, miss, but the Rabbi just arrived.”

“Oh good!” Celia was pleased. “Tell me, have we heard from Ben Prindy’s people yet?”

“No, ma’am, we haven’t, but they don’t have any telephones up here.”²⁰⁶

“That’s just inefficient.” She slipped her bare feet into a pair of heels. “Sometimes I wonder what the point of going on assignment is if the people you want to talk to won’t give you the time of day.” She pulled a cosmetic from her purse and smacked her lips together, turning to Geoffrey: “Teeth?”

Geoffrey took a brief glance. “All good.”

“He’s an old man of the cloth.” Celia dropped the lipstick into her purse. “He probably won’t notice one way or the other.” She held the door open for the cameraman as they walked down a hall and across the Durack City’s Channel Nine newsroom. Celia remarked to Geoffrey that the Durack newsroom was four times the size of the newsroom in Canberra and she asked, “How’s this one stack up to the home office in Sydney?”²⁰⁷

“No contest.” Geoffrey moved the bulky camera from one shoulder to the other. “This is much bigger. Durack is almost twice the size of Sydney now.”

They turned a corner and came down a corridor lined with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking a broadcast studio. The stage was nearly identical to any Channel Nine broadcast studio anywhere in Australia, and Celia rolled her eyes at this; it was just like her boss to insist on widespread uniformity and branding, allowing for variance only in regard to on-air talent—Kerry Packer insisted on hiring locals—and in regard to which panoramic cityscape they sat in front of whilst on the air. The broadcast studio lay quiet, dark and idle. It would not be switched on until three in preparation for the first round of evening news starting live at five.

They passed through a series of hallways and came out to a bank of elevators. They traveled down two levels, stepping out onto a soundstage. Celia spotted the clergyman wearing a giant bib and sitting in front of some bright lights and a mirror. His eyes were closed as a make-up artist doused his face with a small, puffy cloth caked in Estee Lauder.²⁰⁸

Celia came up to him, “Rabbi Jacob Esau Stintston.”

The old man opened his eyes.

“I recognize you.” She smiled, “I’m Celia Corres-Patkin.” She held out her hand.

The old man stared back at her, looking her in the eye while the make-up artist swirled around his face. He did not make any attempt to get up or to shake her hand. He said, “Good,” and closed his eyes. “Good for you.”

“Well,” Celia pulled back, “I want to thank you, Rabbi, for agreeing to this interview, and just to remind you, this is going to be shown later on PSN via satellite coast-to-coast. You *do* know what that means, don’t you?”

This time, the old man opened his eyes sharply—punitively—and said, “*Nu?* You think I don’t know how a satellite works? Jesus H Christ,” he closed his eyes. “I’m not that old!”

“Well okay, then.” Celia smelled Scotch. “I’ll let them finish. We’ll do the interview over there,” she pointed to a pair of chairs on a round, carpeted stage. “Let us know if we can get you anything.”

The Rabbi opened his eyes. “You got any double malts back there?”

Celia raised both eyebrows, “I’ll send a producer over to sort you out.” She smiled, “Alright?”

The Rabbi narrowed his eyes at her, closing them to allow the make-up artist to complete her work. Celia, in the meantime, turned on her heel to rush over to her cameraman.

“Geoffrey,” she said, “I’m worried.”

Geoffrey pulled away from the camera, “Why?”

“He’s tanked. I can’t interview him.”

“Is he visibly drunk?”

“He just asked for a double malt.”

“That doesn’t answer my question.”

“I can’t interview him if he’s pissed.”

“Says who?”

“Integrity for one thing, and ethics for another.”

“Celia,” Geoffrey stepped away from the camera, “we all know you’re a regular pillar of integrity; I’ve never seen anyone take it up with the Big Fella the way you do, but as far as ethics are concerned, do you think any of these people are worried about that or about integrity?”

“Well,” she looked around at the gaffers, lighting technicians, sound engineers and producers. “I highly doubt it, but they ought to be.”

“You know just as well as I do that there are just two ethics when you work for Kerry Packer.”

“Yes, yes,” she nodded, “loyalty and ratings. Alright, then; so you’re saying I ought to interview him even if he is on the piss?”

“A drunk Rabbi talking about the man at the center of the biggest cheating scandal in cricket history,” the cameraman winked. “I’d say that makes good television, wouldn’t you?”

“Well I don’t know. I’m just not sure of his condition.” She looked at the Rabbi, watching the old man move across to the chairs on the carpeted stage with the help of an able-bodied television producer. The Rabbi fell back into the chair like a bag of gabardine-clad bones and Geoffrey said:

“He looks fine to me.”

Celia saw a producer remove the bib from the Rabbi, clipping a small microphone to his lapel. “Very well, then.” She saw the producer hand the Rabbi a small beverage, who drank it in one gulp. “Hopefully he’ll say something we can use.”

“Great.” Geoffrey returned to the camera. “We’ll be ready in a few.”

*

Celia began the interview: “Thank you again, Rabbi Stintston. I know it’s taken you a while to get here, and I appreciate your taking the time to see us today.”

The Rabbi said, “It’s a pleasure,” a little too fast.

“So Rabbi,” Celia smiled, “tell me about yourself. How old are you?”

“*That’s* your first question?” The Rabbi heard it; she *aah*’ed her Rs. “You want to ask me how old I am?”

“Well, no, perhaps not.” Celia Corres-Patkin had interviewed many people; when it came to on-air interviews, she had learnt the hard way that it was best to put the person to be interviewed at ease as soon as possible. “So,” she smiled, “what would *you* like to talk about?”

“Oh please. You and I both know why I’m here, so you can ask me about Felix Morose.”

“Well, yes.” Celia shifted gears. “I understand you know him?”

“Knew him, Mrs Patkin. I *knew* him, but I hardly know him now.”

“I understand,” Celia looked down at her notes, “you officiated at both of his weddings?”

“Those were a waste of time. They both got *gets* and ended in divorce.” He frowned, “There were kids involved and then you people fly in from Sydney to interview the whores.”

Celia flinched. “I didn’t know a man in your position could use such language.”

“They’ve got whores in the Bible, just like everywhere else.”

Celia blinked, “Sir.”

The Rabbi said, “What did you want to talk about?”

“First of all, sir, who told you we’re interviewing...” she hesitated, “...whores?”

This brought a small smile to the Rabbi’s lips. “You think you’re the only TV channel that’s come to town? This is a close knit community, and I’m the Rabbi: I hear *everything*.”

“Alright, then.” Celia stopped smiling. “How long have you known Felix Morose?”

“Since he was a baby, but I wasn’t at his *bris*. That was done on the ship eight days after he was born. He got to Wyndham sometime after that.”

“So from a very early age?”

“Yes.”

“What was he like as a child? Can you tell us what Felix Morose was like as a little boy?”

The Rabbi tensed up: Felix Morose as a little boy; where to begin? He’d been shy at first, but became a brat overnight, then a bully who beat up the other kids. His father had been just as mean, yet money bought these Jews anything—*Russians!*—everything due east of Breislau was suspect, and God only knows where those Morozovas came from, to say nothing of their money. Here, said Maxim Morose, a cheque for your troubles.

“Felix Morose,” the Rabbi said, “is ultimately a generous and,” he struggled to say it, “*kind* person.”

“Kind?” Celia flipped through index cards. “I don’t believe anyone has said they thought Felix Morose was a *kind* person, except maybe some of the women.”

“He donates to the *yeshiva* and to the *shul* and he sponsors I don’t know how many scholarships, so based on that, yes; I’d say he is the definition of generous and kind.”

“Kind,” Celia nodded, “and generous.”

“No,” the Rabbi corrected her, “*generous*, then kind. My English is perfect, you know.”

“Yes, it is.” She smiled, “I can hardly hear the trace of an accent.”

“I’ve only been speaking it every day for the past four hundred years, ever since the government forced us to speak English all the time. Why aren’t you doing an investigative series on that, *nu*? The government lets the Jews in, but forbids us from using any language other than English, rendering parents mute, forcing our elders to learn how to talk from disinterested teenage ingrates. Did you know about that, miss what-ever-you-said-your-name was?”

“I did not know about that, no, and my name is—”

“Do you *goyim* in the South really care about anything up here other than your precious cricket?”

“I can assure you, sir, that Australia cares, and cares quite deeply.”

“Oh Christ! What are you? Running for office or something?”

“No, sir, I’m trying to conduct an inter—”

“Fine, so ask me some questions about Felix Morose.”

“Right.” Celia was not accustomed to interruptions. “So you said you’ve known Felix Morose from an early age? You said he was kind. What more can you tell us about him? Was he a good student?”

“*Pssht*,” the Rabbi scoffed. “I wouldn’t know. He only came to me after school. You’d have to ask the teachers in that Australian school how he was as a student.”

“Would you say,” Celia paused to look at her notes, “that Felix Morose is a good Jew?”

“A good Jew?” The Rabbi flinched, “Based on whose criteria? *Your* criteria? Are you a Jew, Mrs Patkin?”

“No, I’m not Jewish, and my name is—”

“Then why are you asking me a question like that, *nu*? Is he a good Jew? Do you even know what a good Jew is?”

“No, no, I,” Celia stammered, “I’ve no idea what a good Jew is, sir, and I didn’t mean to—”

“No of course you don’t. The only thing you *goyim* know is a bad Jew, and we’re all bad, aren’t we? We can’t possibly be good; isn’t that what you people say?”

“I’ll move on to another question,” Celia felt her pulse quicken. “Do you think the allegations currently leveled against Felix Morose, allegations which at last count include four attempts to bribe various Super Test cricket matches, are true?”

“*Nu*? What the hell do I know about cricket? I can follow tractates of Talmud and reams of Mishna and Gemarrah written across five different ancient languages, but God help me if I still can’t follow a simple game of cricket. *Pssht*,” the Rabbi scoffed again, “if only it were as easy as learning this crap you call ‘Dingo English’.”

Celia tilted her head, “What do you mean by ‘Dingo English’? I’ve never heard that term before.”

“I’ll tell you one thing, though,” the Rabbi pointed a bony, jaundiced, Cirrhosis-pocked finger at the woman, “the best decision they’ve made is to seal that Royal Commission from public view and get that state-sponsored anti-Semitism off the television.”

“Now Rabbi, I’ve been covering the Royal Commission since its inception and I can assure you there’s been no anti—”

“You don’t think that’s anti-Semitism? It’s a witch hunt. Someone down there is looking for a Jew to gang up on—a big rich Jew, by the looks of it—so go on then, let’s gang up on the bastard, shall we?” The Rabbi pushed himself back in his seat, “Go on and ask me some more questions about Felix Morose.”

“You’ll have to pardon me, Rabbi, if I seem a bit confused by what you’re telling me. I’ve interviewed a lot of people for this ser—”

“Yes,” the Rabbi interrupted her again. “I know.”

“Yes, well,” Celia did not like interruptions, “very few people have described Felix Morose as generous or kind.”

“You mean those whores you’ve been interviewing all over town?”

“Well,” Celia nodded, “yes, and one of his ex-wives.”

“Ha! You can never trust anything the ex-wives tell you, or the whores. Even I know that.”

“Rabbi,” Celia attempted to smile, “I’m going to have to ask you to stop using that word.”

“Which word?”

“The word,” Celia gritted her teeth, “you’ve used a few times now to describe some of the people we’ve been interviewing here in Durack, some of the women.”

“Oh you mean the whores?”

“Yes.” Celia closed her eyes for a moment, “That would be the word.”

“What’s wrong with the word whores? That’s what those women are, they’re whores. Whores, whores, whores!”

“You can’t say that on national television.”

“You can’t?”

“No, sir, it violates our standards and practices.”

“What the hell are we supposed to call them then, harlots and Jezebels?”

“The network prefers the term ‘hostesses.’”

The Rabbi was incredulous, “Hostesses?”

“Alright, Rabbi,” Celia looked down at her notes, “let me ask you about Felix Morose’s childhood. What can you tell us about Felix Morose’s childhood?”

“Nothing.”

Celia flinched, “But just a moment ago you said you’ve known Felix Morose from a very early age. Surely you must have *some* idea what his childhood was like.”

“I do, but none of that matters now. He was a child then, and as my blackfella friends tell me, nothing counts until the kid’s initiated.”

“And was Felix Morose initiated into,” Celia racked her brain in search of the correct phraseology, “your world?”

“We’re Jews. We don’t initiate, we *bar mitzvah*.”²⁰⁹

“And did Felix Morose have one of those?”

The Rabbi narrowed his eyes, “Is this what you’re going to ask me about? What was he like as a boy? Did he have a *bar mitzvah*? Do I think he bribed cricket? Are these the things you *goyim* care about?”

“Well, sir, cricket *is* the focus of the Royal Commission.”

“You don’t care about cricket and you don’t care about Felix Morose. You people don’t care about anything. You just want his money. You just want us to get rich so you can steal our cash. That’s what they did in Europe. God forbid a Jew should get rich. They just wiped the slate clean, erasing all Christian debts—the ingrates—and then they shoved us into ghettos, and then you *goyim*, you God blessed Australian *goyim*—you and your Bob Menzies—you let is in, by God, and then we come down here, lured by those lurid tales of a golden land of plenty pristine and uncorrupted by man just waiting to be plucked like a string. That was a can of shit if I ever heard one.”

“Sir, yo—”

“This wasn’t a golden land of plenty. It was a hot red box! We didn’t find a land pristine and uncorrupted by man. We found flies, fleas and mosquitoes. You *goyim* lied! You didn’t tell us this golden land of plenty was filled with blackfellas. You *goyim* forgot to mention that, but that makes sense, seeing as how you’ve been trying to wipe them out since British time immemorial! You *goyim* ought to be ashamed of yourselves.”

“Now sir, I will have to ask you to watch your language. There are just some things you cannot say on television.”

“Oh I’ll bet.”

“Do you think Felix Morose used his money to bribe cricket?”

“Is that what you *goyim* really think is important, cricket and what Felix Morose did with his money? There are more important things you *goyim* should think about.”

Celia made a mental note to find out what the word “*goyim*” meant. “What should we think about, then?”

“Here’s an idea: you *goyim*, you’ve been trying to wipe out those blackfellas for God knows how long. Why don’t you *goyim* think about that, *nu*?”

“When you say ‘blackfellas’, Rabbi, I assume you mean Aborigines?”

“You can assume whatever you like. It’s not on my conscience. I’m part of the group you *goyim* let in to wash your hands of that little black problem. You just hoped we’d finish it off for you, but we weren’t as inventive as you *goyim*.”

“I’m sorry, sir, but what does *goy*—”

“*You’re* sorry? Ha! I bet you are.”

“What I meant was I don’t understand the wor—”

“Of course you don’t, you don’t understand anything. None of you do. You *goyim* live in complete and total ignorance, nothing but drunks.”

Celia balked, You’re one to talk. She said, “Surely you don’t mean that.”

“I’m not the *goyische* lady asking questions about Jews, now am I?”

Celia flinched, “I beg your pardon.”

“You *goyim* don’t know that for years—and I’m talking decades—the government of this country, the same *goyische* government that let us in, was taking black babies away from their black mothers on the pretext of saving them for Jesus? Have you ever heard of such profound lunacy? What the hell’s Jesus going to do with them? That bastard’s been dead for two thousand years! What kind of *shanda* is that, *nu*? Taking babies away from their mothers.”²¹⁰

“I’m not sure what you’re gett—”

“Just so long as there was just a drop of white blood in any black baby and then you *goyim* swoop in and pluck it right of the arms of his mother, but instead you investigate cricket?”

“Sir, I can assure you tha—”

“It’s more than a *shanda*, it’s an *averah*!”²¹¹ You *never* take a child away from its mother, but that’s not how you *goyim* did it. You actually *hunted* them down—black mothers with little half-caste babies—you *goyim* call them ‘mixed-bloods’ now, you’re all so enlightened all of the sudden—but now you want to make it about us Jews, the same Jews you *goyim* in the South have ignored for the past thirty years, except when you rise up to complain about us. It should be you sitting in front of that Royal Commission in Canberra!”

“Well, sir, I’m not the one sitting in front of the Royal Commission.”

“Well you should be. The whole country should be put on trial! You *goyim* stole this land and you *goyim* will have to face that someday. Either you’ll accept the fact you’re all drunken thieves and be proud of it like the good *goyim* you are or you’ll hand back what you stole as an act of downright humility.”²¹² You mark my words,” the Rabbi again pointed his bent and jaundiced finger at the woman, “you *goyim* will get yours some day, probably next century.”

“Yes,” she flipped through her index cards, “certainly.” She felt they had veered far off course.

“And after all that *verkakte* soft pillow business—and then you *goyim* let all the Jews in during the war—leave it to us to finish the job you started! Muck up our hands while you clean yours! We know what you were doing up here and we put stop to it, some of us.”

“Yes, but not *all* of you.” She countered, “Some Jews have been quite hostile toward Aborigines.”

“You *goyim* are no better. You send out a... a...” the Rabbi searched for the precise word, “*platoon* of onward Christian soldiers—blond haired, blue-eyed Anglo-Saxons, every last one of ‘em, just like that little man with the mustache—and they come out here with Bibles and tales of Jesus, but when we don’t convert, you just leave your own people out here to rot! You think you’ve cleansed yourself by letting us in? Your generosity has absolved you, has it? You let an old crippled man into your house but then you lock him up in a hot, bare room. You *goyim* still won’t let us use the telephone. We’ve been sending messages through the God damned telegraph machine for forty years! Jesus H Christ—*forty years*! Let us use the God damn telephones already!”²¹³

“I have nothing to do with the tele—”

“And then you force us to teach our kids *your* language. Then you demand we adhere to *your* standards, which we did, by the way, and to our own detriment, and now we’ve raised

generations of stupid, ungracious ingrate children! And then we go out, some of us, into a backyard you people ignored, and we find some diamonds and some iron ore. We find uranium and we dig it up, raising the GDP of this country by twenty percent, and how the hell do you thank us? You call a Royal Commission and write stories about us in the paper and go on TV to talk about the Jewish problem and how we've ruined cricket and all this and that."

"Do you think it would be a bad thing if they discovered that a Jew had bribed cricket?"

"Jesus H Christ! What the hell is wrong with you *goyim*? Who was it down there who made the decision to send an alcoholic—God rest his soul—to convert us to the Anglican Church, *nu*? Who in the hell came up with that idea? All he did was drink himself to death thanks to His Majesty's negligence. You *goyim* left him out here to die, but that's what you *goyim* do best, isn't it? You ignore things. You send them away so you don't have to look at them, just like you did with those blackfellas. You don't care that I couldn't even get the Archdiocese to come down from Wyndham for Chuck's funeral, do you? Do you *goyim* even remember him? Reverend Charles Christopher Sherbourne, the Vicar across the road? That man's wife offs herself and you *goyim* leave him out here to pickle until the old bastard croaked a good one."

"I'm afraid, sir," Celia's hands were sweaty, "that I have no idea who you're talking about."²¹⁴

"No? Well, why the bloody hell would you? In your eyes, he's a failure. He didn't convert any Jews or blacks to muster any notice from you *goyische* idiots down South. You were too shit-canned to notice. That's why you *goyim* have so many God damned rules: no telephones, don't speak Yiddish, learn English, change your name, convert and drink. You people are thirsty! Most of you *goyim* were drunk when I got off the boat four thousand years ago. I was told by a clerk—a drunken clerk—that I had to change my name but, God forbid, I be allowed to *choose* my own name. Oh no! You lot of drunks had to force one on me and why, may I ask, was the name Stieteltitz too much for your God damned *goyische* ears, *nu*?"

"I," Celia stammered, "don't know what to say."

"Jesus H Christ," the Rabbi looked around, "I need another bloody drink!"

Celia turned to Geoffrey hunched behind the camera. She made one-sided eye contact with him through the lens, and the cameraman leaned out to give her two thumbs up.

"Rabbi, sir," she smiled, "how well do you know Felix Morose?"

“*Nu?* What do you expect me to tell you?” The Rabbi glared. “He was a fine student, and he’s a God damned good Jew!”

“Wow! OK,” Celia blinked her wide eyes. “I think we just got our promo.” She turned to the camera, “Did we got it, Geoff?”

The cameraman nodded, “Oh, I’ll say.”

“Alright, we’re done here.” She smiled at the old man, “This interview is over. Thank you so much for coming in.”

“That’s it?” The Rabbi asked, “When’s this going to air, *nu?* When can I expect to be made a fool of on national *satellite* television?”

“This will hopefully be part of our fourth installment about Mr Morose.”

“*Nu?*” The Rabbi asked, “You *goyim* don’t care about Felix Morose. You just want his money.”

“Well, sir, I suppose you’d have to ask Clarkson and the other commissioners about that.”

“I’m not the investigative journalist though, now am I?” The Rabbi grunted. “Moshe! Kipke! Anschel!” He pulled himself out of the chair, “Bring me my cane!” Three bearded men swept in to help the Rabbi to his feet. He said, “Good day to *you*, Mrs Corres-Patkin.”

“Actually, sir,” she got up, “I’m not married.”

“I know you aren’t, and at this rate,” the Rabbi looked her up and down, “I don’t think you ever will be.”

Celia was stung by this statement and she fell into a mild, yet finite state of shock. She blinked her eyes four times as the Rabbi shuffled off toward a door marked “Way Out,” banishing himself from both the soundstage and from her life.

“Well,” the cameraman came up to her, “that was successful.”

“Did you hear what he just said to me?”

“Who?”

“The Rabbi.” Celia said, “That drunken old fart told me he doesn’t think I’ll ever get married.” She found the statement stung harder and deeper the more she thought about it. “What do you think he meant by that?” She gave the statement more thought, then tried to dismiss it with a “Hhnn.”

Up two levels on the elevator and through a series of corridors and they came back to the Channel Nine broadcast studio. Earlier, the broadcast studio had been quiet, dark and idle, but now it was switched on well before the two o'clock preparations for the daily news live at five. The lights were up, the cameras were rolling and the anchors were seated behind their desks while sound engineers and production technicians, wearing headphones and carrying clipboards, scurried about. Celia squinted her eyes but from that height and angle, she could only see the general "Channel Nine Breaking News" logo but not the actual news itself.

They turned a corner and stepped back into the Durack City Channel Nine newsroom, but this time the newsroom was wild with chaos. People were running in every direction; writers, editors and interns scattered amongst producers at every level of the corporate pay scale; the hustle was maddening.

"Dear God!" Celia had never seen anything like it. "Have we gone to war again?"

Geoffrey snared a low-level employee, "What the bloody hell is going on?"

The low-level employee told him the Prime Minister had just dismissed the Cabinet and dissolved both houses of Parliament, triggering yet another snap election.

"Oh," Geoffrey was unimpressed, "but did the fat bastard resign?" He glanced at Celia who, flabbergasted by the zoo that was the Durack City newsroom, was still reeling from the effects of the Rabbi's parting shot.

"And at this rate," she repeated his words, "I don't think you ever will be." She looked at her cameraman, "You don't know if rabbis are clairvoyant, do you?"

Queensland

1978

Ben Prindy stared up at the television. PSN interrupted regularly scheduled federal election coverage to focus on breaking news:

“...during this morning’s peak rush hour. The collision occurred around 8:40am and was followed by a major derailment involving at least four trains, three of which we’re packed with commuters bound for Melbourne’s CBD. Public Transport Victoria has suspended service on its network and has sent staff to the scene to assist emergency personnel with rescue and recovery operations.”

“Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.” Prindy also heard an announcement: *“Welcome to Trans Australian Airlines flight four twenty with services to Sydney and Canberra. In a moment, we will begin boarding the aircraft.”*

Prindy glanced at the *sari* seated across from him in the first class domestic travel lounge, “Woman, you ready to go now, *nu*?”

Savitra, his half-Indian common-law wife, flashed a pair of dark, furious eyes upon him, raising her gaze from the latest edition of *Hello*: “Don’t talk to me like that.” She spoke in a low voice, “Not in lingo, not here.”

Prindy came over to her. “Come on,” he held out his hand, “let’s get a drink on the plane.”

Savitra slammed the magazine shut. “Fine, but if you’re going to drink, then I’m going to smoke.”

“Don’t smoke too much.”

“I’ll smoke a whole pack if I want, and *you’re* not going to say anything about it.” She turned towards the air-bridge.

“It’s not up to me.” Prindy followed her, “I don’t own this airline.”

“Then buy it!” She turned on him now, all five feet four inches of her. “You’ve got the money. You could pick it up for a song, with your friend’s help, no doubt.”

Prindy knew she was angry and why, but her travel permit restricted her independence and she was, for better or worse, forced to accompany him on all travel until they flew back to Durack.

On the flight after takeoff, she did as promised and smoked while he drank. She lit two cigarettes: a long white Old Dominion Slim specially marketed to ladies, and a factory-rolled Land-O-Smiles filled with the finest greenery imported from Suriname.²¹⁵ Of the two, only one was permissible on the flight and the other lit to mask the scent of the forbidden.

“Who’re you trying to fool?” Common-law husband countered common-law wife: “That never works.”

“Shut up, you *piggin’ puggin’* bastard!”²¹⁶

Prindy rolled his eyes, knocking back a glass of Scotch with ice. Fishing around in the pocket on the seat back in front of him, he found fold-out safety instructions for the Boeing 727 and a square bound glossy—*National Geographic*—he assumed had been discarded by a previous passenger. He took it out and ignored the *Pirámide del Adivino* pictured on the cover, thumbing through the magazine until, much to his surprise, he came across a two-page spread of an article entitled “From Wilderness to Wasteland: the Price of Exploratory Excess in Australia’s Central-East Kimberley.” His grey eyes almost popped out of his head when he recognized the drab and dreary diamond mine in the photograph.

Prindy skimmed over the article in search of his mate’s name, finding phrases like “...*both flora and fauna have died... bovine and equestrian animals become ill and expire with blood pouring from orifices... massive disruption of the food chain... in other places, the sand has turned to fiberglass...*” The only name he found was the author’s: Shoshana Siskind, an Associate Professor of Southern Hemisphere Zoology from Catalina University in California. Prindy wondered: with a name like Siskind, you couldn’t tell if she was a Kimberley Jew.

‘The Argyle region of East Kimberley is a landscape dominated by heavy machinery and pockmarked by strip mining. Trucks numbering in the thousands kick up red dust crisscrossing the desert travelling to and from the recently re-paved Victoria Highway that links Durack City and Halls Creek to the rural red heartland of the interior.’

Prindy hid the article for a moment, stealing a glance at Savitra seated next to the window smoking a joint she held between her fingers. She was engrossed in an expose featuring “the Bachelor of the Century and the Indiscreet Divorcee” and he read on:

‘Animals that once roamed this desert, rock wallabies, red kangaroos and other marsupials, are scarce, as are the birds that once filled the sky. Local veterinarians have noted a sharp increase in the number of household pets stricken with cancer after eating local grass and plants. There has been a documented increase of cockroaches, which some claim is the reason for the near-absence of mosquitoes and other insects from the East Kimberley. Pests such as the insecta Dichaetomyia, also known as the nocturnal bush fly, have vanished along with other insects such as ants and cicadas. On the ground, or perhaps beneath it, there has been a noted increase in seismic activity...’

The stewardess pushed a trolley. “Pardon me, sir.” She smiled, “Can I get you anything to drink?”

Prindy hid the magazine and held up his glass. “Another Dimple, please?”

“Certainly.” Prindy saw her name tag when she leaned over. “And for you?” ‘Pamela’ directed her smile at Savitra, “Can I get you anything?”

Savitra looked up from *Hello* to take a drag off the joint. “I want a glass of champagne.” She blew smoke out, filling the air with the processed effluvium of marijuana. With casual nonchalance, Savitra set the joint in the ashtray, exchanging it for a brand new Old Dominion Slim she sparked up with a red lighter, returning her attention to the Prince of Wales.

Prindy waited for the stewardess to push the trolley further down the aisle before he went back to the magazine:

‘Conversely, certain types of lizards, from thorny devils to goannas to bearded dragons, have grown in size or have started to change color. Some reptiles now sprout gills, enabling amphibious capabilities previously unknown to local experts. There is also a new type of freshwater silver eel, a type of amphibious reptile that is difficult to find but has nevertheless been spotted in numerous places along the Ord River as far north as the Marlgu billabong just off the Freeland League Expressway, though it is not clear if this is a new species or the cumulative result of radioactive mutation. Indeed, rumors about two-headed

fish with three eyes and lizards more than quadruple their normal size have been plentiful in these parts ever since the advent of strip...

“Pardon me, miss.” Prindy looked up to see Pamela directing her smile at Savitra, “Is that cannabis you’re smoking?”

Savitra glanced up from a glossy page. “So what if it is?” In the ashtray in the arm rest, a lit cigarette sat smoldering next to the burning ember of a fatty wrapped around a cylindrical filter. “Do you know who I am? Do you know who *we* are?”

This question turned Pamela’s smiling lips round. “No, I’m afraid I don’t.”

Savitra nudged her head toward Prindy, “Do you know who *he* is?”

The stewardess smiled at him, “Who are you, sir?”

Prindy pursed his lips and leaned over to stub both the cigarette and the joint out in the ashtray. The stewardess thanked him and said, “Federal aviation regulations only permit cigarette smoking during the flight.”

Prindy glared at Savitra, “She knows that.” He smiled at Pamela, “Won’t happen again, miss. Thank you.”

The stewardess went back to the galley as Savitra pulled out a ten-pack of Land-O-Smiles. “What did you do *that* for?”

Prindy snatched the ten-pack from her. “Be a good girl, please. Don’t make a scene.” He shoved *National Geographic* into the seat back in front of him. “That’s the last thing we need.”

She pulled a pack of cigarettes from the outside pocket of her Gucci purse. “That’s the last thing *you* need.”

“You can’t just light up wherever you please.”

“I can do whatever I want. *We* can do whatever we want, unless you’re summoned by dear old Felix and then off you go.”

“I need another drink.”

“Give me back my pot, *nu*?” She went to grab the ten-pack out of his hands.

“Don’t be stupid.” He held her off. “If she comes back and finds you tokin’ up, it’ll be *your* photos plastered across the newspapers if there’s another public outburst.”

“We’re not in public, you bonehead. We’re on a plane!”

“Shut up, woman, and read your magazine!”

“Don’t talk to me like that when we’re in first class!”

“Oh, so now we’re in public, are we?”

“Don’t twist my words, you pork-bellied bastard!”

Pamela returned to place a glass of Scotch in front of Prindy and a flute of champagne in front of Savitra. She smiled but saw them glaring at each other and she backed away, leaving them to bicker over most of New South Wales until they landed hours later at Brindabella Airport in Canberra.²¹⁷

Australian Capital Territory

1978

At last, the Royal Commission got their chance to pose questions directly to Felix Morose whom they flew down from Durack City with the assistance of a private aircraft and some federal agents dispatched from Canberra for the task. When brought before them, they told Felix to state his name to administer the oath. Felix made a point to eye the golden letters embossed on the spine of the book they placed under his hand: *The Holy Bible - King James Version*. He took the oath with consequent ease and the chair of the Royal Commission began by addressing the summoned witness:

“I want to thank you, Mr Morose, for your presence here today. This Royal Commission is aware of the disruption your appearance has caused in terms of your various activities that are, in your words, economically beneficial to the Australian Commonwealth. We appreciate that, Mr Morose, and we appreciate the time made for you to be with us now.”

Felix snarled at this, smirking snarky at the commissioners.

“In 1965,” the chair began, “you and your then business partner discovered, and by chance no less, large scale diamond deposits in the Argyle region of Western Australia, later expanding your operations to include a number of mineral exploration enterprises scattered across both the East and West Kimberley so that today your companies, or companies you either own or control, are responsible for the extraction of iron ore, nickel, zinc, coal, opal, bauxite, aluminum, tantalite, shale, copper, uranium and, of course, diamonds. You operate a vast network of mines that, all told, provide you with an income in excess of forty million dollars in direct revenue annually, not including all subsidiary income from related industries that you either own or control, which are estimated to yield an additional ten million dollars a year, bringing your income for the previous financial year into the neighborhood of fifty million dollars. You, sir, are one of the wealthiest, most successful and most sought after businessmen in the history of Australia. Would you agree with that assessment, Mr Morose?”

“Well your honor,” Felix eased back in his chair, “I *am* under oath.”

“Now, before we get to any questions regarding your connection to International Super Test Cricket, Mr Morose, my colleagues and I have a number of questions regarding your mining

activities. We want to ask about *how* you obtain these minerals you are mining. I am advised that you and your solicitor have been briefed on this avenue of inquiry, is that correct?”

Felix Morose turned to his attorney for a brief consultation, turning back to the commissioners after a few minutes. “Yes, that is correct.”

The commissioners glanced at each other, Vincent Bennett in particular wondering what the witness needed to discuss with his attorney before answering what he thought was a basic yes-or-no question.

“In 1969, your diamond exploration enterprise,” the chair named the company, “pioneered a unique method of mineral extraction that enabled you to dig very deep very quickly in a relatively short amount of time without the use of traditional geological drilling; is this correct?”

Felix leaned over to speak to his attorney in hushed whispers while the four justices looked at each another. Vincent Bennett scribbled a note in pencil he passed to Trevor Worland: *Is he going to consult the silk after every question?*

Felix came back to the microphone, “Yes, your honour. That is correct.”

“Can you explain to the Royal Commission, Mr Morose, what that unique method of extraction is, please? Can you describe the method in laymen’s terms?”

Felix Morose turned to Reuben Spike, who opened a briefcase to retrieve a slender file he passed to his client. Felix pulled out a pair of bifocals he did not need, opening the file to bring out four sheets of paper stapled together. He turned to the second page and cleared his throat:

“In June of 1969, and in coordination with the Geosciences faculty at the Kimberley Institute of Science and Agriculture, small kiloton atomic devices were deployed in an experimental program that proved to be, over time, competitively advantageous in terms of mineral extraction, commercial productivity and market dominance, providing maximum fiduciary benefits to executives, managers, administrators, shareholders and employees.” Felix looked up from the statement he’d just read to find four justices staring down at him from the bench. He sat back, knowing he’d not been brought here to impress them.

“Mr Morose,” the chair spoke up, “we have compelled your appearance here today to obtain direct and unequivocal answers regarding your role, if such a role exists, in allegations of cheating in the sport of cricket as well as what role your companies or businesses might have played in connection to this matter. We are fully aware that this may be at times a tedious affair,

which we will get through all the more quicker if you bypass scripted answers provided to you from the content of some sales brochure peddled among your investors, and if you would also be so kind as to refrain also from consulting the gentleman to your right, Mr Morose. Though it is understandable that you will occasionally seek the advice of private council, we don't expect it at every question. I will take this moment to remind you that this is a *sealed* commission, and we expect forthright and honest answers from you. Has this been made clear to you?"

"It has, your honour."

"Good. Now tell me, how do you get those diamonds out of the ground? You use nuclear explosions?"

"That's not what they're called but small detonations are utilized as a method to obtain minerals without the initial use of a drill."

"Thank you, Mr Morose. We expect every answer to be as clear and as succinct as that one." The chair handed the floor to John Angus Limmo:

"Mr Morose, we know from your 1978 tax returns that your diamonds mines are only a fraction of your company's annual revenue. Your interests in iron ore, bauxite and uranium generate enormous profits for you and your subsidiaries, but how do you, for instance, unearth an mineral deposit?"

"There are many ways that can be done."

"How do *you* do it in your mines?"

"Each mine is different, your honour."

"How do you do it in *most* of your mines?"

"Strip mining, sir."

"Can you explain what you mean by 'strip mining,' please?"

"You remove the top layers of soil and rock out of the way so that you can get at the mineral you want to extract."

"Would that be the case at some of your mines?"

"Some, but not all."

"And how would you remove the top layers of soil and rock out of the way? What's your method there?"

"Most of the time we utilize controlled detonations."

"What kind of controlled detonations?"

“Dynamite,” Felix swallowed, “TNT.”

“What about here, Mr Morose?” The bespectacled justice clicked a button, illuminating the projected image of a drab and dreary mine onto a nearby screen. “Do you recognize this location, Mr Morose?”

“Yes, your honour. I do.”

“And where is this location, Mr Morose?”

Felix named the site and the justice asked: “And what is it that you mine there? What are those people digging out of the earth in this picture?”

“Diamonds, your honour.”

“And when your company removed those aforementioned top layers of soil and rock, Mr Morose, did they use—in your words—dynamite and TNT?”

Felix turned to his attorney, who leaned over to his client for a brief consultation, causing a commissioner to sigh, “Just answer the question, Mr Morose.”

Felix turned back to the four justices, “Your honours, we used small atomic detonations in a controlled setting to loosen the top layers of dirt and rocks.”

“Right.” The commissioners knew to expect this answer. “Put another way, Mr Morose, you are using nuclear technology in at least four instances to extract precious resources from your mines, is that correct?”

“As I said before, your honour, that’s not what they’re ca—”

“But that’s what they are, aren’t they?” The bespectacled justice broke in, “You can call them what you want, Mr Morose, but you’ve already said that’s what you’re doing. You’re using nuclear technology in mineral exploration and extraction, aren’t you?”

“We utilize small atomic devices, and *no*, not in every instance.”

“But in *this* instance,” the commissioner pointed to the image on the nearby screen, “you used nuclear technology, nuclear explosions, to loosen the dirt, is that right?”

“My companies utilize small atomic devices.”

“It is a semantic difference, Mr Morose, between ‘atomic’ and ‘nuclear.’ This Royal Commission maintains several dictionaries and we’re more than happy to bring in a grammar expert to discuss these points before we finally settle on a precise *legal* definition of either word, but for here and now, and in the interests of judicial expediency, Mr Morose—let us not mince

words—you use nuclear explosions to loosen the dirt to make way for your strip mines, is that correct?”

Felix narrowed his eyes over the bifocals he did not need and said, “I’m not sure.”

“Well then, it’s good you brought your attorney. Why don’t you consult with him before you give us your definitive answer?”

Felix Morose glared at the bespectacled justice as he leaned over to Reuben Spike. Attorney and client spoke at length, referring to those stapled sheets of paper a few times until Felix turned back to the four justices.

“I cannot confirm or deny that any atomic energy was used at that particular site but what I can confirm is that *any* atomic power used by any company under my control is used in full compliance with federal regulations and has been approved and sanctioned by several successive federal and state governments. With all due respect, gentlemen, I am totally within the law using atomic energy in my business expenditures and I am rankled by your insinuation that I am doing something illegal. Have you dragged me here today for the sole purpose of dragging my name further into the mud, or are you just trying to waste tax payer money on a misguided prosecution of someone who is totally innocent of wrongdoing?”

The four commissioners paused at this, then John Angus Limmo handed the proceedings over to his colleague.

“Mr Morose,” Trevor Worland shifted gears, “I’d like to direct your attention to the document the bailiffs are furnishing you with now.”

A robed clerk brought a bound reader to Felix Morose, setting the ledger on the table in front of him.

“Mr Morose, can you read aloud for the commission the title of the document just handed to you?”

Felix stared down at the cover, “*Her Majesty’s Treatise on the Promulgation of Atomic Agency Among Non-European Actors.*”

“Thank you, Mr Morose. Could you please turn to page sixteen of that document?”

Felix turned to page sixteen.

“Now Mr Morose, I’d like you to read out the first statement at the top of that page.”

Felix cleared his throat, ““These nation-states are expressly prohibited from obtaining atomic resources of any sort from any British entity including all government and military

corporations, defence agencies or strategically-significant businesses or from private individuals with access to these materials. This decree is universal and hereby applied to all British dominions, colonies, states, territories and provinces subject to Her Majesty's rule as signed by the Letters Patent under the Great Seal of the Realm effective immediately from this date forward." Felix looked up from the document, "You want me to read the Latin as well?"

"That won't be necessary, thank you." Trevor Worland continued, "Beneath that Royal Decree, there is a list. Do you see that list? Are you able to locate it?"

Felix looked over his bifocals, "I am."

"Read that list aloud for the commission, please."

Felix glossed over the list before he began: "Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, China, Cuba, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Japan, the Korean Republic, Kurdistan, Lebanon, Libya, Manchuria, Mongolia, Morocco, the Philippines, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Soviet Union, Syria, Transjordan, Tripoli, Tunisia."

"Thank you, Mr Morose. Now, though this is a tad unorthodox, I'd like to hear from you what you think that list means in regard to the Royal Decree that appears directly above it."

Felix turned to his lawyer, who shook his head. Felix turned back to the four justices, "I'm afraid I don't understand the question, your honours."

"That's nonsense, Mr Morose. You understand perfectly well what he's asking you. Don't waste this Commission's time."

"Why not, *nu*? You people clearly think I'm guilty, but you haven't charged me with anything. *You're* wasting *my* time."

"You speak to me like that again, Mr Morose, and I'll see to it you're held in contempt."

"That's rich. I'm not the one who's contemptuous."

"I'm warning you, Mr Morose."

"You're warning me?" Felix scoffed. "This whole thing is nothing but a kangaroo court."

The chair wrapped his gavel and said, "I will take it upon myself to rephrase my colleague's question: are you aware that the countries listed there on page sixteen are, in the paraphrased words of Her Majesty's Royal Decree, prohibited from obtaining atomic resources of any sort from any British entity including businesses like the kind you own or control or from private individuals with access to those materials, which would include someone such as yourself? Are you explicitly aware of this fact, Mr Morose?"

“Truth be told, your honour, Royal Decrees put forth by the powers-that-be in London are not part of my daily thoughts.”

“That’s perfectly understandable, Mr Morose, but is this the first time you have heard of *this* Royal Decree, or were you completely ignorant of its existence until today?”

Felix Morose stared eyeball-to-eyeball at the chair for a prolonged moment, leaning over to Reuben Spike, who whispered something in his ear. Felix nodded and pulled away from his attorney, “I cannot recall one way or the other, your honour, and will respectfully decline to answer.”

“I’m afraid that’s not possible, Mr Morose.”

“Then my answer is no, your honour.”

“Let the record show,” Trevor Worland spoke up, “that the witness has answered ‘no’ to the question.”

Vincent Bennett seconded that, “Hear, hear!”

Gresley Drummond Clarkson said, “So this *isn’t* the first time you’ve heard of *Her Majesty’s Treatise on the Promulgation of Atomic Agency Among Non European Actors* is it, Mr Morose?”

Felix realized his mistake and he parted his lips to speak, but he was cut off by the chair, “I will remind the witness that he remains under oath.”

The witness turned to glare at his attorney, then back at the four justices, “No, your honours. It isn’t.”

“So you were aware that it would be against Royal Decree for a private individual such as yourself to sell atomic resources to any of the countries on that list, that is to say illegal?”

“I’ve never been more aware of that fact than I am right now, your honour.”

“Thank you, Mr Morose.” The four justices placed hands over microphones and put their heads together for a quick and private discussion. After a few minutes, Vincent Bennett came to the fore:

“Mr Morose, I want to talk now about your connections to International Super Test Cricket and to various squads that play in the Dominion League, in particular the Australian teams.” He referred to some notes, “In 1974, you won one point two million dollars betting on a test match between Toorak and Newcastle. This was your first major win, or at least the first win

written up in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Later that same year, there was a test match between Trinidad and Tobago and Belmopan, and in that match, you—”

Felix butted in, “I *lost* money on that match.”

“Yes, but in the following year, in 1975, you won three point six million dollars when Daylesford lost to Durack City in a surprise upset in Sydney. I remember that win very prominently, Mr Morose. It was in the news for a week and then in 1976 you won an unprecedented four million dollars betting on a test match in Auckland between Christchurch and Bournemouth.” The justice went on to name other dates, locations and test matches; he said, “Over the past six years, Mr Morose, there are several indications that you have won more than twenty million dollars as the result of well-placed bets. You are twenty million dollars richer today than you would be had you not bet on cricket; is that correct?”

“I am not sure about twenty million dollars.”

“You will concur, Mr Morose, that your declared income has been greatly supplemented by the winning of bets placed on cricket on your part, correct or incorrect?”

“That’s part of the public record. My betting on cricket has been media fodder for years and I’ve declared my winnings legally. There is nothing illegal about any of that, and I resent the implication that it’s otherwise.”

The commissioner smirked, “I only have one other question, Mr Morose.” They had him cornered now, “Where did you get the money to place those bets?”

Felix Morose glared at Vincent Bennett for a long, drawn out moment, his face stern with fury. “It’s my money.” Some of his rage reared. “You want to tell me how to spend it in retrospect?”

“You’re welcome to do whatever you want with your money, Mr Morose, but can you tell us how much money you’ve spent placing bets? Can you furnish us with a rough estimate?”

“*Nu?*” Felix flipped through the four stapled pages looking for figures. He found none and turned to glare at his attorney.

“If you are unable to supply that information to the commission, Mr Morose, then we’re left with no choice but to rely on information provided to us through earlier testimony, which we are well within our rights to do.” Vincent Bennett read through some stapled sheets of his own. “In the calendar year of 1976, Mr Morose, you spent approximately ten million dollars on crick—”

“No, your honour, and with all due respect,” Felix countered, “that is just not true”

“Let me finish!” The commissioner glared down at the witness. “Of that ten million, Mr Morose, approximately four million was spent on the placing of bets, and by this I mean *documented* tabulated betting in the strictest sense. You turned up, went to a bookie, placed a bet and if that team won, you won money. This is sort of thing that was written about in the newspapers Would you agree with that, Mr Morose?”

Felix shook his head, “Those numbers are not accurate.”

“Here’s my question, Mr Morose: if you only netted fifty million dollars in personal income in the form of profit dividends paid to you by various companies you either own or control, does that mean you spent nearly a fifth of it betting on cricket matches?”

Felix Morose remained silent.

“The audit tells us you spent ten million betting on cricket, but we can only account for four million dollars worth of bets. So the question must be asked: if you spent four million dollars placing bets, then where did the other six million go? In more direct language, and I put it to you thusly, Mr Morose: something does not add up. I know it’s complicated. We’ve had expert testimony from forensic accountants who have explained this to us and, by the looks of it, Mr Morose, you’re spending millions of dollars betting on cricket in 1976 we just can’t find according to your tax returns. Those experts could not account for this discrepancy, so have you got one for us today, Mr Morose?”

The witness sat rooted in place.

“Well, Mr Morose? What say you to this?”

“Well, your honour,” Felix did not consult his attorney, “it is simply not true.”

“Yes, you say that now, Mr Morose, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. You are aware we’ve been hearing testimony regarding your activities in connection to cricket for over three years now, are you not?”

“*Nu?*” Felix said, “I run a dozen companies. You think I have time to sit around watching PSN all day, *nu?*”

“I want to ask you about the other six million of this ten million you spent on cricket, Mr Morose. As I believe you are well aware, there have been a number of witnesses that have provided testimony to this commission claiming you spent approximately six million dollars influencing the outcomes of various Super Test matches in 1976 alone.” Vincent Bennett looked

up from his notes to find an irate Jew fuming back at him. “Did you bribe various Super Test cricketers or any team officials, team captains, squad members or umpires in the lead up to the Toorak test match against Newcastle in 1974?”

“No.”

“Did you give money to any team officials or captains, or to any squad members or umpires in the lead up to the 1974 Trinidad and Tobago test match against Belmopan?”

“Absolutely not.”

“Did you give money to any team officials or to any squad members from Daylesford or from Durack City in the lead up to their test match in 1975 at the Sydney Cricket Ground?”

“Nope.”

“And in 1976, when you won four million dollars betting on Bournemouth for a test match in Auckland against Christchurch, did you bribe any squad members or team captains from either team prior to that test match?”

“For the fourth time, no.”

“Is it thus your testimony before this Royal Commission here today that you did not bribe any Super Test squad members or team captains, or anyone else on the pitch, at any time to play a certain way or to make a call a certain way at a certain time or to, in simple terms, *throw* a match one way or the other? Are you saying you did not provide money to make these things happen?”

Felix Morose thought about *King James* and said, “I have never once given money to any Super Test captain or squad member or umpire *ever* in the history of my life.”

“Did you ever provide money to other people, people like Mordecai Quonset, also known as Mordecai Vanunu and as Jonathan Crossman, among other aliases, who passed it on to various squad members or team captains or umpires in exchange for throwing Super Test matches?”

“Absolutely not. Never.” *King James* loomed large over Felix, “Not once in my life!”

“That’s fine that you say that, Mr Morose, but just so you’re aware, we have evidence that says otherwise.”

“Then lay a charge, gentlemen. I look forward to a claim of libel.”

“You know what, Mr Morose?” The commissioner threw down his pen, “I *will* lay a charge, an accusation right at your feet, if you will pardon the informality.” His tone indicated

anything but informality. “Based on previous evidence and testimony given to these proceedings, I believe it is a fair and accurate statement, Mr Morose, that it looks like you have been bribing both players and captains and, in some cases, umpires and referees, to throw various cricket matches and that you bet on those teams to win a lot of money, a lot more than you spent on placing the bets. Based on your tax returns, Mr Morose, and on our own forensic accountants, it would appear that you used money obtained through illegal activities to place not only these magnanimous bets but also to systematically bribe just about everyone on the pitch at that test match in 1975. We have troves of evidence, Mr Morose, that back this claim up, despite your innovative cloak-and-dagger attempts to shell-game your evident participation in this corruption.

“What’s more, Mr Morose, and in addition to your recklessly impertinent behaviour here today, it would appear, indeed it is abundantly clear, that the money you used to bribe and bet on cricket is in fact the profit of an illegal transaction between you and certain persons connected to the atomic energy programs for the State of Israel. You’ve been selling your pioneering nuclear technology to the Jews, Mr Morose, in full violation of a Royal Decree and you’ve been corrupting cricket as a method through which you launder those ill-gotten gains back into the domestic economy. Now, sir—Mr Morose—I ask you: what say you to this?”

Felix Morose shrugged. “For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe.”²¹⁸

Vincent Bennett was apoplectic: “How dare you impugn my dignity with such a thinly-veiled insinuation? Shame on you, Mr Morose, for the invocation of, and I quote, your ‘tribe’! For if there is one thing that has become scathingly clear throughout the duration of this years-long Royal Commission, it is that your extensive and grandiose actions in these matters has not been motivated by any concept of a tribe, Mr Morose, not on your part. Not as you’ve demonstrated it, at least, and on that note, let me be clear: I’m not suggesting you sold nuclear technology to the Jews due to some personal affinity or because of some Judaic cultural heritage or lineage or as the result of some sort of religious obligation to your Jewish Israeli brethren on your part, Mr Morose. Oh no. I’m suggesting you sold that nuclear technology to the Jews solely for the sake of profit!”

Trevor Worland piped up, “Hear, hear!”

“You wanted to make an extra buck, Mr Morose, and it looks like you broke the law selling nuclear technology to a country expressly forbidden from that type of transaction with no thought as to what that country might do with it. Though it is beyond the mandate of this

Commission, it is known to the four of us that there are several indications that this technology was not only weaponized by that country, but ultimately deployed for use against the Egyptian Third Army in the Sinai Peninsula in 1973.”²¹⁹ Vincent Bennett stared down at the witness, watching him pour water into a glass, spilling some onto those stapled sheets of paper. “Are you aware of this, Mr Morose?”

“*Nu?*” Felix took a drink, his hand shaking, “I don’t pay much attention to the news.”

“You *are* the news, Mr Morose, and I will request that you be held in contempt, if for no other reason than your testimony here today. On your honour, sir,” The commissioner turned to the chair, “throw the book at him and send this man to jail!”

Trevor Worland agreed, “Hear, hear!”

The chair rapped his gavel as Felix Morose gulped another drink.

*

Ben Prindy uncorked a three-sided bottle of Dimple to pour Scotch over ice. He returned the cork to the bottle and took the Scotch to the sofa in front of the television. The channel was tuned to PSN; Celia Corres-Patkin standing beneath wattle at the bottom of the steps leading up to Parliament:

“And how hopeful are you that the latest rounds of coalition negotiations will be successful?”

“Oh I’m very hopeful.”

“Do you think it’s likely United will emerge as coalition leader?”

“I don’t want to speculate on that just yet. These types of negotiations are very sensitive.”

“That’s understandable, and I’m sure you’re aware that Labor is also in the midst of their own coalition negotiations. What do you say to political commentators who predict a coalition lead by Labor instead of United?”

“Again, I don’t want to comment on coalition negotiations. Many people are working hard on that and it would be premature to comment on that prior to an outcome. I will say this, though: the United Party won the most seats in the general election, and that ought to count for something in terms of which party leads the Government.”

“Yes, but United didn’t win a majority.”

“No one did, but we won more seats than Labor.”

Prindy chewed a piece of ice; the Dimple felt spicy as it coursed its way down. Prindy was familiar with Celia Corres-Patkin; she’d been hounding his office in Durack for months requesting an interview, but he was less familiar with the matronly politician she was interviewing.

“You will forgive me for saying this, but I’ve heard some tout your name as a possible successor for party leadership.”

The matronly politician—the name on the screen said she was Margaret Guilfoyle—laughed at this, *“Well that is certainly flattering, but again I don’t want to speculate on the ongoing nature of coalition negotiations.”*

“Have you been asked to stand for party leadership? Would you step up as leader of United if they asked you to?”

“Well,” the matronly politician appeared to give the question some thought, *“one ought to do what’s best for the Party.”*

Prindy got up from the sofa to change the television to Channel Seven where he found JJ and Francis investigating a love-triangle murder-suicide in a Riverside hotel room very similar, he realized, to the hotel room he was standing in. He went over to the mini-bar for a refill, listening to theme music play over the closing credits for *Cop Shop*. The hotel mini-bar: Prindy had read up on these in a recent trade magazine; they’d been installed in hotel rooms in Hong Kong on a trial basis years earlier, boosting annual revenue by over four percent. He picked up the laminated menu and looked at the prices: four dollars for a can of Coke, twenty-two for fifty millilitres of Chivas Regal. Prindy scoffed, then chuckled; he and Felix could easily afford such overpriced beverages: four was the same as twenty-two, both were less than pocket change to them now. The thought that came to his mind revolved around investment: who made these mini-bars? Prindy looked the mini-bar over, searching the small refrigerator for a brand name. Did they have shareholders? How did their stock perform?

There was a loud knock on the door but Prindy made no attempt to cross the room. The door was unlocked and opened to let in a heavy thicket of iron, brass and lawyers, the most senior of which was a diminutive man by the name of Reuben Spike; Prindy had met him a few times previously back in Durack.²²⁰

Reuben Spike held his hand out to Prindy, who did not acknowledge nor receive the gesture. “Mr Morose would like to see you out front, if you don’t mind.”

Prindy had an unpleasant history with the pocket-sized lieutenant, “*Mister Morose?*”

“You know who I mean.”

“Fine.” Prindy threw back the drink, clinking ice in the glass. “Where is he?”

Reuben led Prindy down the halls of the Hotel Kurrajong. Many of the all-white patronage were shocked to see a black man—a refined and well-dressed black man—strolling across the lobby. Others were appalled when the doorman, a white servant, held the door open for Prindy, while a few others; the very few who recognized him as Ben Prindy, former business partner to Felix Morose; were just shocked to see *him*, one of Australia’s *nouveau riche* Bush Industrialists: what could *he* be doing in Canberra?

Prindy was taken around to the side of the hotel to the delivery docks where Felix Morose was waiting for him, sitting in the open door of a Holden sedan listening to the radio and smoking a cigarette.

“And here he is, sir.” Reuben Spike presented him: “Mr Ben Prindy.”

Prindy took in the sight of Felix Morose. He had aged; he looked like a man who’d fathered too many children, spawned too many ex-wives and had, as Savitra said, engendered the ire of every cricket-loving man, woman and child in the Commonwealth.

Felix rose up out of the vehicle, “Ben.” He held out his hand.

Prindy grasped the hand, “*Mister Morose.*”

“Yes, yes.” Felix rolled his eyes.

“It’s hot out here. What’s wrong with indoors?”

“Don’t be silly, Ben. They’ve got that room bugged. *You!*” Felix turned on Reuben Spike, “Hover with the brass. My mate and I are going for a walk.”

“Watch out!” The attorney said, “Don’t let them get any photos of you talking to him.”

Felix turned to Prindy, “You’ll have to pardon that annoying little man. I pay him to do a job he didn’t do very well, so he’s overcompensating with all this secrecy.” He turned back toward his lawyer, “Let them take my photo, Reuben. I’m allowed to talk to me mate.” Felix came back to Prindy, “I’ve got my own bodyguards hiding in the trees, see?”

Prindy did not see. Aside from casual and somewhat obligatory greetings during various holiday seasons, Felix and Prindy had managed to avoid each other for the better part of the past

four years. There had been some sort of falling out—both were reticent about the details—that remained unresolved between them. Prindy was curious to see if Felix would broach that issue here and now.

“You’re probably wondering why I asked you here.” Felix pulled out a pack of cigarettes, offering one to Prindy, who declined. “I’m sure you might’ve heard,” he flicked a Zippo lighter, “I’m in a bit of a pickle with the Government.” Felix closed the lighter, returning it to his pocket. “And I need your help with it.”

“Aha!” Prindy nodded, realizing Felix would not take *this* opportunity to resolve the unresolved. “I see.”

They walked on for a few paces, neither saying anything, coming to the footpath fronting National Circuit near the corner of Blackall Street.

“*Nu?*” Felix asked, “How’s Savitra?”

“Well, Felix, I won’t lie to you. She sure as shit ain’t happy we’re here.”

“She came with you, did she?”

“We were on holiday.”

“Oh.” Felix had not known that. “Was that what you were doing up there?”

“I was trying to keep away from that reporter.”

“Celia? Right,” Felix nodded. “Thanks for that.”

“All good.” Prindy said, “I was obliged.” He and Felix turned the corner in silence, only the chirps of birds and the sound of Felix smoking could be heard.

“So Felix, did you do it?”

“Do *what*, Ben?”

“Did you bribe those players like they say you did?”

“Well, Ben,” Felix took a long drag, “there’s a reason why it’s sealed from the public, now isn’t there?”

“*That’s* your response?”

“What does Savitra think?”

“She thinks you’re guilty as.”

“*Meh,*” Felix blew out some smoke. “She’s never been fond of me.”

“She only met you a handful of times.”

“How many times does it take, *nu*?” Felix did not want to hear Prindy tell him the feeling was mutual. “What do you think, Ben? Do *you* think I’m guilty?”

Prindy gave his answer some thought. “No.” He said, “But I bet you’re going to get away with it.”

“*Nu*?”

“What do you need me for?”

“Well,” Felix fell silent.

“*Nu*, Felix? Don’t tell me you flew me down here to take a walk in this heat.”

“Tell me, Ben,” Felix cleared his throat, “what do you know about federal politics and the balance of power?”

Prindy thought about that matronly politician he’d seen on television. “You know I don’t pay attention to that stuff.”

“No return on investment, so you’re not interested, hey?”

“You’re not talking about an investment though, are you?”

Felix exhaled, tossing the cigarette ahead of him to step on it a couple of paces later. He pulled out a large envelope he’d folded in half to fit into his pocket. He handed this envelope to Prindy, who opened it to find a small in-colour photograph—the type of photograph that accompanies passport and travel permit applications—and a thin dossier and some newspaper clippings. Prindy didn’t recognize the curly-haired man in the photograph, but the first page of the dossier listed a name—Abraham Growman—his age, his birth date, his business address and personal address—both located in rival suburbs of Durack—as well as his net worth and his telegraph instructions alongside the names of spouses, children, parents, siblings, cousins and, much to Prindy’s surprise, household pets.

The newspaper clippings—there were four of them, all out of date—were political in nature; two cut from the *Durack City Register*: the first an article about ‘Honest Abe’s’ campaign launch for a seat in the House of Representatives, the second a story describing his election win as the only Independent to run without any serious local opposition. The third article, cut from Rupert Murdoch’s *The Australian*, listed various non-Labor and non-United Members of Parliament currently being courted by both Labor and United, while the last article, cut from the previous day’s newspaper, explained how the balance of power at present came down to

whichever non-affiliated MP joined whichever fragmented and tenuous coalition in an effort to secure the Governor-General's blessing to form a minority government.

"I don't follow." Prindy asked, "What the hell does any of this stuff have to do with anything?"

"Well, Ben," Felix lit another cigarette, "I'd like you to take a meeting with that man and I'd like you to relay a message."

"A message from you?"

"I'd like you to give him *that*." Felix indicated the dossier. "Take a closer look at it later." He said, "You'll understand why."

"*That's* your message, for me to give him *this*?"

"That's not all, of course." Felix turned on his heel, Prindy followed and they started walking in the other direction. "I'd like you to offer my new friend a lifetime of campaign support so long as he agrees to four conditions."

They walked in silence for a moment and Prindy grunted, "*Nu*, Felix. Four conditions?"

Felix took a long drag before blowing out a stream of smoke, "Number one: this sure as shit can't go to trial; no criminal proceedings down the line in the future stemming from this whatsoever. Number two: they're not putting me on trial, and they're not taking my money if they do. Number three: *if* they put me on trial, and *if* they find me guilty—which they won't—I want the verdict sealed from the public, if there is one, but that's only if my main objective proves elusive, and that's number four, the big one: I want *that* man to make the Royal Commission go away. I want it called off and shut down. Tell Growman uncounted riches await him so long as *those* particular conditions are met whenever he joins whichever coalition he will later crown Government."

Prindy's jaw fell open, "You want me to bribe a federal politician?" He looked at the small photograph, "You want me to corrupt the national government?"

"It's already corrupted, Ben. Besides," Felix took another drag from the cigarette, "it'll collapse in a year. Minority governments never last more than that, eighteen months tops. That's why we keep having one bloody election after another."

"Then why not call the Governor-General and get him to dismiss the Government, *nu*?"

"That's impossible, Ben. The Governor-General would *never* do such a thing, and we just came out of an election."²²¹

“So you want me to buy him off?”

“I want you to *convince* him what the best course of action is *for him*.”

Prindy glanced at the newspaper clippings and thumbed through the thin dossier; he’d never heard of Abraham Growman, the newly-elected Independent member for Durack. “With whose money? I’m not using my own for this.”

“Of course not. We’re going to use no one’s money.”

“How do you figure?”

“Look at the last page.”

Prindy narrowed an eye at the greying blond and flipped to the last page of the dossier. He found a twelve digit number written next to ‘*Banque Hottinger & Cie SA – Zurich*.’ Prindy raised an eyebrow.

“You just give him that,” Felix exhaled, “but only *after* he joins a coalition that later forms a Government based on those terms.”

Prindy glanced at his mate.

“*Nu?*” Felix replied, “He can’t very well do what I need him to if he’s part of the opposition, now can he?”

“What if he doesn’t go for it?”

“He will. Money is a drug to politicians. They can’t live without it. It’s like air, they need it for sustenance.”

“Which side you want him to join, Labor?”

“I don’t care which side he goes with, so long as they drop the Royal Commission.”

Prindy flipped through the first pages of the dossier. Abraham Growman was a first-generation Kimberley Jew of Bavarian origin who had worked as a solicitor prior to election. Prindy looked at the photograph. Abraham Growman was not unattractive; he was young with curly-hair but looked somewhat short and somewhat stocky. The dossier claimed he was capable of tremendous charisma and that he possessed a fine gift for sparkling oratory. One of the newspaper clippings from the *Durack City Register* claimed he was an ambitious up-and-comer, a self-styled “man of the people,” though the commentary from *The Australian* claimed he was lucky to have made it this far without much political experience, learning or theory. The assessment at the end of the dossier was succinct: Abraham Growman was a Durack local and,

more importantly, an eager opportunist in search of a long-term political career, exactly—Prindy realized—the kind of elected official Felix would want deep in his back pocket.²²²

“Do you even know this guy?” Prindy asked, “How am I supposed to meet him?”

“You’re one of the richest men in Australia *and* you’re a member of his constituency.” Felix winked, “Something tells me you won’t have any dramas scoring a meeting.” Felix watched Prindy flip through the dossier. “Sprinkle some of that blackfella magic on him, Ben. Sing him a song. I’m sure you can work over a politician.”

The dossier contained personal information about Abraham Growman; which synagogue he attended, where his father worked, that his family sailed from the Seychelles later than most—in the late 1950s—and that his brother-in-law owned an illegally-irrigated poppy field out past Ivanhoe and had a taste for underage rent boys and men of colour.

Felix noticed Prindy reading that page of the dossier. “That’s in case he refuses.”

Prindy glanced up, his face aghast.

“Don’t be shy dropping that piece of trivia into polite conversation, if he needs a gentle nudge.” Felix took another drag from the cigarette, “I’m sure he’ll want to avoid a scandal and a shock resignation.”

“How did you find that out?”

“*Nu?*” Felix said, “I have my ways.”

Prindy flipped back to the front of the dossier. “Well, where the hell is he, then?” He eyed the two addresses on the first page, “Back in Durack?”

“He’s here in Canberra. You can go to him.”

“*Nu?* How?”

“Easy.” Felix used the Zippo to light another cigarette, “He’s sending a car to collect you at four.”

Prindy turned to his mate, “You’re not joking, are you?”

“*Nu?*” Felix smirked, “Am I ever?”

Western Australia

1980

Rifkah scooped ice cream from a square-shaped, plastic container marked “Streets,” filling a white ceramic bowl with dark chocolate she doused in Arnott’s chocolate fudge. She filled another ceramic bowl—this one black—with French vanilla smothered over by a glob of maraschino cherries poured from a sugary elixir enclosed in a square jar. Rifkah returned the tubs of ice cream to the freezer and pulled a couple of spoons from a drawer. She returned to the salon where she found her parents and siblings scattered across the leather cushions of a teak sofa imported from some distant corner of the wood-making Orient. Rifkah handed the white bowl to her father and the black bowl to her mother, both of whom said “Thank you,” and then she left the room.

“Nu?” Baron, watching television, spoke to his wife with a full mouth, “She didn’t want any dessert?”

Miri *nouk*’ed, “She said she had *shiurei bayit*.”*

“Ah!” Baron shoveled a dollop of frozen chocolate into his mouth.

The programme faded to commercials and then a Channel Seven newsbreak came up on the television:

“Good evening, I’m Peter Waltham.

“Eighteen motor vehicles, including two road-trains, have been involved in a major collision on the China Wall Expressway just south of Halls Creek CBD. No report yet on any fatalities.

*“US President Gore Vidal touched down earlier tonight in Taipei for talks with the People’s Republic about improving trans-Pacific relations between America, Japan and the Philippines.”*²²³

“In cricket, Margate triumphed over Mombasa at the Gabba earlier today in Brisbane by 387 runs overall with twelve wickets in the last inning alone.

“Meanwhile in football, the Fitzroy Lions cruised to victory over St Kilda at the MCG while Carlton hopes to snag a victory from the Bombers later tonight at Flemington.

“And now here’s Delphinia with the weather.”

* “*Shiurei bayit*” is the Hebrew equivalent of “homework.”

Miri and Baron, along with Daniel and Little Kurt, watched the forecast with passing interest, their attentions focused on the conspicuous consumption of ice cream. Devorah, their second eldest, stood up with an empty bowl, her face and hair streaked with the remnants of strawberry.

“May I take my bowl into the kitchen now, please?” She bit her bottom lip, watching her mother and father turn to stare at her. “I promise I’ll come right back.”

Two beats passed and Miri said, “Yeah, alright.”

Devorah rushed from the room.

“*Kayn ay’norah!*”^{*} Baron turned to his wife, his mouth full again. “What was that about?”

Miri let French vanilla melt on her tongue, “She’s been acting different lately.”

Baron thought about this for a moment; he thought Devorah might still be too young for women’s business and he said, “Hhnn,” and turned back to the commercials.

Devorah, in the meantime, stepped into the kitchen, a large, cavernous room at night, void of light and people. She rinsed the bowl in the sink and placed it in the dishwasher for dairy plates and utensils. She went over to a drawer, opening it to peer in. Spoons—wooden spoons, plastic spoons, spoons made of stainless steel, spoons of all shapes and sizes: slotted spoons, curved spoons, long spoons, short spoons, round spoons, flat spoons, globular spoons and ladles—Devorah bit her bottom lip; the choice astounded her. She noticed the tray the spoons sat in, a white tray lining the interior of the drawer. These were *milchik* spoons and she wondered if she ought to grab a *fleishik* spoon instead.*

Devorah closed the drawer and crossed to the other side of the island in the centre of the darkened kitchen. She opened the corresponding drawer and found a different *cache* of spoons resting in a blue tray. The meat spoons here were different from the dairy spoons and she selected a long, copper spoon—deep and bulbous—attached to a thin neck and round fiddle. She glanced around at the unlit kitchen, checking for others. She was alone and she pulled the long

* “*Kayn ay’norah*” is a Yiddish phrase akin to “Without the Evil Eye!” or “Knock on wood.” It also sounds similar to the name of “Kununurra,” a small town in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia.

* In kosher-keeping households, all plates, pots, pans, cups, glasses as well as cooking and eating utensils are separated according to meat versus dairy: “*milchik*” indicates dairy, “*fleishik*” indicates non-dairy. (Both words are also spelled “*milchig*” and “*fleishig*.”)

copper spoon from the drawer, shoving it long ways under her arm where it would remain hidden if she didn't move her elbow.

Devorah returned to the salon, walking in stiff and upright to a spot on the thick carpet where she could sit in full view of the television yet hidden behind a bulky ottoman with only her legs and stocking feet visible to her parents and brothers.

"Daddy," Daniel stood up in front of the television, "when's Dumbo coming on?"

"In a minute, Danny, this show's almost over." Baron scraped liquid fudge from the bottom of the bowl, "These are the promos for next week."

Daniel turned back to the screen:

"...talking to Abe Growman, the man some are calling the most powerful Independent politician Australia has ever seen."

A curly-haired man appeared on the screen, walking through a crowd of supporters, smiling and shaking hands. The image shifted to the House of Representatives in Canberra where the curly-haired man, now dressed in an off-white suit, stood among the green pews of Parliament:

"The time has come—indeed it is well and truly overdue—for Australia to take its necessary and rightful place as a Dominion of the British Empire once and for all. It is utterly ridiculous that we lag behind the rest of the Empire in regard to this Treaty. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves that we are playing third, if not fourth or fifth-fiddle to the likes of St Kitts and Nevis and the newly formed city-state of Brazzaville. This is appalling, Mr Speaker, and I encourage both the Prime Minister and the leader of the opposition to put forth motions ratifying this Treaty immediately."

The image cut to that same man dressed in a light suit and seated in a chair. He lit a cigarette and dropped the lighter on a table where it clinked on the glass of a nearby ashtray. He crossed his legs as a voice from off camera asked him: "What do you think is the most pressing issue facing Australia in the next decade?"

"Well, aside from the Treaty of Westminster—which absolutely needs to be ratified immediately by Parliament—I'd say the most pressing issue facing Australia is what our role in the world should be now that we're part of the G6 economic summit."

Daniel was unable to comprehend what he saw on the television, not until another set of commercials came on. Baron told Daniel to finish that last bit of ice cream, but he was ignored

by his sons who became hypnotized by the logo for “A Seven Network Special Presentation...”

“I’ll put these away, then.” Baron took the empty bowl from his wife and, piling it in his, he grabbed the two smaller bowls given to Daniel and Kurt. He slipped past Miri to drop them in the sink where they’d remain overnight. In the kitchen, Baron heard excitement coming from the salon; Daniel and Little Kurt jumping up and down for Disney’s *World on Ice* on television, tape-delayed from the Alpine Winter Olympic Stadium in Mount Buller.²²⁴ Baron went to the stove to flip on the kettle, opening a nearby cabinet to retrieve a mug.

Rifkah entered the kitchen slugging her cello in a case. She stood almost as tall as the case, covered as it was by travel stickers from Ansett and Qantas, Vanuatu and Rome. She hauled the case over to the corner where she propped it up near the door.

“Nu?” Baron asked, “You’re going to leave it there?”

Rifkah wore a pair of glasses she pushed up the bridge of her nose. “I don’t want to lug it down tomorrow and I have orchestra in the morning.”

“That’s right.” Baron poured a cup of tea. “When’s the concert?”

“Late April.” She said, “After Pesach after the wet.”

Baron nodded, “Of course.” His daughter had regaled him with tales of loose strings made moist by heat and humidity snapping off in rehearsals, whacking string players in the hands and face. “Mum says you had *shiurei bayit*?”

Rifkah nodded, “And a math test on Wednesday.”

Baron smiled, his daughter was good at everything. “Do you want some ice cream?”

Rifkah declined but followed her father back into the salon. Daniel and Kurt were transfixed by Disney’s *World on Ice*, lying side-by-side on the carpet just inches away from the static glow. Rifkah took a seat near the end of the teak sectional, sitting caddy-corner to her parents. The music from the television built into a crescendo as floppy elephants spun around a skating rink in Victoria. The song ended and the elephants posed for applause. Upstairs, a baby started crying; only Miri heard it at first but then both babies started crying, and everyone heard that.

“I thought the TV might be too loud.” Miri pulled away from her husband, rising from the sofa to tend to their latest pair of offspring.

Baron got up to move toward the television, reaching in to turn the knob. “Relax, boys,” he told Daniel and Kurt, “I’m not switching it off, just turning it down so as not wake Sammy and Junior, alright?”

Daniel and Kurt couldn’t have cared less, the way they looked through, between and around their father as he clambered in front of the television. They just wanted Baron to move out of the way.

Baron noticed his daughter then, sitting with her legs spread open, leaning against the wall near the sofa. Her skirt was pushed up above her waist and hips, confined in the hollow of her belly by the long, copper neck of a spoon she jiggled into the crotch of her panties. Baron was at first perplexed by what he saw, but he quickly grasped the magnitude of the vision:

“Devorah! Stop that right now!”

Devorah pulled the spoon from between her legs, holding it up for all to see.

“What are you doing?”

Devorah bit her bottom lip.

Baron turned to Rifkah, “Did you know about this?”

“*Nu?*” Rifkah pushed her glasses up. “She’s always touching herself like that.”

Baron turned to his other daughter seated on the floor. “Devorah! Cover yourself!”

“Baron?” He heard his wife call out from upstairs. She used a word in *Language* and said, “Can you lend a hand, please?”

Baron rushed up the stairs in an instant.

Rifkah turned to the television. On the screen, Snow White jumped a triple axel while seven dwarfs spun circle-eights around her, everyone whistling. Rifkah passed a glance at her younger sister; Devorah had returned the long, copper spoon to her groin, her gaze affixed firmly to the television where Disney’s *World on Ice* was interrupted by *Seven Network Breaking News*. Daniel and Little Kurt started to whinge.

“Good evening, I’m Roger Climpson reporting live from Sydney.

“This just in from our London bureau: the Government of Harold Wilson has collapsed with reports suggesting Lord Louis Mountbatten is to be installed by Her Majesty the Queen as emergency caretaker Prime Minister of Great Britain. No word yet on—”

“*Nein! Nein! Nein! Nein!*” Little Kurt—the lightest and whitest child in the room—jumped up and down, screaming and shouting at the interruption. Daniel, his older brother, turned to Rifkah:

“What happened?”

Rifkah stared at the screen:

“...*who, you will recall, survived an assassination attempt whilst on a family holiday to Ireland four years ago.*”²²⁵

Daniel asked his sister, “Where’s Pluto?”

Rifkah shrugged as the man on the television said, “*We’re expecting a statement from Buckingham Palace any moment now.*”

Little Kurt flailed his arms. At the top of his lungs, he hurled himself to the floor to kick and pound his fists into the carpet.

Rifkah sighed: yet another temper tantrum. She then heard two babies crying from upstairs...

Central Australia

1981

The light came on and she smiled at the camera: “Good morning Australia and welcome to the Yipirinya Dome in Alice Springs. My name is Celia Corres-Patkin. This is PSN and you’re watching Internatioanl Super Test cricket!” She stuck out her tongue, knowing the image on the screen for the viewers at home had been superseded by the opening credits the Packer networks insisted airing ahead of every live broadcast.

For the Summer Opener, Celia had chosen a small hat with an eruption of giant white lilies fanned out high above her head. On air, she was joined by Bill and John, a pair of veteran commentators snagged away from the ABC a year earlier. They’d been given upscale makeovers during the Christmas holidays and now appeared as gentlemen dressed in top hats, black tails and polished leather boots. Though dressed to the nines, Celia had refused to stand between the two. Instead, she agreed to stand to their right so that her dress—a tight-fitting white pastel made of cream silk and chiffon—might provide a bright contrast to their intentionally indistinguishable suits of grey and black.

They were joined by a fourth: a former cricketer brought out from the shadows of retirement to provide expert commentary for every inning and over. Shamus O’Kelly lumbered onto the mezzanine. Having missed the broadcast intro, he rumbled into place, his shirt and coat rumpled and wrinkled. Celia looked him up and down and from side to side. He’d grown exponentially since they’d first met for a brief interview years earlier. His nose, she saw, was still crooked.

“Jesus Christ, O’Kelly!” Bill knew the former fast bowler personally. “What the bloody hell took you so long?”

“I’m old,” he huffed, “and I’m fat. Can’t move as quick as you lithe little bastards.” Shamus then saw Celia in that tight-fitting white dress. He looked her up and down and said, “Mmm hmm.”

Celia snarled. She thought the ginger-bearded beast was foulmouthed and unprofessional. O’Kelly started to move toward her but she held him off, “No! Nnh-nnh. You’re meant to stand over there on the other side of John.”

“Says who?”

“Says the man behind the camera.”

O’Kelly glanced over and saw the cameraman duck quietly back behind the eye piece. O’Kelly grunted and started to move towards Celia anyway, but she said, “Oh no you don’t. Nnh-nnh! No. Stop! Stay. *Stay!*” She pointed at the camera. “We’re on air in a minute, Shamus, and don’t tempt me. I *will* slap you on live television.”

O’Kelly leered at her and at the camera. He considered her threat, then slinked over to his place next to John, who patted him on the back. No one at Channel Nine or at PSN doubted Celia; she maintained a stellar reputation buttressed by high ratings. Most people were surprised she hadn’t already slapped someone at one of the networks, where virtually every aspect of commerce behind the scenes was dominated by men.

The foursome on the mezzanine stood in place as the cameraman counted down. The light came on and John said, “Welcome one and all to PSN’s live coverage of this year’s Summer Opener coming to you from the red hot—and today, *wet*—centre of Australia. Please join me in welcoming my co-host, Bill Johnson.”

“Thank you, John, and might I extend a warm welcome your way, Mr John Williams.” He led the small group in a brief round of light applause. “And today we’re joined by our esteemed colleague from the news department, *Miss* Celia Corres-Patkin, and by our special guest commentator for today’s test match, the former leg bowler for the Daylesford Golden Panthers, Mr Shamus O’Kelly. Welcome to you both.” Light applause. “Now, before we get to the Super Test match between Darwin and Brisbane, I believe you have an announcement, *Miss* Corres-Patkin?”

“That’s right, Bill, and I’m sure our boss in Sydney won’t mind my not wearing a pair of gloves for this.” Celia held up her hand.

“*Jesus!*” O’Kelly whistled; on the third finger of her right hand, Celia wore a five carat diamond engagement ring sparkling pink in the lights of the camera.

“Well, congratulations, *Miss* Corres-Patkin!” John said, “This calls for a round of champagne!”

As if on cue, cater waiters dressed in black slacks and red vests appeared on either side of the foursome, handing out flutes of Bollinger and strawberries dipped in dark chocolate. Celia clinked her glass with the men and took her obligatory drink:

“Thank you, sirs!” She bit into a strawberry, careful not to get any dark chocolate on her white dress. “Now I know,” she sipped, “that today’s test match is important for you, too, Shamus?”

“Yes, that’s right, and congratulations, *Miss Celia*.” Shamus swallowed four strawberries in one gulp. He raised his glass, giving a hesitant thought to planting a kiss on her lips live on television, but the glare he got from her, along with her icy smile, stopped him. “My nephew,” he spoke with a full mouth, “is playing in today’s match.”

“Right,” Celia asked him, “and who’s that?”

“Riley O’Toole, the junior spin bowler for Oxley. He’s making his debut on the pitch today.”

“How exciting for you.”

“Yes,” O’Kelly sneered.

“And how do you think Oxley will do today?”

“Well, Bill, I’m certainly hoping for an Oxley win. They are the Division Two favourites this season, but the Zodiacs are quite good and they’ve got their new batsman charged up and ready to go, from what I’ve been told.”

“You’re of course referring to Cameron Garnham, the Darwin batsman traded from Mornington at the end of last season. Did you ever train with him?”

“I did not, but I’ve seen him in action many times and he’s very good. Very precise. He really knows his way around a big, long bat.”

“Would you want to go against him as a spin bowler?”

“Well, John, I was a fast bowler—you’ve gotten it wrong twice so far—and thankfully I’ve been retired for many years now,” Shamus O’Kelly gave a flashing thought—a fleeting memory—to that moment back in Sydney in 1975 when that little Chinaman nailed him right between the eyes, knocking him out cold for six days. “I’m not sure I could bowl him out, so I’d hope all bets are off on whether he’d be any good at defending.”

Celia glued a fake smile to her face and pretended to listen to the men. They were boys, really, and she had several more hours of Super Test cricket to get through before they’d finish later in the evening. She found most of the on-air discourse trivial—banal—they were filling airtime to justify the high price of commercials. Occasionally, the men feigned to include her in their live chat and, at one point, she said:

“Yes, Bill, it’s really great to be here inside the Yipinrinya Dome. The weather outside in Alice Springs today is absolutely treacherous. I don’t think it could be any wetter!”

Very often, though, Celia caught herself smiling at the man behind the camera.

*

The Summer Opener between Brisbane Oxley and the Darwin Zodiacs began an hour later when two teams of eleven and a pair of umpires moved into place across field and pitch. At the start of the first over, the new batsman for Darwin took position ahead of the wicket at the Sadadeen End while the junior spin bowler for Oxley tugged his feet through the trimmed grass down past Lasseters on the opposite side.

Riley O’Toole narrowed his eyes at the batsman who, for his part, glared back at the spin bowler. The match was due to be tight, close and tense but, with a slight, imperceptible nod of his head, the junior spin bowler winked knowingly at the new batsman. In response, Cameron Garnham scraped his feet in the yellowed dirt, his smirk well-obscured behind a cage-like mask...

PART FIVE: God-Fearing Sabbath-Keepers

Western Australia

1985

The black girl wrote with her left hand with a tendency to drag the side of her palm across the page, smearing her words into an unintelligible mess that irritated the white teacher who did not look upon the girl's progress as a sufficient demonstration of intellectual acumen. The white teacher remained stern, a frown upon her face, watching the black girl write with her hand held above the page to prevent further smudging. This little black girl annoyed her, she did everything wrong, and the teacher reckoned if this was Queensland or South Australia, they would've long ago sent this black child to a reserve so that she wouldn't be here in this private classroom after a series of expulsions from a veritable who's-who of local girls' schools.

In the course of her brief history on earth, the black girl had managed in her surefire and petulant way to get chunked out of every public school between South Carlton and Ivanhoe. She had been told by her parents the proverbial last straw had been all but broken and it was either the in-house *yeshiva le'banot*, with its rigid Orthodoxy and the dreaded *Lashon HaKodesh*, which she detested with every fibre of her being, or *this* school filled, as it was, with the children of transient migrants coupled with the first-generation progeny of mostly immigrant non-Jews—locals, all of them; a veritable Babel of malice—many of whom were mean-spirited, just like that evil white teacher staring down at her.

Devorah was told she got the punctuation wrong, that she spelled words incorrectly and that her handwriting was ugly and that her hands, her eyes, her self-styled way of learning, her attitude, indeed her whole *being*, these white teachers claimed; moved from right to left and not the other way around. Her hand tired and dropped back onto the page where she thoughtlessly smeared the ink from her pen, forcing that white teacher to hiss and *tsk*. The white teacher added insubordination to her list of grievances—*insubordination!* Why hadn't she thought of it earlier?—and made another derisive comment about Devorah's obnoxious behavior. Though she thought the girl stupid, she stopped short of calling her that, but this did not stop her from making her opinion—that it was unseemly for Jews to bring more black babies into the world—

known, believing that to be the crux of Devorah's manifold problems: your parents, the white teacher told her, ought to be ashamed of themselves.

Devorah was shocked by this. She'd be sure to tell her mother about it, and she glanced up from her essay—"Discuss the changes made to the Terms of Settlement since 1972"—and saw a golden crucifix hanging between that white teacher's sweated breasts. Well, she thought, no surprise there. That pretty much explains everything.

The white teacher stepped in to look over Devorah's shoulder. She *tsk'*ed again; Devorah hadn't even finished a whole paragraph! How long will it take you? The teacher had heard Jews were smart, and though she reluctantly chose to accept that, she'd also been told this black girl was a Jew, her father a redhead no less, but this girl was not smart; one just *doesn't* write with a left hand anymore. In her day, the white teacher could've, or at least would've liked to, beat that penmanship right out of her black hand with a sharp, wooden ruler.

Devorah didn't care about the essay. Who cares about something that happened more than ten years ago? It was tedious. You teach us like you're punishing us. Why do you teach like that? I'm not learning the way you teach. Why are you so angry?

The white teacher, just like the black girl, had an answer for everything: so that Jews like your father understand what we've done for them!

Devorah would tell her mother about that, too. With any luck, her mother would sprint to the school to take on these white teachers, yanking Devorah out of there by the end of the week, but this time it wouldn't be her fault. She could lay the blame at the feet of that fat, white, crucifix-sporting teacher!

The paper she was writing on was jerked away from her, ripped off her desk by that white teacher, who stormed with it to the front of the classroom. Clearing her throat, the teacher looked through the smeared smudge of ink to see the little black brat had taken the piss:

'When I grow up, I want to be lawyer and judge so I can persocute you for ignurence and stupidty.'

The white teacher went red in the face. The cheek of that black girl! She hissed. She made a scene of it, and she made an example of her: a lawyer? *A lawyer!* Ridiculous! Absurd! Preposterous! It's just not possible with that atrocious spelling:

“And if there’s any justice on God’s green earth, then you’ll be condemned to a lifetime of teaching pathetic little runts like you!”

The white teacher glared at Devorah. Steely-eyed, Devorah did not flinch or bat a single eyelash. She stared straight into the teacher’s bloodshot eyes, narrowing her own in a flippant yet emotive display of truculence, daring that fat white woman to defy her. The white teacher would later claim something—a mosquito, a speck of dust, some saliva presumably spat at her by the child in question—got into her eye to make her blink, causing the other students, mixed-race Afghanis, Greeks, Turks, Melanesians, Polynesians, Pashtuns, Gujaratis and Levantines intermingled with the sons and daughters of Anglo-Celtic miners shipped in from the Australian South, to slide into an unruly fit of laughter she found confronting and impossible to subdue.²²⁶ The white teacher hissed the class dismissed whilst staring straight at Devorah, the venomous culprit.

Devorah sauntered from the classroom triumphant. She’d won this round and once word got back to her mother, she’d get that white teacher fired and herself, with any luck, sent to a different school. Devorah knew that white teacher’s story without actually knowing it: in her last school, when her parents were informed she was invited to leave, her mother drove straight to the office of the headmistress with daughters in tow to berate the faculty, claiming they were academic rejects chewed up and spat out by the Christian enclaves of the South, fired from every last school in Sydney or Melbourne until they came down by coming up to Durack to teach, and teach poorly and for considerably less pay, children who are forced to attend these backward state schools. The notion, the claim, that Devorah was a wild child prone to fits of hyperactivity and increasingly inappropriate behavior with the boys was, in essence, patently disregarded; these silly bugger Christians, according to mum, either had it in for blackfellas or they resented Jews and Devorah was, as her mother told her, sometimes on the wrong side of both of those issues. Devorah’s father, on the other hand, placed at least some of the blame on his daughter who was, in a word, difficult, if not headstrong and full of angst. She was stubborn around the house, she had a chip on her shoulder and, he said, it’s not like her grades were anything to write home about.

Devorah followed the other students out to the courtyard for recess. Penned in by bars held in place by small pillars of simple brick, the courtyard lay blazing gold in the heat of the sun, the green grass turned yellow due to the effects of municipal water rationing. A rectangle

that paralleled a flank of classrooms in the nearby building, the courtyard contained a slide, a set of swings, monkey bars and a basketball hoop pegged to a backboard. Down the far end, a single date palm tree provided the only viable stretch of shade, a strip of darkness cutting across dried earth, towards which Devorah now headed.

Devorah sat beneath the date palm, sitting within that strip of shade to look back at her classmates swarming around the slide and swings. She did not know them. She was still the new girl at school and she kept her distance as, evidently, did they. Though she saw a rainbow of humanity up the other end of the paddock—blue-eyed white girls wearing *hijabs* alongside boisterous Koreans with unnaturally-occurring blond hair—she was pretty sure she was the only black Jew in *this* school, but that had been the case ever since she'd been booted from that first school in Ivanhoe. After that, the local Jewish academies circled wagons and, like perturbed Talmudists, her parents were forced to take their daughter not just down a notch but to a different suburb where she was later thrown out of another school after she incited a mutiny amongst the students, most of whom were black, just like she was. Then the grapevines kicked into gear and Devorah's parents found their daughter shunned once more, which is how she ended up here, in *this* school with this motley crew of multi-ethnic children. Devorah watched them chase and play. Though a few were white, absolutely none of them were black, but were united in appearance by the school's limp and impotent dress code: a uniform and proper close-toed shoes must be worn at all times!

Devorah hated the place, it was beneath her, and that white teacher—Mrs Jabin—was nothing more than a loathome, bickering tyrant. She told Devorah she came with some baggage, a reputation: we'd heard about you before you rocked up here, she said. Devorah envisioned a patchwork of competing grapevines crisscrossing the northern suburbs of Durack: the Jewish grapevine, the teacher's grapevine, the trendsetting blackfella grapevine; invisible channels of communication that turned minor rumor, gossip and innuendo into detrimental fact. She resented it and *humph*'ed, folding her arms beneath her budding, black breasts hidden, as they were, beneath a plaid, school-regulated cardigan.

A similarly-dressed child ran past Devorah sitting in that strip of shade beneath the date palm. The boy ran whilst giggling, and Devorah narrowed her eyes. The boy—she'd forgotten his name but thought it something like Larry, Barry, Harry or Daryl—was restless, he disrupted the classroom frequently, proving to be quite a pain for those rabid and incompetent educators.

The boy had few if any friends and he seemed goaded on by an internal force of will which, for some reason, he directed at Devorah.

The boy was white, the son of interstate contractors who often boasted about his suburban Melbourne origins as a way to put down the local Kimberley kids. Devorah, perhaps the darkest of his classmates, became the focus of his schoolyard taunts and he honed in on the black girl, running circles around her as she sat there, minding her own business in the narrow shade of that date palm. Devorah intuited a slight degree of flirtation on his part, though that specific word—flirtation—still had yet to enter her daily lexicon. On other days, or at other times of the day, the boy would call her a half-caste or a mixed-breed, phrases that would have seen him suspended for a day or two in almost any other school in the region except, of course, for this school. Yet no matter how annoying and stupid he was, the boy was on most days not that bad, but that did not cause her to not raise general defenses. She lost count of how many times he ran circles around the tree, taking note of him only when he stopped in front of her.

“G’day, Devorah.”

She hated that he knew her name while he, for his part, never stopped to consider whether or not she remembered his. He came at her from an angle of misanthropy: he called her a picaninny and offered her a half-dollar if she let him touch her left titty. Though he was unable to sit still, he, like those teachers, had heard unflattering whispers about this black girl. He’d heard black girls sold themselves and that half-castes were especially easy, even if they’d been locked up in a *yeshiva le’banot* which, he assumed, was where she came from. The boy said as much, speaking at her with a snarl buttressed by a slight Victorian drawl that inspired Devorah to rise up from the yellowed earth in order to slap the white boy twice right across his smug white face using, she smiled, the sturdy back of her black hand the second time. Devorah concluded their one and only moment of physical contact with a taunt of her own:

“Fuck you, you bastard prick!”

The white boy was stunned—how dare this black girl *touch* me?—then hurt. His hands went to either side of his face. He let out some type of wail and ran off screaming towards the monkey bars where a cluster of white teachers heard what Devorah imagined was a truncated description of the boy’s grievance and that she’d used the F, B and P words all in one go. As if on cue, the cluster turned to look for the black girl standing—there she is!—in the shade of that

palm tree, Mrs Jabin puffed out her nostrils and shook her head, sending both hands straight to her generous hips. She called for Devorah, summoning her by way of shout.

Devorah knew nothing good would come out of obeying that stupid teacher's beckoning call. She rolled her eyes and, with casual nonchalance, strolled over to the bars that penned in the courtyard. In a matter of seconds, she scaled the miniature brick pillars—there were a series of them placed at regular intervals to hold the bars in place—and, just like that, was over the fence and on her way to temporary if not total freedom.²²⁷ The teachers, on the other hand, flew into an immediate panic, scrambling to get out through the school and around to the back in a futile attempt to intercept the black girl who, like any good *lubra*, disappeared entirely as if she'd never been there in the first place.

Devorah hopped a bus that transported her very far very quickly. She arrived at the center of town within twenty-five minutes, removing her school cardigan along the way, turning it inside-out to tie around her waist. Devorah crossed the Victoria Highway and came up to the water's edge: Lily Creek Lagoon. Though hardly a creek any longer, it was now a nationally-protected wetland forever realized as a manmade tourist attraction popular for dinner-boating and water sports. Endlessly dammed and re-routed, the river of Ord flowed its sometimes stinking water through the lagoon, where it was diverted via aqueducts, cleansed with fluoride and treated with a mixture of chemicals before it was deemed fit for human consumption and poured into pipes and tubes buried deep in the earth for the benefit of state-sanctioned crop irrigation.

At this hour of the day, in the middle of the week, the waterfront was deserted. Not even the elderly fishermen, who seemed to stand in stooped guard along the recently refurbished wooden planks that made up the scenic promenade featured in many a "Visit-the-stunning-East Kimberley-today!" tourist brochures were present. Devorah was, for all intents and purposes, alone out there on that *tayelet*, as they said in a more modern form of *Lashon HaKodesh*; her only companion the midday sun, which she looked up to now.

The sky was, like that boardwalk, void of life. The only bird she saw was a four-engine airliner climbing into heaven after take off from Durack International.²²⁸ Her line of vision came down through the vast expanse of blue, arriving at the horizon, lumpy with an uneven triplet of mountains white people called "the Sleeping Buddha;" a big belly flanked by two smaller bumps anchored to either side sitting to the city's south and surrounded by a shawl of brown smog. To the northwest of this, the Packsaddle district and Lake Durack sitting against the walls of a

curved damn like an adult waiting patiently for a door to open to let it through to the other side. The dam, built by white men in the Sixties, was not without cosmological precedent. Devorah recalled the story her mother's aunties had told her during secret rites of passage she had endured as the ongoing era of latent puberty stretched into her early-teens: the white crane made a dam, the Great Egret built a dyke, the white-faced heron constructed a tall levy, but the jabiru knocked it down, the black-necked stork tore it to pieces, the Mighty Pelican smashed it out of spite, all to keep the waters flowing north. The characters; their details and their attributes; Devorah knew, changed or alternated, depending on who and when and for what and to whom the story was told. The dam, in any event, was ruined by some malignant and thus more powerful force apparently not in play today. In fact, today looked tranquil, with a slight breeze cooling the air alongside warm temperatures and a bright sun; Devorah wished she'd brought her Emilio Pucci sunglasses.

Devorah took off her close-toed shoes and her stockings and, without any hesitation, seated herself at the edge of the boardwalk, dangling her two feet into the water where ten toes bristled with the glowing whiskers of translucent barramundi.²²⁹ The water was cool and refreshing and different from the air, which was warm and windless. Ahead of her, further out in the lagoon, Devorah spotted a line of bubbles rising to the surface. Behind them, she thought she saw a wet leathery body craggy with scales slithering through the water, creating a wake of ripples that spread out behind whatever *that* was. She pulled her feet out of the water, bringing them up to the edge of the planks. She noticed more bubbles, closer now and coming toward her. She crimped her brows.²³⁰ She thought she saw a scaly body dip down into murky depths. She froze. She feared a freshwater crocodile, but she would be damned if she, in her all-encompassing anticipation, did anything but sit there to wait and see. The bubbles that rose up belched upon bursting the surface of the water but then, mysteriously, they stopped. Devorah narrowed her eyes: just what the hell was *that*?

That... it... leapt up from the lagoon, a wretched, slimy *thing* splashing out of the water.

Devorah gasped!

This was a reptile—no, a snake—its colour iridescent with eyes on either side of its head, blinking side to side rather than up and down. Surrounded by an aura, *it* had a yellow mouth and hissed out a silver tongue that appeared, so it seemed to her, to lap at the heels of all creation. She'd never seen anything quite like it. *It* brought time to a halt: nothing moved aside from her racing heart and a pair of eyes blinking side to side. A giant eel, a huge dragon, a big lizard, a

full-sized serpent of many colours: she found she did not possess language capable of describing this *thing* coming at her. What was it? A sea-creature of a sort she had never seen before, lurching out from the swamps after swimming upstream past mangroves and mudflats?²³¹

Whatever *it* was, *it* came at her sitting on the edge of the boardwalk, for what purpose was never clear, but it got her. It came down on top of her, its leathery, scaly body wet and spiky, lined with horns and stinking of polluted Ord. It gripped her and, she thought, coiled around her. Somehow it flipped her over. Was that a tongue that just licked me? She screamed, losing sight of the birdless sky for what seemed like hours. A nightmare enveloped her. Something clawed at her. She smelled fish but tasted mud. *This* was without cosmological precedent, and she tried to squirm out of whatever the hell *it* was.

The next thing she knew *it* was no longer clutching at her. Standing above her, a bearded redhead wet with sweat and blood and some type of inhuman gut smeared across his near-naked, scorched torso looked down at her. Time, she felt, stopped here, too, and she narrowed her eyes at this... *black* man? Devorah was terrified. She was confused: just what the hell was *that* and just who the hell is *he*?

The scorched face bore down upon her; it spoke: “*Ich... Ich... Ich hoben kol!*”*

But Devorah collapsed. She fainted out of pure, unadulterated, teenage shock...

*

Devorah’s father, Baron Freedel, was at the Institute when he received the first of two phone calls. The first informed him that his daughter had acted up in school again, hitting a boy smaller than her before escaping into the perilous wilds of the northern suburbs and no, they told him, we have no clue where she is at the moment. The second phone call, received some time later, came from Emergency Services, who told him his daughter had been brought to the Emergency Ward at Steinberg Memorial, the same place they took Baron’s father, Devorah’s grandfather, after Cyclone Ruth tossed him from a highway two decades earlier.

How, Baron asked them, did she end up in the Emergency Ward? Details, they told him, were sketchy but, they said, your daughter was brought in by a man.

* “*I... I... Ich hoben kol!*” is Yiddish for “I have voice!”

“By a man?” Baron felt his stomach drop. “What do you mean she was brought in by a man? She’s only a teenager.” He asked them if they’d called his wife—they had—and his heart stopped. Oh holy Moses, no. He would later realize Miri had dropped everything back at the house to rush in the family sedan to the Emergency Ward in downtown Durack where she cooked herself up into a steaming rage by the time her husband arrived.

The doctors had no idea what had happened. Devorah was unconscious upon arrival, though when she woke, she’d been hysterical and they’d had to sedate her. Miriyam, the mother, found some delight in hearing it took a team of five nurses and a cardiologist to hold her daughter down while they administered the shot into her left arm. Of those five nurses, one was Asian:

“And they were covered in fish guts or some type of sea thing! Eel, stingray, oysters out of the shell, maybe? I don’t know. We had to hose her off!”

The only part Miri heard was “they”: who were “they”? Miri flew off the handle when told her once-hysterical and now-sedated daughter had been brought in by a man. A *man*? Miri was incredulous: who is this man? *Where* is this man?

The doctors conferred with one another in a corner near a potted fern, coming back to Devorah’s parents to tell them that due to a vast contingency of privacy laws, they were not at liberty to release any further information beyond the status of their daughter. Miri became irate at this, accusing the man who brought her daughter in of rape whilst threatening the medical staff with a charge of collusion until Baron intervened. Miri’s husband reasoned with the doctors and, making promises his wife wouldn’t bother to keep but resented nevertheless, convinced them to take him to the man who brought his daughter in.

Baron was told the man did not speak English. Every bilingual or tri-lingual person on staff had addressed him in any and every language spoken in the Ward—and that’s eleven different languages, he said—but this man had not responded to any of them. He became belligerent when they separated him from Baron’s daughter. Sedation was thus necessary but, they told Baron, he ought to be coming out of it soon.

“Oh, by the way,” the doctor told him, “he’s white.”

He was indeed white, but Baron reckoned had they not said anything to him one way or the other, it would’ve been almost impossible to know that from his look. He had a leathery face matted by a mangy, damp, dirty red beard and a bony stick figure, all ribs and elbows knotted

and knobbed at the joints. Asleep, he had the sunken, emaciated face of an underfed, light-skinned blackfella and, Baron sniffed, the smell of one, too—dead mudflat water—but he was white, alright, though he'd clearly suffered a good deal of damage: skin permanently burnt by the sun, scratch marks across his arms, dents in his chest, and his right eyebrow was missing.²³²

They'd draped a hospital gown around his waist and strapped him at the wrists and ankles to the bed. His knees were swollen and bent. One of his legs, which he tried to shift against Velcro shackles, was twisted and shorter than the other.²³³ Baron gawked at this strange man. He looked at the man's bare feet. They were hideous and they disgusted him, yet he stared at them for a long time. They were dirty, dark and tan. His toenails were especially repugnant—cracked, bent, torn and riddled with fungus—but if the calluses and the toe rot were scraped away and if those toenails, caked as they were in the dried red remains of earth, were trimmed and filed down, they might look, Baron realized, more or less identical to his own, so much so that it very nearly... almost...

Baron stared at the dirty, sedated, leathery face and saw, hidden near the edge of the red beard, the eruption of a cold sore on the lower lip.²³⁴ Baron winced; could this be my long lost older brother Aaron?

The man began to groan and shift in the bed, his movement restricted by manacles. The doctors and the nurses became agitated by this. The man awoke and turned his head. He felt the straps at his extremities. He tried to move his legs. He looked around, but the medical staff was preoccupied: the doctor was scribbling on a chart clasped to a clipboard while the nurses, that Asian nurse in particular, openly discussed the option of re-sedating the man based on a fear of potential violence he exacerbated when, letting out a deep-throated growl, he arched his back off the mattress as if possessed by a *dybbuk*. The doctor completed his scribbling and forbade the use of any further drugs. Without smile, the doctor stepped up to the foot of the bed to ask this man in a stern and voice for his name.

The man, the bearded redhead with an infantile bout of herpes popping up on his lip, wasn't having any of it. Baron saw he was getting very angry very quickly due to those straps, but this was lost on that doctor and those nurses who fell into a professional skirmish regarding sedation: the nurses wanted to knock him back out with Haloperidol but the doctor, looking at an incomplete medical chart, insisted they wait until after he or some hospital underling collected information such as the man's name and medical insurance numbers. Can he even *pay* for our

services? We're not running a charity here, now are we. Now the doctor was annoyed. Tell me, man, just what the bloody hell is your bloody name?

Baron became *persona non grata* during the commotion the bearded man's come-to induced. Overall he found the doctor, a man dressed in scrub linen called Michael Gabriel MD, arrogant and the nurses—God bless those who heal the sick—catty and presumptuous and just barely on the side of competent. This became more evident to Baron as the focus in the room shifted from the bearded man they'd strapped to the bed to an argument between the nurses and the doctor the cardiologist quickly joined in on. The bearded man calmed a bit and watched the shouting. He didn't noticing the Asian nurse standing in the corner tapping a syringe to squirt out an ejaculation of clear, viscous liquid.

The man in the bed made eye contact with Baron and, to the two of them at least, the rowdy room went silent. Baron would not recall later for how long he stared at the man but he would definitely describe the immediate ring—long and unrelenting—that came to his ear the very moment their eyes met. It was unnerving, he claimed, yet it compelled him to step forward to bring without thinking a cluster of fingertips to his lips and to make, with a casual flick of his wrist, the five-fingered local blackfella gesture for "Speak, you!"

To this, the man responded silently: he opened his mouth but said nothing, all while holding Baron's gaze without interruption. He then grunted: "Eeermmm. Eeem. Eeeemm. Eeeeeuuuummm."

Whatever he was trying to say, it came in at least two syllables, bringing the noisy, boisterous room to the very brink of quiet:

"Eeeemmaa. Eeeeeemaaaah."

The man in the bed grunted and groaned and struggled against those straps. That Asian nurse, armed with that syringe, shrieked when he kicked out, declaring the need for tactility before he lost total control.

"Eeermmm. Eeemaah! Eeeemaahnu. Nu. Nuuuuu!" The man grunted one last time, then panted like a dog barking out of breath.

The doctor ignored his charge and told that Asian nurse where to shove the syringe she'd filled without his explicit authorization. The Asian nurse threw her hands up and stormed from the room, taking her ally, the cardiologist, with her.

The man in the bed kicked his legs again and arched his back off the mattress. He released a long, guttural vowel, locking eyes again with Baron:

“Eeee. Eeee!”

The doctor raised his voice: “We can’t help you if you won’t tell us your bloody name!”

The man contorted his body like a demon, “Eeeman. Eeeman!”

The doctor scoffed but Baron could tell the man was trying to say something. “Doctor,” he said, “go get my wife.” Baron realized then the man in the bed looked much older than his daughter and, for that matter, much older than him. “Find her,” he said, “and bring her here, please.”

Miriyam had been taken to Devorah, where she climbed into the bed to cradle her child, ignoring pleas from nurses to leave the patient unperturbed. Her maternal instinct was kind and loving, but she turned dark and ferocious when summoned to the opposite side of the Ward to see the man who’d brought her daughter in. She had to be held back, and she asked the question at the forefront of her mind: did that ugly bastard rape my little girl?

Doctor Gabriel assured her they’d seen no obvious evidence of any sexual impropriety, telling Miriyam they’d conduct a more thorough examination later when the girl was not as heavily sedated.

This news cooled Miriyam and gave Baron ample time to smooth her out and calm her down. He asked about Devorah but, by that point, Miri had taken a good long look at the man strapped to the bed staring back at her. She furrowed her brow and, though she did not speak, her countenance seemed to say, He’s *white*?

Miri stared at the man in silence and in judgment, erecting herself to stand up straight while he, with his bearded, herpetetic jaw hanging open, snapped his mouth shut with a clap of teeth.

Baron, wide-eyed with confusion, glanced between the two of them, asking his wife if she knew this man, but Miriyam, speaking with a tone, asked the man who he thought he was.

The man did not answer.

Miriyam took a step forward to glare at him from closer proximity and then, as Baron had hoped, she addressed the man in five different Aboriginal languages in less than ten seconds, but the man only stared back at her, blinking once.

Miriyam took another step forward and, without looking at the doctor or at her husband, she made a gesture with her hand—she made her sign—and, in that instant, when he saw it, the man strapped to the bed looked away.

“Well,” she looked down on him, “his skin may be white, but he ain’t.”

Baron asked, “Doolbung?”

Miriyam *nouk*’ed, “Something else, I reckon.”

Baron asked her which language, but she said she couldn’t figure it out, as the man won’t—can’t—speak to her. “I’ll call Ben, then, shall I? Ben will know what to do.”

Miriyam tuned her husband out. The man strapped to the bed might look and even be older than she but something forbade direct eye contact between them and she sensed she sat somewhere superior to him in the local blackfella system—his recoil suggested this—but she glared at him anyway, narrowing her dark and ferocious eyes at him as if to say I’ll deal with you later. She stepped from the room to return to her daughter on the other side of the Ward.

“None of this will do!” The doctor took out a pen. “We’ve got to call him something.” He scribbled something onto the medical chart. “There,” he said, “his name is now Elijah Bushman. That settles it.”

Baron said, “But that’s not his name.”

“What does it matter? He came in here naked carrying *your* daughter. He didn’t have any identification on him, no papers—nothing—and we’ve got enough John Does to fill this Ward and the next.”

“Yes certainly, but ‘Bushman’?”

“*Nu*?” The doctor returned the pen to his pocket. “Isn’t that where the likes of him come from with his stink? It was either that or we’d call him ‘Elijah Climax.’ Take your pick.”

Baron frowned. He glanced at the man strapped to the bed—he just didn’t look like an Elijah—and then he heard the doctor order another round of sedatives for the patient.

*

Dr Michael Gabriel MD, on behalf of Steinberg Memorial, made it clear that if he couldn’t pay, he couldn’t stay, and it was decided after heady argument between husband and

wife that Elijah who, Miriyam insisted, could *not* stay with them at the house, would be sent away with Ben Prindy, who drove a ute into Durack to fetch him.

Baron had limited the particulars he'd disclosed to Prindy, telling Ben that although the man who'd brought his daughter in was white, he was really black and now Miri refused to be in the same room with him, let alone house, and this, Baron told his mate, was problematic for him personally because, Baron said, "I think I know who this man is. If only there was a way to test my theory."²³⁵

It did not take much cajoling; Prindy was famously generous with his prosperity and, he admitted, fascinated by this white black man who'd done something—he wasn't sure exactly what—to Devorah.

"And he doesn't talk?"

"Grunts and groans only," Baron told him, "but he seems to grasp *some* things."

Prindy brought a fresh batch of clothes, a simple shirt and a pair of nondescript trousers and without hesitation loaded the man they'd christened Elijah into his ute to drive him out of Durack. Prindy smirked as he merged into the light traffic barely using the two-lane, northbound Nimbing Parkway; Savitra would need to be put in her place regarding this new addition to their already well-peopled household and he chuckled, reaching for a small compartment nooked into the lower part of the door near the bottom of his seat. He brought out a small, round snuff box he popped open. He held it out to his passenger who, at first, shrank away but, motivated by curiosity, he slinked back to look into the snuff box where he saw little, dried up pellets of grass. He looked at Prindy without expression.

"You want one?" Prindy glanced at his passenger, keeping his hand on the steering wheel.

Elijah blinked twice.

"You eat it." Prindy took a nugget from the snuff box. "*Pituri*," he put the nugget between his teeth. "Like this." He held out the little round box.

This time, Elijah took a nugget and, following Prindy's example, placed it between his teeth.

"That's it. Now bite down on it," Prindy did just that. "Let's see if that knocks you out."

Elijah stared at Prindy, watching him chew, then he mimicked him and began to eat the dried grass pellet.

“You’re probably wondering who I am or how I fit into all this.” Prindy put the snuff box back into the compartment hidden in the door. “Then again,” he gnawed, “I want to know who *you* are.” He looked at his passenger, now staring out the windows, transfixed by the continuing advent of automotive movement. Prindy, like Miriyam before him, switched over to *Language*, repeating his question five different times in six different dialects, but any hope for a response, voluntary or otherwise, were dashed when the passenger ignored the driver.

“Well,” said Prindy, “it was worth a shot.”

Elijah turned to Prindy—his eyes were glassy and pink, soon to be red—and Prindy thought: well at least we know the *pituri* works. “So we’s headed north right now,” Prindy said, “going toward Blossom.” He glanced at his passenger. “You know what any of that means?”

Elijah blinked three times.

“Blossom,” Prindy told him, “was founded twenty-five years ago—was *named* twenty-five years ago, I should say—by the local council. God only knows where they got the name, but the idea behind it is it’s a town for blackfellas. It’s kind of like how them Jews can’t touch that book, you know; that scroll? They have to use that funny-looking stick, with a fist stuck on the end of it? Blossom is like that scroll. They gave it to us, and they let us have it, and now they won’t come near the place unless they’ve got a good reason to or because they’ve got a really big stick, ‘cause we don’t want ‘em here, and blackfellas from all over move here ‘cause it’s the only place where blackfellas,” he turned to his passenger, “people like me, can live out on our own without white people mucking everything up. They don’t take our babies away up here anymore. They still do that where you come from?” Prindy glanced at his passenger, repeating his question in *Language*, adding “*Nu?*” in the hopes of getting his passenger to say something, even if it was nonverbal, but Elijah stared out the windows, watching the high-rises and the lush landscape fly by.

“You see that big tall building way out there?” Prindy nodded in that direction, but when his passenger did not follow, he pointed. “That tall one is called ‘HaMigdal’ and its home to Kim Tech.” Prindy beamed with pride. “That’s one of my companies.”

Elijah turned to look and Prindy took in his passenger’s profile: he was old, his skin was wrinkled and his red beard mangy. He had a crusty cold sore protruding out from his lower lip. He was going to need an extra towel back at the house—Savitra will be thrilled—and, in thought of his common-law wife, he asked his passenger: “Where’re you from, mate?”

Elijah blinked twice.

“Well,” Prindy sighted, “you’re a shy one, aren’t ya’?”

An hour later, Prindy steered the ute off the highway. “This here,” he said, “is Goose Hill Road, named so ‘cause it goes all the way down to Goose Hill near Wyndham. It’s not sealed more than a dozen kilometers south of here ‘cause whitey doesn’t want us black folk coming down that way.” Prindy saw his passenger gazing out the window. “Goose Hill,” Prindy sighed, “nothing but rich white people.”

They drove into the semblance of a town, turning onto a street shaded by a row of bulging boabs on one side and a row of buildings—a post office, a bank, a supermarket, a barber, a beard-cutter and some shops—on the other.

“This,” Prindy hooked a right, “is the heart of Nimbing, or what the white people call Blossom.” He took in the local sites he’d seen numerous times: a two-storey city council building surrounded by an empty car park, a bank of public toilets and, across the road, a subdivision of old, prefabricated, government-built concrete houses enclosed by a series of chain-link fences behind which lay a smattering of wire beds and mattresses where people napped either in the shade or in the sun, depending on personal preference. One of the sleeping men was dressed in a suit and using a waded-up jacket as pillow. Prindy recognized him: Professor Marko, the Chancellor of the newly-minted Unaipon College, having a rest after a liquid lunch with Blossom’s mayor, Dicko, who doubled as his brother.

Up ahead, they came upon a circular sports field bookended by four tall, white posts. Prindy saw this, noting for the umpteenth time the livery on a nearby scoreboard: ‘Proud Home to Nimbing’s Junior Dragons – Winners of the 1984 WA East Kimberley Regional Netball Divisional.’ He said, “That’s our footy pitch,” and looked at his passenger. “You play any sports?”

Elijah did not respond. He looked out at a large park near the centre of town. Trees obscured Prindy’s view, but through the branches he could make out the rock boundary of one of Nimbing’s many Ring Places that, since the early Sixties, had endowed Blossom with its twentieth century purpose:

“That’s where us blackfellas come together for *joonbas*.” Prindy was surprised to see his passenger turn sharply. “You know that word, do you?”

His passenger stared back at him, his bloodshot eyes searching Prindy's. He parted his lips and, waiting two beats, said, "*Wangka*."

"And we have speech!" Prindy raised both eyebrows. "Baron wasn't kidding when he said you're a blackfella, was he?"

Elijah stared his old bloodshot eyes at Prindy. He squinted, and Prindy felt scrutinized.

Prindy watched his passenger turn back toward the park and said, "That's where the Doolbung comes together with the Miriwong and the Gajerrong. That's where we mix ourselves up, but there are other places for men's business and women's business, but that one," Prindy nodded at the park, "that's where we have the big *corroborees* with all the people coming in from everywhere for all sorts of business. You can hire it out." Prindy provided further explanation in *Language*, hoping to coax more speech out of his passenger, but Elijah just stared through the trees. "Well, you know, it's like they say," Prindy sighed again, "this is the life that survives us."²³⁶

Prindy steered around another corner, turning into suburbia where meandering lanes gave way to stifled lawns, knee-high brick walls and paved driveways; vain efforts, in his estimation, to make the East Kimberley look the same as sunny Victoria. The houses at this end of the street were older and somewhat identical to each other: single-storey with a single door in the center, two bay windows looking into bedrooms at the front, surrounded by thick-tiled verandahs. Later, bungalows were set along an L shape, shoving main bedrooms into narrow lawns closer to the road. Younger lots were larger, as were the houses built upon them, and the styles became more varied as triple-fronts rubbed shoulders with austere cottages and two-storey Georgians inhabited by six or more families. As the years went on, the cars and trucks parked in the driveways and in the garages in front of these houses changed as newer, better models were brought in and used continuously until a complete and total state of disrepair took over. Then the vehicle was abandoned on an eastbound highway headed toward North Australia or taken away piece-by-piece by an old Jewish *altazaken* who roamed through the local enclave on an ass-drawn carriage every Thursday afternoon. The houses grew rustic, some of them flirting with the Italianate or taking on the wooden finishes of a slight Tudorist revival until Prindy coasted past a gate into a cul-de-sac encircled by five, high-set Queenslanders floating above the terrain.

“And here we are.” Prindy explained their location in *Language* and said, “I’ve got relations in each of these houses.” He parked the ute and came around to the passenger’s side to open the door. “Some of my people live in *that* house.”

Elijah saw two-storeys covered with lacey, wrap-around verandahs set beneath a series of sloped roofs. At the top of the house, at its highest point, an iron weathervane beaten into the shape of a Jew lizard pointed North.

“My wife and I,” Prindy said, “we’s live in that house there, the blue up the top, in the center of things.” He made a motion with his hand and, in *Language*, said “Come on.” Prindy walked, and Elijah followed.

Ten steps led up to the front door, which was opened by a servant Prindy thanked by name. Inside the foyer, Prindy slipped out of his shoes as another servant brought him a stack of mail. Elijah, for his part, stared wide-eyed at the art on the wall: a dot painting with a galaxy of totemic trivia. He drank it in and Prindy, glancing up from a cease-and-desist letter, saw this. He handed the post back to his servant—send that to my lawyers—and went to Elijah to guide him into the salon where, Prindy assumed, he’d be less overwhelmed.

“I forget you might actually know what some of that means.” In the salon, Prindy sat Elijah on a sofa and switched to *Language*; he said, “Wait here.”

Elijah found he did not easily comprehend what he saw on the walls and in the form of little statues, hundreds of them, stacked on an altar shrouded in the ashen remains of snuffed incense. He saw dark white women with multiple arms, legs and faces, a man with blue skin and monkeys—*monkeys!* He’d never see this kind of creature before—the paintings, the tapestries, the figurines, the myriad of bright colors were an assault on his senses.

Prindy came back in the room, he said, “Elijah!” and realized, at that moment, that this was the first time he’d thought of or referred to this man by that name. “This is my wife.”

A dark, white woman—Savitra, dressed in a *sari*—came through a right-angled archway with her hand extended. She said, “Hello,” but did not smile.

Elijah saw this woman moving toward him. He looked at the hand she held out. The gesture was of no consequence, but it confused him when she placed it in front of him whilst making direct eye contact. He stared at her knuckles—they were painted with henna—then at her, then away.

Savitra, for her part, stared back at him. She stared until she blinked, then she threw up her hand and said, “I don’t know why you even bother to include me in this shit, Ben. I really don’t. This is the second mute you’ve dragged home.” Savitra left the room, vanishing back through that right-angled archway in a flourish of sequined pashmina.

“And this,” Prindy said, “is my son.” He repeated himself in *Language* as a boy, a teenager, stepped into the room. He was slender with broad shoulders. His hair, naturally curly, tumbled down off his head with a synthetic buoyancy brought on by chemical assistance. He wore a tight-fitting blue jumper pulled up at the sleeves with a black, rhinestone belt atop a pair of ripped jeans his mother claimed she’d paid too much for. Like Elijah, he too was barefoot but, unlike Elijah, his toenails were painted sparkly silver. His dark eyes, shaped like almonds, silently assessed his father’s latest acquisition: an old, bearded redhead with a blood-oozing crack on his lip.

“And where’s this one going to sleep, *nu*?”

Father told son this man was going into the room right next to his. “You’ll be sharing a bathroom, so I expect you to behave.”

Those teenage eyes turned in fury to glare at Prindy, who told Elijah, “This is Dinesh, but most of the time we just call him ‘Dingo.’” Prindy explained his son’s place within the family in *Language* but Elijah, much to Prindy’s chagrin, stared at his son’s bare feet. “Damn it, Dingo.” Prindy said, “You need to take that shit off your damn nails.”

The teenager rolled his eyes, bringing them back to the redhead staring at his toes. “So what’s wrong with him?”

Prindy summarized the story: “We’re going to find out who this man is and where he comes from and then we’re going to get him back to his people before whitey gets involved and sends him down South. “

“And how,” Dingo glanced at his hand; his fingernails needed buffing, “is this your problem?”

“He was picked up by Devorah. You know, Baron’s daughter.”

“Devorah Freedel?”

“Yeah. You remember her, don’t you?”

Dingo scoffed, “I’m not friends with that girl.”

The local grapevine, in the meantime, went into overdrive just minutes after Elijah's arrival with the news spreading out among Prindy's relations and beyond. By sunset, a crowd of sorts had gathered somewhere to discuss this most recent development: Ben Prindy had yet again taken someone in, but this time that someone was white.²³⁷ Prindy's immediate and extended family, as it went, required some explanation. Ever taciturn, Prindy provided cursory information to his family but ignored his neighbors who found the gossip, speculation and innuendo that bubbled up in the wake of this strange white man's arrival far more interesting than any concept of truth:

"I heard he has the legs of a brolga."

"I bet he's all spells and curses."

"I was told he looked like he changed into a bird, but only half way."²³⁸

The whispered query went from "Who was he?" to "What was he?"²³⁹

This discourse later found its way into the local schools where it ran straight into Prindy's son. A defensive wallflower, Dingo wore a pink scarf in the lapel of his school jacket. He'd been the butt of jokes and the target of bullies over the years, never positively sought-after until, five days after Elijah's arrival, he found himself in the centre of everyone's fully rapt attention as classmates and teachers posed to him rapid-fire questions:

"That whitefella; he works for the Government?"

"Did you mother take another lover?"

"Is it true he's a new kind of sea-creature no one has ever seen before, or is he some sort of feeble, mumbling spirit sent back from the dead?"

"Just who is that strange white man?"

His answers did not satisfy his interrogators, who took it upon themselves to fill in the blanks. What Dingo did not know they imagined with wild, often lurid embellishments. They asked him where did that strange white man sleep, on the verandah or in the house? Dingo understood this seemingly innocuous question to be loaded: his half-Indian mother, he knew, would not allow an untouchable into the main house, yet he was unsure whether the people at school would know that. He nevertheless grasped the implications this type of question led to: is that strange white man your comfort boy?

Dingo retreated into his social clique, a group of girls similar in age borne from fathers who worked for his father. They too showered Dingo with questions about that strange white

man. Like the others, they too arrived at their own conclusions, establishing several competing narratives that erroneously contextualized the sudden presence of an old white man with a red beard:

“He’s a demon, a God sent from his mother’s country!”

“Yes!” They said, “That must be it!”

A teenaged sense of decorum forced the conversation into territory best described as crude when this multi-hued mass of young, budding black women raised notions of marriage and kinship:

“Your mother wants white grandchildren, doesn’t she?”

“Did they really bring him in just for you?”

“I didn’t know you went for old white men.”

Dingo could not keep up with their conjecture. He found his answers did not matter; everyone wanted to ask questions, but no one really cared about his answers, no matter how nubilous he made them.

Rather than condescend, Dingo made it a point to transcend. To entertain himself firstly and his peers secondly, he decided right then and there to invent stupid answers to their stupid questions:

“Yes!” He told them, “You’ve finally figured it out! That strange white man is my new uncle, my mother’s new lover *and* a brolga. He’s my comfort boy *and* a God—a demon—brought back from the dead and sent here by the Government to take away our half-black babies!” Dingo slapped his chest like the jocks that picked on him, “I’m the first to go!”

“Yeah?” They asked, “So when do you leave?”

A select few honed in on the comfort boy business: “So you really are a poofteer, aren’t you?”

“Of course I am, and we share a bathroom at home!” Dingo smirked, “I’ve even seen him naked!”

His classmates—that clique of girls—gasped at this.

*

Felix Morose had become over the years a well-connected philanthropist of notorious, pseudo-celebrity merit. His image nearly rehabilitated, the Kimberley-based mining magnate had diversified a series of portfolios that allowed him to pour money on everything from the high arts, medical technologies and the local symphony orchestra to interdenominational non-profit charities, the Red Cross and, of course, the Royal Flying Doctors Service helicopter squad headquartered, as it was, in Durack City.

Felix Morose also donated money to the Kimberley Institute of Science and Agriculture and had, since the early Eighties, bankrolled the Geosciences faculty with grants, bursaries and a flowing, seemingly endless stream of funding. Biannually, the Institute invited their platinum patron to one of their five campuses to view their latest advances in research or to open a new educational wing or hall of residence. Reception, banquets, toasts and champagne were the order of such days, and Felix found himself seated on a dais at a midday luncheon honoring some new botanical breakthrough—something to do with the longevity of butterflies—he couldn't care less about. He had more interest in posing for photographs after dessert with undergraduates thanking him for scholarships he'd awarded them by name. You just couldn't go wrong smiling a giant, toothy smile with mum and dad joining in on the picture; this, Felix reckoned, was an image makeover at its best and most basic: word of mouth, and that famous personal touch captured in countless photographs he knew would one day turn up in family albums to be looked at decades from now. They would remember him as the generous benefactor who sent an uncle or a son or a brother or sister to university, and that's exactly how he wanted it.

Felix smiled for polaroids, making no attempt to memorize the names of the students he'd sponsored; everyone was either "Junior" or "Sport" or "Miss" or, if he was mildly impressed, "Scholar." Felix shook hands, said "Congratulations" and "You must be so proud!" many times until an infantry of engagement associates netting sixty thousand a year cornered him for yet another tax-deductible contribution to their most deserving department. At times like this, Felix would politely demand to see something they were working on which wasn't per se known to the general public.

Felix was offloaded onto Miss Leah Kitts, a senior endowments coordinator who wore thick glasses. Under orders from both the chancellor and vice-chancellor, Miss Kitts took Mr Morose, as she was told to call him, to the Joseph Brill Memorial Laboratory for a guided tour of

a facility he had no memory of opening a year earlier.²⁴⁰ The laboratory was in reality a large complex spread out over five hundred hectares. Miss Kitts was keen to add that thanks to Mr Morose's previous generosity, the Institute was able to purchase additional Crown Land from the state of Western Australia upon which this tremendous structure had been built.

Felix replied with a simple "Mmn." He asked, "Where're they going to put that new synchrotron I paid for? You know, that spinning thing?"

Miss Kitts of course knew what he was talking about, but she was surprised he knew about it. Her response: a wearily-voiced, "I'm not sure, sir."

"Hmn."

Miss Kitts lead Mr Morose to a reception desk where she surrendered her identification to a uniformed security guard. A door buzzed open to a small, square room. Miss Kitts took a step inside, inviting Mr Morose to join her.

"What's this? An elevator?"

"We call it an airlock. We maintain very stringent security measures on this campus. Much of what we do here in this building is unknown to the public."

Felix told her he knew all about this place as the door they stepped through swooshed shut. "I paid for most of what's in here, you know."

A second door slid open behind them and they came out onto a platform overlooking a giant basement filled with people dressed in hazchem suits and face masks carrying tongs and test tubes and steaming beakers between kilns, lasers and bunsen burners. The platform was a hydraulic lift and it lowered them down onto a floor abuzz, Felix presumed, with some type of radioactivity. Miss Kitts went over and looked into a mirror. She held her identification up to her reflection and another door opened.

"Another airlock?"

"Yes." Miss Kitts smiled as the door slid open. "Security here is very tight." She stepped out into a short hallway at the end of which was a thick door. "This," she smiled, "is the vault. This is where we—"

"Keep the dead bodies?"

Miss Kitts turned to Mr Morose, "Beg your pardon?"

"Nothing." Felix shook his head, "Was a joke."

Miss Kitts blushed.

Another uniformed security guard glanced over her identification before unlatching the vault to haul it open wide enough for them to pass through, quickly closing it shut behind them.

“This is where we perform our most sensitive research and our most sensitive experiments. I’m told you want to see something unique today. Is that right?”

Felix narrowed his eyes.

“Well,” she wilted, “I think you’ll find what I’m about to show you *very* interesting.” She led him to another door staffed by another uniformed security guard. They stepped through another armored entry and came out to a room of technicians sitting on *this* side of a large wall of windows looking into a sealed laboratory. In its center, the laboratory contained a series of long tables upon which lay a giant, faded... *lizard*...? Felix couldn’t quite work out what it was, but there it lay inert—dead—its head cracked open and its midsection surgically disgorged with a network of intestines overflowing out of a rectangular bucket on the floor beneath the table. The creature had expired. One of its eyes had glazed over, frosted like a giant jade amulet, and its faded, serpentine tongue lay stretched out from its mouth, dangling over the jaw of fanned beard to coil on the tiles. Felix Morose had never seen such a... *dragon*? He had no clue what the hell he was looking at.

Miss Kitts, in the meantime, greeted one of the technicians, “What’s new with Nessie, Simon?”

“Well she changed color overnight and her radiation levels have spiked again. That’s why no one’s in there with her today.” Miss Kitts asked how long Nessie had been under the weather and the technician said, “Five days.”

“*Nu*?” Felix asked, “What the bloody hell is all this?”

“Well, Mr Morose, we’re not exactly sure what that is.” Miss Kitts introduced the technician. “But I’m sure Simon can sum it up for us.”

“*Nu*?” Felix Morose turned on the technician, “What the bloody hell is *that*?”

“*That*,” said the technician, “is probably some type of mutation discovered leaping out of Lily Creek Lagoon a few months ago. We’ve had our top biologists working on it for weeks now, but it seems no one can agree on what *that* is. Some say it’s an amphibious eel with feet but others say she lacks gills. We’re not sure if it’s a mammal or a reptile, but whatever *that* is, it seems to change color like a chameleon, even though it’s dead. There was a huge argument among the staff about what color it was, some said she—and we sometimes just arbitrarily call it

a ‘she,’ as we can’t seem to arrive at a male-or-female consensus—was green, others said purple or black. Some said silver or rust red or gray and splotchy, like a horny devil, but she kept changing color and those who said black one day came back the next to say purple or some other color, and then she started letting off a foul odor and radiation and we had to seal her off for a week.”

Felix Morose looked at the... *thing*... It was a wretched, forlorn creature. Its skull cracked open, it had probably died in agony. “What were you trying to do to its head, *nu*? Get at its brain?”

“Why yes, actually, that’s exactly what we were trying to do.”

“And did you? Did you get the brain?”

The technician nodded, “We *were* able to locate the cerebrum and the cerebellum which, by the way, had the consistency of a jellyfish, but we couldn’t remove it due to the fact that it’s attached to what appears to be a very rigid, yet malleable spinal column. That’s why we opted to cut her back open. We were hoping to figure out which species she comes from.”

“*Nu*? How’d that work?”

“It didn’t. It just caused more disagreements among our team.”

Felix stared at the bizarre creature on the other side of the windows. It was a large specimen lying across three tables. Its skin was spiky and horny and, in Felix’s view, discolored. “Is it a crocodile or something? What is it?”

“That’s the thing, we can’t seem to figure it out, but we’re pretty sure she’s not some type of crocodile.”

“How do you know that?”

“Not enough teeth.”

“Ah!” Felix nodded. He stared at the creature. He’d never seen anything like it. It had been drained of life. The head was shaped like a diamond, it’s body slender and capped off by a foursome of stocky, squat legs and long claws that had curled back postmortem. Felix noticed someone had cut the tail off and this, more than anything, unnerved him. “*Nu*?” He asked, “What’s it doing all the way down here?” He turned on Miss Kitts. “You mean to tell me *this* is top secret KISA business?”

“If I may,” the technician intervened, “there are a number of reasons we need to keep Nessie locked up.”

“*Nu?*”

“For one thing, it came out of the lagoon in Durack. Second of all, it was seen by some Jews—Orthodox Verbover Jews, no less—and by some local Aborigines before it was taken away by Durack’s finest.”

“*Nu?*” Felix asked, “What for? Was it bothering people?”

“Well, yes, it was. It attacked a little girl from what I understand, but more importantly, Nessie there appears to be radioactive and we feared she presented a danger to the community.”

“What community, *nu?* Who saw this thing? Just some old Jews and a couple of blackfellas?”

“Yes, and that posed two problems for us, which is part of the reason Nessie is locked down in the basement. The Jews that saw it—”

“You mean those uber-Orthodox Verbovers?”

“Yeah,” said the technician, “*them*. They seem to think *that* is a Leviathan from the Bible, and to them she’s an omen.”

“An omen? For what?”

“I have no idea. I just heard when the Aborigines saw it, they ran off screaming about the return of the rainbow serpent, long-awaited, I’m told.”

“This is ridiculous.” Felix turned to that *thing* lying across the tables in the lab. “It’s just a, you know, *lizard*. I don’t see why this needs to be locked up.”

“Well, sir,” Miss Kitts chimed in, “it was an executive decision.”

“And what’s the substantive reason propping up that executive decision?”

“The day after she came in, one of those Verbovers came in demanding to see her.”

“*Nu?*”

“With him, we just turned him away and he left, but when some local Aborigines came, they tried to barge in.” Miss Kitts nodded, “We had to call the police.”

“*Nu?* What’d they want?”

“They said they didn’t like what we were going to do to her.”

Felix looked at the creature through the windows, looking at the head cracked open with veins and brains strewn out, it’s back sliced open along the spine, it’s tail cut off, it’s clawed feet curled back. “*Nu,*” he said, “I can understand their objections.”

“You know what I heard?” Miss Kitts seemed to revel in the trivia she was about to share, “I heard some of those Verbovers ran off after they saw her. I heard they went north of Blossom to hire one of those black witch doctors!” She lifted her brown eyebrows and nodded.

“*Nu?*” Felix didn’t follow, “So?”

“I’m told they hired someone out there to conjure up a red heifer, which I’m also told they were more than happy to do.”

“*Nu?* A red heifer” Felix was, in this instance, moved by disdain, “Are you serious?”

Miss Kitts shrugged, “That’s what I heard.”

“What’s wrong with those people? They think they can induce the Messiah or something?” Felix stared at Miss Kitts, taking note of her long sleeves and her long skirt. “Are you a Verbover?”

Miss Kitts *nouk*’ed like an Israeli, “Modern Oz Orthodox.”

Felix turned to the technician, “You?”

“Not religious.” The technician said, “Jewish in name only.”

Felix stared at this man for a moment, then he turned to stare at that *thing* in the lab. At first glance, it looked off-white, gray—opaque—but now, on second look, he thought he saw it change color ever-so-slightly to a lightly faded putrid green.

“Well, I don’t mean to dismiss the admirable work you people are doing down here, fascinating as this is, but when I asked to see something hush-hush, I was really hoping you’d take me to that teletransportation system no one’s supposed to know about. You’ve started experimenting with that, haven’t you?”

Miss Kitts flinched. “I... um, I,” she stammered, “I’m afraid I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

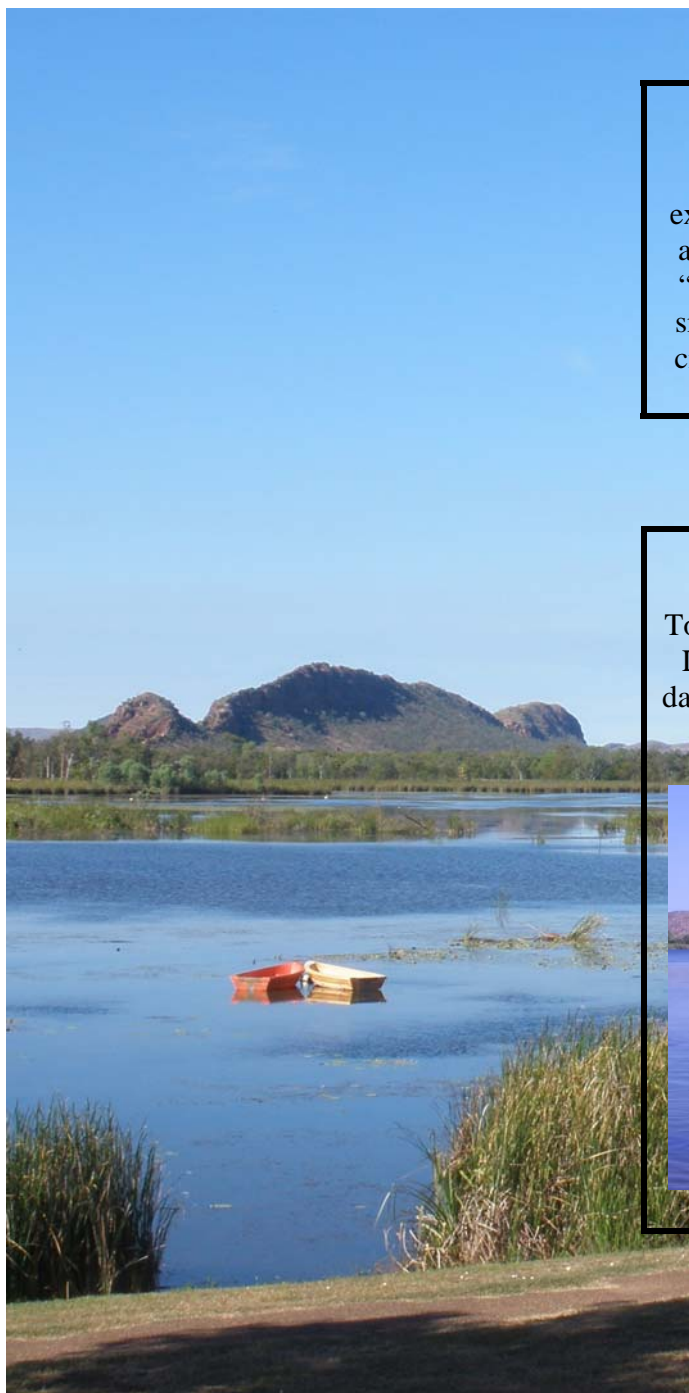
“Bloody bollocks you don’t. Where’s *that* happening? Is it down here somewhere? I want to see it.”

Miss Kitts remembered she’d been told Felix Morose was the man who bought off cricket back in the Seventies. She’d been told he’d pushed at photographers and shoved reporters into busy lanes of traffic in Canberra in a fiery outburst the day they secretly released the findings of some Royal Commission she was too young to remember. She’d been told he was a man with deep pockets keen to buy his way back in from the proverbial cold, donating money to advance his vision by purchasing at least two seats on the executive boards of everything. His

acceptability, she now gathered, was totally dependent on his ability to invest tax-free in tax-deductible non-profit organizations. His wealth had bought him access to the upper echelons of the Institute and she found he was exactly like they said he was: condescending, rude, crude, dismissive, and bloated. She, like many others back at the enagement office, saw right through him. “I have no clue what you’re talking about, but if you want to see it,” Miss Kitts was tempted to smile, “we’ll need another multi-million dollar donation.”

“That’s fine.” Felix glared at the frummy woman. “I’ll just write another check then, shall I?”

Miss Kitts nodded once. *Touché*, Mr Morose, *touché*.



Left:

Her line of vision came down through the vast expanse of blue, arriving at the horizon, lumpy with an uneven triplet of mountains white people called “the Sleeping Buddha;” a big belly flanked by two smaller bumps anchored to either side sitting to the city’s south surrounded by a shawl of brown smog.

Below:

To the northwest of this, the Packsaddle district and Lake Durack sitting against the walls of a curved damn like an adult waiting patiently for a door to let it through to the other side.



Western Australia

1986

At his late-blooming, tumultuous age, Dingo Prindy grew by leaps and bounds in starts and spurts with bursts of hair sprouting up in places that had been naturally smooth previously. Accompanied by a voice that cracked through the guttural octaves of latent post-pubescence much to his chagrin and embarrassment, his development stabilized half way through his sophomore year of secondary school where he and other students waded through a mere modicum of rigorous academics until a lower tier of elders deemed them sufficiently ripe for the next round of local blackfella business. In year twelve, just beyond the horizon, he knew to expect an arbitrary separation brought on by gender which, frankly, suited him: less competition with the girls out of the way. They were a whorish lot and he long awaited the break he hoped his reputation would take in the absence of those females who, like cackling, raucous birds, ran rumors up and down the local grapevines in search of sumptuous fruit ready for plucking.

Dingo awakened late in the morning, stumbling out to the kitchen where he put the kettle on. He then stumbled into the lounge room to sit on a cushioned sofa. He propped his bare feet up on the coffee table and pointed a cordless remote control over his painted toes to tune in to breakfast television, to Channel Nine in particular, where the lead news story was a raging house fire south of Cairns:

“...where a seventy-three year old man was rushed to hospital, but the dog he was trying to rescue sadly did not make it.

“Turning now to federal politics, the House of Representatives is due to debate the formation of a new state today with Abraham Growman, the senior member for Durack City, leading the call. He and other lawmakers from across the Kimberleys want to carve a new state out of the top part of Western Australia. We cross now live to our chief political correspondent in Canberra, Celia Mansfield; Celia?”

“Thank you, Lorraine, and good morning. As you mentioned, the proposal to establish a new state in far north Western Australia will be discussed in federal parliament later today. Abraham Growman, along with several other MPs from northern WA, claim they have the support of their constituencies as well as several independent backbenchers from around the

country to push for the creation of a new state, but several other MPs, along with the premier of Western Australia, oppose the controversial move. I had a chance to speak to Mr Growman earlier today and he said he believes the time for the Commonwealth to proclaim a new state in the Kimberleys is now, but he admits he's expecting a long and fierce debate today in parliament."

Dingo yawned as the image on the television cut to a lady reporter standing in front of Parliament House in Canberra holding a microphone into the face of a curly-haired man wearing a suit without a tie:

"The founding of the state of Kimberley is somewhat overdue, yet it's an important issue we ought to debate to make up for lost time. Given the Kimberley's soaring population and it's growing preeminence as both a regional and international hub for the mining industry, science technology, transportation as well as shipping to and from Asia, the time has come for both the state and federal governments to separate our region from the rest of Western Australia. As I've said many times before, the people I represent and the people my colleagues represent are sick and tired of our tax dollars going to infrastructure projects in Perth and Kalgoorlie and Albany when it's clear that some of that money—our money—should be spent where it's needed. The people of the Kimberley pay more taxes than the people in southern parts of WA, but we get substantially less from both the state and federal governments, and that is why I'm looking forward to a hearty and lengthy debate about this today in the House."

The kettle whistled from the kitchen and Dingo rose from the couch, not listening to the reporter on television: *"As for now, the prime minister—who will not be attending the debate in parliament today due to an unrelated scheduling conflict—has remained reticent on how she feels about the proposal. It is important to note that the House is not expected to come to a vote today, but should the proposal at some point pass both the House and the Senate, it would make the Kimberley Australia's ninth state. The last time parliament proclaimed a new state was five years ago when North Australia was re-split into North and Central Australia."*²⁴⁰

"Lorraine?"

In the kitchen, Dingo poured hot boiling water over the freeze-dried remains of instant coffee, yawning again as he added five lumps of sugar to make the warm beverage taste sweet.

His mother stepped into the kitchen, an empty whisky glass with a trace of milk in one hand, a freshly lit Land-O-Smiles in the other.

“Good to see you making another fine attempt to go to school today.” Savitra inhaled, toking on the filtered joint, the chest of her plain housecoat rising and falling as she exhaled a thick cloud into the corner of the kitchen.

Dingo leered at his mother. She was a pothead and a drunk and she maintained a ridiculous accent that grated on his nerves. He couldn't stand her and he said, “Oh just shut up, mother. I'm not in the mood for you this morning.”

Savitra glared *up* at her son—after his latest growth spurt, he towered over her—and blew a cloud of smoke into his face. Just a few months ago she would have backhanded him to run him out of the house, but he had at one point shoved back and she found the disciplinary option of physical intimidation no longer available to her.

“You will do as I say.” She inhaled, “I'll get Rhoda to drive you in.”

“Like hell you will.” Dingo looked down on his mother, unimpressed by her smoky nostrils. “You will do nothing of the sort.”

“You've no right,” she exhaled, “to speak to me like that.”

“Mmm.” Dingo was not moved. He finished what was left of his coffee and belched, “Excuse me, mum, but I've got to shit.” He set his coffee mug down near the sink and belched again. He said, “See ya',” over his shoulder and walked from the kitchen.

Dingo retreated to the bathroom adjacent to his bedroom where the sink and the bathtub shower, along with the cabinets and a small linen closet, were separated from the toilet tucked into a room of its own. He sequestered himself in this small cubicle and reached up to open the small window just above the water tank. The coffee he'd consumed motivated his metabolism, pushing through him quickly as his bowels evacuated with ease. Outside, through the opened window, he heard a vehicle pull up. He heard doors open and close and his father's voice:

“You go on in and have a shower. We'll head back out after lunch.”

Dingo heard Elijah's response: “Yes, boss,” and scoffed. Elijah was a resident non-entity and Dingo had, months earlier, given up all attempts to engage him in conversation. He did not talk much; his answers were monosyllabic; to get him to speak about anything was like pulling teeth. His mother barely acknowledged him, but she enjoyed and benefitted from his near-mute

status and regular presence. He did everything she told him to. He didn't ask questions or present a challenge or threat, proving himself useful in many ways over the last few months. Ben Prindy, on a piecemeal basis, sometimes employed their guest to till the fields or to dig another irrigation tube, or to shred papers back at the office, or to burn files down at the warehouse, or to lift heavy boxes, but Dingo was sure no actual money ever changed hands. His mother would've put a stop to that; just give him some more *pituri*, she would've said.

Dingo shook himself free, flinging random drops of piss around the inside of the commode he was sitting on. The hand that shook turned into the hand that stroked and he felt himself harden. He looked down at his groin and saw his thick, stumpy manhood surrounded by curly hairs spreading out from the base. Three years ago, his genitalia had resembled a long brown slug with a dark, slightly pink sleeve of flesh hanging off the end of it. Now, thanks to his father's family's mens' business, his penis—which was larger now than it had been then—was two-toned and suddenly erect despite the loss of thousands of nerve endings that were removed, along with his foreskin, during a traumatizing, sunlit *corroboree* Dingo preferred to forget. Dingo hated blackfella business; like going from color television back to an old school black and white was how he described the transition from shaft to knob in his ongoing efforts to relearn the pleasurable mechanics of his cock.

Dingo heard the door to the bathroom open. He heard the flip of the light switch. A moment later, someone was trying to get into the toilet and Dingo pushed back on the door:

"I'm in here already, Elijah."

Silence followed, then the faucet for the bathtub was turned on and pulled out, sending the pressurized water through the showerhead. From inside the toilet, Dingo felt the air steam up. He heard the rollers at the bottom of the partition—the sliding glass door—and he imagined Elijah naked and soon to be wet stepping under rushing, hot water. Dingo stroked himself. Though he'd seen Elijah naked hundreds of times, he realized Elijah had not seen him naked, at least not like this, and besides, Dingo wanted to take another look at that old white man.

Without arising from the the commode, Dingo pulled the door to the toilet open. As expected, he saw Elijah's rumpled backside. The tuft of hair above his butt damp, Elijah stood under the water with his back to Dingo. Dingo got harder and stroked stronger; Elijah had no clue he was being watched. He held his face up to the shower, working a dollop of shampoo into

a foamy lather that cascaded down his neck and shoulders. Dingo pushed the door out of the way to get a better view.

Elijah turned around in the shower and Dingo got a good look at him. He was a scrawny man with long skinny arms and long knobby legs, a scorched stick figure with a beard and a lumpy gut hanging over a small, limp penis shrouded in a mangy mess of pubic hair. Dingo was pleased at this sight and pleased with himself—I'm bigger than he is!—and this excited him and he bit his lower lip.

Elijah, oblivious to Dingo, rinsed the shampoo off his face and beard, shaking his head and rubbing his eyes free of soap and water. Vision restored, he blinked a few times and saw Dingo seated over the commode in that small room with the toilet. Elijah froze. He stared, but did not speak.

Dingo lifted his legs to prop his feet on either side of the door jamb. He stroked his shaft with his right hand, sending his left south to fondle his testicles. He clutched at them, showing them off to the old white man watching him. He thumbed his frenulum and toyed with his balls.

"Yeah?" Dingo whispered, "You like my nuts?" A light breeze blew in through the window and he was thrilled by the chill. A thunderstorm was *en route*—he could feel it—and he raised his legs higher, placing them further up the door jamb, catching a whiff of feces—*his* feces—stewing in the porcelain bowl beneath him.

Dingo flushed the toilet and brought his gaze back to Elijah who, with his back to the shower, just stared. Dingo didn't expect him to say anything—Elijah never spoke—but he kept on stroking his two-toned genitalia for this wet, speechless audience of one. Stiff as cement, Dingo panted. He was getting close, Elijah just kept staring, and then... and then...

And then Ben Prindy, Dingo's father, came into the bathroom, opening the door with a short stack of work clothes piled in his hands:

"Here're you go." Prindy set a shirt and a pair of trousers on the counter next to one of the sinks. "Put these on when you're done."

Dingo did not have enough time to put himself away or to close the door to the toilet and his father saw him in all his lewd glory.

"Jesus H Christ, Dingo! What the fuck're you doing?" Ben Prindy was disgusted by his son—disgusted to see him like *this*—and he quickly turned away, looking without thinking into

the mirror on the wall opposite the shower. In the reflection, Prindy saw Elijah standing behind the sliding glass door in the bathtub under the shower. He saw, poking out from under that man's belly, the fresh beginnings of a tiny, little erection he immediately presumed was intended for his son who was, at that moment, ejaculating a torrent of teenage semen.

This floored Prindy, who flew into a rage. He cursed at his son in *Language* and called him a bloody poofter. Prindy growled his way over to Dingo seated on the commode. He pulled first at his son's hair and then at the back of his neck, dragging him off the toilet and into the bathroom where he shoved him face down onto the floor.

Prindy then took aim at Elijah cowering in the corner of the shower. He pulled at the glass door above the bathtub, jerking the partition clear off its rollers. The partition shattered and glass fell on the floor and in the tub. Prindy yanked Elijah from the shower. Elijah sliced his feet across shards of glass scattered across the floor. Prindy shoved Elijah from the bathroom and said, "Get the fuck out of my house!" in seven different languages.

Elijah fled. He ran naked from the bathroom, tripping over a rug from Rajahstan and some imported teak furniture to rush from the house. Ben Prindy, in the meantime, looked down on his son lying on the floor. Dingo was barefoot and his underwear was double-looped around his ankles and his shirt pulled up behind his neck. Prindy noticed Dingo's anus, it was caked in shit. His son had yet to wipe himself and he said: "What the fuck is wrong with you, *nu*?"

Elijah, in turn, ran like the wind. He left the house through a back door and rushed down the cul-de-sac surrounded by houses filled to the brim with Prindy's relations, some of whom sat on their verandahs unstartled by the sight of a naked man running through the street. To them, this was not an unusual nor uncommon sight, though some would later say the strange part was that, this time, it was that old white man who lived up in the big house with Ben and Savitra.

Elijah disappeared. He remembered what he'd heard about the road to Goose Hill: it was unsealed just past the edge of town. He aimed for it, stepping as far out into the bush in what he hoped was a southerly direction. He'd grasped that Nimbing was a large area but, in essence, a small town he found easy to sidestep. He quickly came out into a country burnt orange. He climbed over some giant rocks and a couple of jagged, mountainous hills before the heights of Nimbing vanished into a vast expanse of hot, hoary land overflowing with scrub and spinifex. He thought he was on his way home, but something stopped him. The horizon was a border—a

series of borders—but before any attempt was made at traversing them, he raised his shoulders and straightened his spine. He turned on his heel to look back over the way he came, locating the populous of Blossom in the distance by the plumes of smoke rising up from one of those many ring places. Using both hands, Elijah cupped his palms around his mouth and shouted:

“Eeeeemaaaanuuuu! Eeemaanuel! Emmanuuueel!”

He grunted and spat on the land beneath his naked, bare feet, then shouted again:

“*Emmanuel!*”

He said, “*Jah!*” and spat another three times in a language no one in Nimbing had bothered to try. He cursed at the North and at the South and pounded his hairy, bare chest:

“Emmanuel!”

He whispered, “Manny!” as a teardrop streaked down his face. He climbed down a mountain—for he’d been at the top of a scenic vista—and walked casually yet purposely across a golden land scarce of humanity.

Hours later, and charred by the sun, he stepped into a puddle of water, which to him seemed out of place. The earth between his toes was mushy, muddy and black and the puddle was not a singular body of water, but a stream, a brook he quickly followed. Trees and foliage gathered along the edges of the brook. Birds became plentiful, as did mosquitoes and ants. The brook widened, the water deepened, the trees and bushes on either side denser. Lily pads popped up along the water, mingling with clumps of tall green grass and wet ferns. The brook turned swampy and fish appeared, glowing just beneath the surface of the water. The brook curved, the swamp expanded and then, without warning, he wandered into a tranquil billabong home to thousands of little brown birds wading in the shallows between fallen tree branches. In the center of the lake, he saw a cluster of giant, prehistoric white pelicans with long beaks communing in a circle reflected in the still water. There were other birds and fish of every color and he leaned over, stepping into the water with a cupped hand to ladle a sample.

The water was foul. It tasted murky, but he drank from the brook anyway, stepping backward out of the water after a few lengthy sips. He feared a crocodile lurking in the water, while the dazzling, phosphorescent fish—enchanted on first glance—became living objects of mystery, then fear. He had, after all, never seen anything like this before, and his place *in* this

place was at best undefined, especially without the advent of a cumbersome, diplomatic ordeal, yet he saw no one nearby and, as a result, made motions of a slow, hasty retreat.

The sun was hot and bright and his skin was scorched. He wandered over to dry earth to take a seat beneath the shade of a fuzzy green tree. He sighed and leaned back against the trunk. This respite provided his stomach with a voice that grumbled. He was hungry. He'd fled prior to rather than after lunch and he desired nourishment. What he found around him looked edible but a latent sense of totemic obligation tied his hands, preventing him from the organic necessity for sustenance. He looked to the heavens; flat and blue and dotted with white clouds; then to the distant scenery where mountains rested like sleeping ancestors.

He rested; he dozed, and he awakened. Squawking—violent, boisterous and persistent squawking—roused him and he saw the pelicans in the water take to flight, their long, white wings flapping as they climbed towards the sky. Those little brown birds followed suit, fluttering away as a mass collective, following after the pelicans. The squawking grew louder and then, from around and above that fuzzy green tree, there were black birds, thousands of them. They swarmed around his head and body. He shielded himself from this avian onslaught until they descended to the ground around him.

He looked at these black birds; they had black eyes, black beaks and dark, almost purple, black feathers. They looked stern. He felt like they were staring at him with disapproval, but they did not harm him. He saw they'd brought something: fine flakes of dust powdering his body and the ground around him. These flakes looked like many different things—round seeds and wafers mostly—but, more importantly, they looked scrumptious.

Those black birds stared down their beaks at him with penetrating, beady little black eyes. He glared back at them, but only for a moment; whatever they'd brought him looked edible, and he was hungry. He began to eat what they'd flown in. He found the wafers were sweet and the round seeds like anything and everything he'd ever tasted or eaten. After the first couple of bites, he scooped them up and ate while those black birds—those ravens—cooed and chirped around him.

The ravens did not squawk as he ate. They milled around, staring at him as if they were the owners of this land. For all he knew, they *were* the owners of this land. He had no real idea of where or in whose country he was in at this moment and he ate without ceremony or tribute.

Those birds, those vicious black ravens and their mysterious delivery, added to the sense that *this* place was not *his* place. At the moment this dawned on him, those ravens took off, flapping their wings in one singular, mass of movement. Once airborne, he watched them fly from the billabong, following the same flight path as those pelicans and those little brown birds. He ate more flakes until at last he was full. He stood up to yawn and stretch, looking in the direction the ravens had flown. After a brief moment of hesitation undermined by a sense of urgency, he put one bare foot in front of the other to head off in the same direction.

He walked for eight days and five nights until he saw the outskirts of Durack City blistering on the horizon like a scab.²⁴¹ He saw high-rises lining up through the distant haze. He recognized one of them, the tall with reflective glass; it had been pointed out to him months earlier—Kim Tech, ‘HaMigdal’—he’d never been there, but he remembered seeing it on his way to those people and that big house and all that work! He licked his lips: freedom awaited him. He could go back from whence he came; his prodigal pilgrimage had finally begun.

The weather changed over time, shifting from the heat of the dry back to the thick, heavy stench of the wet. The sky crowded with dark clouds, thunderbolts, wind, lightning and driving, furious rains. He found the streets and thoroughfares of northeastern Durack flooded over with rising, reddish brown water, but the city moved on—lived on—and he saw lights, houses, automobiles, planes and trains and people everywhere. He hid from them all, sticking to roads and alleyways. He unknowingly wandered into South Carlton, an upscale suburb known for vast, expansive lawns, circular driveways and sprawling mansions where garages, tool sheds and granny flats stood alone out the back, separated from everything.

His journey in the thick rain continued. He became invisible in the wet, especially after sunset, moving around a dark bend where he was nearly hit by a speeding car that swerved to miss him. He turned a corner. Above him, a sign he couldn’t read told him he’d stepped onto Sidon Avenue, where two giant houses stood facing each other on either side of a street. Of these two houses, only one—the blue house—had smoke rising from a chimney. Illuminated by an amber lamppost, he saw a row of black birds—those ravens—perched on the edge of the parapet at the front of the house looking as if they’d been waiting for him to arrive. His midsection grumbled and he remembered the sustenance those black birds had brought him earlier. He

walked towards the blue house; those black birds had fed him once before, perhaps they'd do it again, provided he was still in their country.

He'd learned the easiest way to get into a house was to get up to a window or door to grab the attention of those inside it, which is exactly what he did. In the darkness in the rain, he stepped over some bushes and a bed of orderly wildflowers to look through the bay window at the front.²⁴² Inside, he saw people—white women wearing identical skirts and aprons—moving around a kitchen. He leaned in and pressed his fingers to the glass. It was warm on the other side and he sniffed. They were baking bread and he salivated. In the corner, a woman stood over a pot boiling on a stove. She used a long spoon to stream a thick golden liquid into a set of jars lined up on a nearby table. She moved slowly, filling each jar. He recognized the golden liquid she poured. He had a name for it—*honik*—and he knew it was sweet and tasty and he tapped on the window, knocking on the glass until the people on the other side—all those white women—froze to stare at him.* Once he had their attention, he opened his mouth and made what he thought was a universal gesture for I'm hungry: he pointed at his belly and grunted.

The white women shrieked and screamed. They pushed and shoved at each other. They panicked. Some grabbed knives while others grabbed meat cleavers and rolling pins. A young, black woman—a girl—stepped in and, with one word he couldn't hear through the window, brought them to quiet.

"What are yous doing running up a ruckus in here?" she asked them, "What the hell is wrong with you people?"

The household staff pointed at the man staring at them through the window. The young black girl turned and saw, on the other side of the glass, an old, naked white man with a bushy red beard standing in the rain.

"Oh dear God." She recognized him instantly but went up to the glass for a closer look. Yep, she saw he was missing an eyebrow, it's him alright.

Ignoring pleas from the servants, she moved from the kitchen down the hall towards the side door. She stepped in to the garage and clicked a button to roll open the big door. As they rose, she saw a pair of long, bony white legs, a pair of knobby knees, a furry groin, a belly gut, a slashed torso crisscrossed with scars and, finally, a red beard and a pair of eyes she would never

* "*honik*" is the Yiddish word for "honey"

forget. She'd encountered this man before—she remembered when, where and how—and she stepped out near the edge of rain to look at him. He had aged since the last time she'd ever seen him and she asked, "Do you remember me?"

The old white man stepped into the light to look at the black girl. He didn't know anything about her, but he recognized her face which, like his, had aged, though not as much.

"Why are you here?" Devorah searched his wet face for recognition. "Did you know me mum and dad are stuck in Wyndham tonight?" Devorah waited in vain for a reply, then she switched to *Language* and repeated herself.

She received no response.

Devorah then made her sign, placing herself in a particular location within the local blackfella system and, to this, he responded: he made his sign and she flinched. My husband, *ha!* She laughed; more like my uncle, and look at those pathetic legs! She asked him: "What do you want?"

He opened his mouth and pointed at his belly. He said one word, "*Ungry*," then pointed at her. "You give me."

At that moment, some members of the household staff came out into the garage.

"*Oi!* Devorah! Shall I tell Winifred to phone the police?"

"What's he doing to you? Is he hurting you?"

Devorah turned on these white women. She told them to hush up, to go back inside, to mind their own bloody business and to keep their fuckin' mouths shut, "I'll handle him," She also berated the Israeli servants in Hebrew, telling them "to get the fuck out of here, *now!*"

She looked at the man with the missing eyebrow. He was the same man who'd been at the lagoon the day that thing came up out of the water at her. She owed him a debt of gratitude and she said, "You want some food?" She opened the door for him, "Come on in, then."

Elijah pressed his hands together and bowed. He said, "*A dank*"—two forgotten words that came to him suddenly from out of nowhere—and then, wet and naked, he followed her into the house.*

Five months later, Devorah found herself seven months pregnant with a uterus the typical size of nine-months four months early. Her doctor—Dr Michael Gabriel MD—called this an

* "*A dank*" is Yiddish for "Thank you"

accelerated incubation, claiming she was two-thirds the way through her final trimester. He said it was some type of medical anomaly the baby growing inside her was healthy and normal. He said he planned to write a paper later: “I’ve just never seen anything like it!”

Devorah’s parents, on the other hand, were perplexed as to how their daughter came to be with child. With eight children of their own, Baron and Miriyam certainly understood the biology of procreation, but what they couldn’t grasp was how *this* happened to their second-eldest daughter. Devorah was less than forthcoming about those details, though she did whisper to her mother that this had happened to her willingly and not by force.

“Who did this to you, then, *nu?*” Miri asked her, “Who knocked you up?”

“He’s gone now, mum. He left me.” Devorah spoke without tone, “He doesn’t matter anymore.”

According to the doctor, the young mother-to-be was, simply put, in a state of prolonged shock while the household staff she’d been entrusted to the night the Freeland League washed out proved tight-lipped about what had happened. They clammed up when reproached by Baron, forcing Miri, as both Devorah’s mother and as the lady of the house, to fire them all, banishing that useless, incompetent lot of white women to the local Department of Human Services.

Baron, in the meantime, arranged the details necessary for Devorah’s health and well-being. After all, his wife reckoned, a healthy, uncomplicated birth required discretion and a private hospital room for the penultimate delivery. Baron ordered both through their state-subsidized health fund, along with a midwife and a licensed pediatrician to provide post-natal amenities. Devorah, a surly teenager notorious for a querulous personality and ornery disposition, transformed and seemingly overnight into a passive entity notable for a distinct lack of interest in the fast-growing fetus baking inside her. She stopped arguing, backtalk ceased and her sass—Devorah’s bright and judgmental sass—evaporated. She followed all instructions and did everything the doctor told her to, but it was clear in her solemn, near-silent rectitude that she did not take to pregnancy. The baby in her belly was a medical condition she was forced to carry until it crawled out of her and it was clear to her family that she’d made no mental or emotional preparations beyond that inevitable moment in her future when, to her casual disregard, motherhood would set in.

Devorah went through the motions, some of which were quite extensive, and endured what her mother's culture deemed customary, compulsory and appropriate according to Law. On the day of the birth, Devorah's water broke whilst she ate lunch at a table in their cavernous kitchen surrounded, as she was, by a newly-stocked household staff of Macanese women speaking a combination of Mandarin and Portuguese. Her parents were not at home. They'd left Devorah hours earlier to attend a *tenai'im* ceremony between Rifkah, their eldest daughter, and Antwone, her gentleman intended, taking place on a grassy picnic lawn adjacent to the car park for a co-ed *mikveh* housed in a sleekly-designed, progressive Synagogue that reluctantly approved of mixed-race, interfaith marriages. Protocols were nevertheless in place and quickly activated: an ambulance was called and the midwife was summoned, and Devorah was packed up and shipped out to the Maternity Ward at Steinberg Memorial.

The birth itself was quick and painful. Devorah's parents turned up with Rifkah, Devorah's older sister, some time after the delivery. Miri asked her daughter how it went and how she felt; she was told: "It hurt, mum, and I didn't like it."

Her father asked her if there'd been any issues or complications during delivery and Devorah said, "No."

"Did she," asked Rifkah, "have a boy or a girl?"

Everyone agreed that was an excellent question, but Devorah stared off past the wall and said, "I don't know and I don't care."

Miriyam scolded her daughter: no man will want to marry you with that attitude. Up close, Miri noticed a small red bump popping up near the corner of Devorah's bottom lip. Devorah had a cold sore, and her mother turned to her husband and shook her head.

Baron nodded and stepped away. He went up to the nurse's station to ask about his daughter's baby, "Where is this child?"

Baron was led to the nursery window where newborns were set out on display. He asked which one was Devorah's and the nurse pointed to the baby fast asleep in a small bin at the front. A big number seven was glued to the front of the bin next to a dual-language label. On the left-side, the label was written in English, but Baron's eyes went first to the right where everything was written in Hebrew. The label asked for the gender of the child and, to the right of the big

number seven, someone had written the two Hebrew letters for the word *baht*—daughter—with a felt tip pen.

Baron smiled, “She had a girl!”

The nurse asked him if the newborn had a name yet, “Her mother didn’t give us one at the birth, but we need one for the record.”

“Of course.” Baron saw the blank part of the label where the name ought to be written and he said, “I see.”

“Great.” The nurse took out a pen. “What’s the little one to be called, then?”

Baron stared at his granddaughter fast asleep on the other side of the window, noting again the blank space for the name on the label on the front of the bin. Beneath that blank space, Baron saw the two-lettered Hebrew word for daughter just to the right of the big number seven glued to the front.

“Batsheva,” he read from right-to-left. “Her name is Batsheva.”

“Wonderful,” the nurse smiled. “I’ll see they get that name on the certificate.”

“Yes.” Baron beamed beatific. “So when can we hold her, *nu?*”



The brook curved, the swamp expanded and then, without warning, he wandered into a tranquil billabong home to thousands of little brown birds wading in the shallows between fallen tree branches.



In the center of the lake, he saw a cluster of giant, prehistoric white pelicans with long beaks communing in a circle reflected in the still water.

¹⁰⁸ Glimpse into our world – one of the main features of Uchronic alternate history fiction.

¹⁰⁹ Yet another glimpse into our world, as per the features of Uchronic alternate history fiction.

¹¹⁰ “Don’t just stand there gaping at me like an idiot!” is adapted from page 40 of Joan Lindsay’s *Picnic at Picnic Rock*.

¹¹¹ Edmund Barton was the first Prime Minister of Australia and his portrait appeared, at the time, on the 100 pound note.

¹¹² Elliptical world history: an East and West Berlin still exist in 1964.

¹¹³ This sentence is adapted from page 84 of Joan Lindsay’s *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

¹¹⁴ Ironically, modern Doolboong people generally use the word “tribe” in defining dynamics with other Aboriginal groups in the East Kimberley, such as the Miriwoong; see Doolboong section of dissertation.

¹¹⁵ The lines “Are you a Jew, Ben?” to “...your own bare feet...” are adapted from page 370 of Patrick White’s *Riders in the Chariot*.

¹¹⁶ In the iconic Australian epic, *Poor Fellow My Country* by Xavier Herbert, there are more than eight references to urination.

¹¹⁷ This line adapted from page 20 of Joan Lindsay’s *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

¹¹⁸ The “little trickster rabbits” are based on the tale of Br’er Rabbit, a syncope of “Brother Rabbit” linked to African and Cherokee cultures that is, in turn, linked to Gullah Storytelling and the Gullah language, a Creole language spoken by African American populations in coastal Georgia; *The Gullah: Rice, Slavery, and the Sierra Leone-American Connection* by Joseph A. Opala; and *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the ‘Cornfield Journalist’: the Tale of Joel Chandler Harris* by Walter M. Brasch; and *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* by Lawrence Levine.

¹¹⁹ This line is adapted from dialogue attributed to the character of Alfie Candelmas on page 533 of Xavier Herbert’s *Poor Fellow My Country*.

¹²⁰ Kimberley Plan – English-language in schools requirement.

¹²¹ Elliptical world history: what happened to Israel? (as per “Israel Endangered”).

¹²² This line of dialogue adapted from page 172 of Joan Lindsay’s *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

¹²³ Elliptical world history: the reader can assume some atomic weapons were dropped on Japan during the climax of World War Two.

¹²⁴ This is a direct reference to the events of Part Two

¹²⁵ *In the Wet* by Nevil Shute.

¹²⁶ Sequence of descriptions, as well as various lines of dialogue attributed to the Mindi MacCallum Ricklesby character are adapted from page 114 of Xavier Herbert’s *Poor Fellow My Country*.

¹²⁷ From “Prindy drove the ute...” to the “...top side of the ferny rocks”, adapted from page 522 of Xavier Herbert’s *Poor Fellow My Country*.

¹²⁸ This sequence adapted from page 115 of Xavier Herbert’s *Poor Fellow My Country*.

¹²⁹ Prindy’s vanishing into the water adapted from pages 114 and 997 of Xavier Herbert’s *Poor Fellow My County*.

¹³⁰ Paragraph adapted from page 711 of Xavier Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country*.

¹³¹ Paragraph adapted from page 522 of Xavier Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country*.

¹³² From "her scanty drawers" to "fancy *shmancy* ways of the aristocracy, miss" is adapted from page 115 of Xavier Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country*.

¹³³ Paragraph adapted from page 522 of Xavier Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country*.

¹³⁴ "calf-deep water" adapted from page 115 of Xavier Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country*.

¹³⁵ "projection of rock nicely shaded by an overhanging tree" adapted from page 711 of Xavier Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country*.

¹³⁶ "like a Negro Adonis" is adapted from page 115 of Xavier Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country*.

¹³⁷ "flopped down" and "thrashing about" are adapted from Page 115 of Xavier Hebrert's *Poor Fellow My Country* while "spray of iridescence" is adapted from page 522 of the same novel.

¹³⁸ This sentences is adapted from page 522 of Xavier Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country* while "naked boys slipped into the water" is adapted here from page 711 of the same novel.

¹³⁹ This sentence is an inadvertent nod in the direction of the famously fabled American Civil War, (i.e. Elusive Appomattox), in which the "Grey and the Blues" (i.e. North versus South) fought it out.

¹⁴⁰ This sentence and the two paragraphs above it are adapted from page 711 of Xavier Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country*.

¹⁴¹ Adapted from page 60 of Kenneth Cook's *Wake In Fright*.

¹⁴² Adapted from page 61 of Kenneth Cook's *Wake In Fright*.

¹⁴³ Adapted from pages 60-61 of Kenneth Cook's *Wake In Fright*.

¹⁴⁴ Adapted from lines attributed to Blanche DuBois at the end of Scene Five in *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams.

¹⁴⁵ Adapted from page 61 of Kenneth Cook's *Wake In Fright*.

¹⁴⁶ Adapted from pages 60-62 of Kenneth Cook's *Wake In Fright*.

¹⁴⁷ Adapted from pages 60-62 of Kenneth Cook's *Wake In Fright*.

¹⁴⁸ It is not a coincidence that the name of this fictional character is Mindi MacCallum Ricklesby. The MacCallum clan are famous Australian historians, the coincidence and recurrence of their name here is meant to emphasize the central role of history in Uchronic alternate history fiction; i.e. history, both are "our history" as well as the "alternate history" inherent to any Uchronic novel, are characters in the drama of the story.

¹⁴⁹ Adapted from page 111 of Joan Lindsay's *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

¹⁵⁰ Adapted from page 25 of Joan Lindsay's *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

¹⁵¹ The image of a "hop-hopping" Jew lizard on a "zig-zag course" is adapted from a similar sequence involving a wallaby on Page 85 of Joan Lindsay's *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

¹⁵² Adapted from page 26 of Joan Lindsay's *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

¹⁵³ Adapted and incorporated from page 32 of Joan Lindsay's *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

¹⁵⁴ Adapted from page 81 of Joan Lindsay's *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

¹⁵⁵ This line of dialogue adapted from page 28 of Joan Lindsay's *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

¹⁵⁶ According to the Australia Severe weather website, Tropical Cyclone Ruth skirted the coastline along the top of WA in 1965. In this Uchronic alternate history novel, it turns in land as described here.

(CITE:

http://www.australiasevereweather.com/tropical_cyclones/1964_1965/jtwc/tropical_cyclone_ruth.htm)

¹⁵⁷ This sentence is adapted from page 82 of Emile Zola's *Therese Raquin*.

¹⁵⁸ "kadish" – Jewish prayers typically associated with mourning; "yahrzeit" – the anniversary of a death of a close relative where it is customary to recite a "kadish."

¹⁵⁹ It was proposed by the Postmaster General HVC Thorby that the Jewish colony in the East Kimberley not be allowed access to the telephone so as to keep them separated from the rest of Australia; in this Uchronic version of events, the proposal is made and adopted, and the Jewish residents of the Kimberley instead use the telegraph to communicate with one another; this is mentioned on page 42 of Leon Gettler's *An Unpromised Land* which cites a quote from Thorby: "If they don't speak English, they can't use the phone." This quote is taken from the *Daily Telegraph* (newspaper) on January 18, 1938.

¹⁶⁰ The name "Menachem" is lifted, as it were, from Michael Chabon's *The Yiddish Policeman's Union*, where the corpse central to the plot is named "Menachem Shpilman"

¹⁶¹ The elliptical revelation of an alternate world history: during "the war" (i.e. the Second World War) Russia and Italy switched sides, thus implying the Soviet Union was defeated and conquered by Nazi Germany who then installed a Vichy-like puppet government that forced the USSR to 'switch sides'.

¹⁶² Elliptical revelation of alternate history: there are travel restrictions that, in short, keep the Jews from moving around the country. They are restricted to the East Kimberley region of Western Australia.

¹⁶³ These two lines of dialogue between Prindy and Baron elliptically reveal something very telling about the United States circa 1965; this revelation will be clarified in Part Four.

¹⁶⁴ A reference to the fictional Verbover sect depicted in Michael Chabon's *The Yiddish Policeman's Union*.

¹⁶⁵ This is the general location for that Aboriginal school mentioned on the very first page of the thesis.

¹⁶⁶ This excerpt from *Nineveh* reveals the possibility of an independent country in southern India known as "Travancore." The idea for an Indian state or region known internationally as Travancore in the modern era is a reference to *The Years of Rice and Salt* by Kim Stanley Robinson, a Uchronic novel that was to be included in the Islam Insh'Allah category of the genre study.

¹⁶⁷ "Nineveh – Summing the world up in four discs!" is similar to Microsoft Encarta, a general precursor to Wikipedia that came mostly in disc-form during the 1990s.

¹⁶⁸ The *Library of Alexandria* is a reference to Matt Ruff's Uchronic novel *The Mirage*. *The Mirage* relies heavily on the direct revelation of an alternate world history, also known as the "info-dump." In Matt Ruff's Uchronic novel, these "info-dumps" take the form of entries excerpted from the *Library of Alexandria* which, for all intents and purposes, is presented very similar to Wikipedia. The *Library of Alexandria* serves a similar purpose here in *The Jew Lizard Suite*: it directly reveals information to the reader regarding the characters living in an alternate world history.

¹⁶⁹ The elliptical revelation of an alternate world history: Macau, in 2015, is still Portuguese. Also, the server for the *Library of Alexandria* is located in San Francisco; this is similar to Wikipedia.

¹⁷⁰ Several details regarding the alternate world history are revealed elliptically here: the location of the world's largest Orthodox organization and the fact that this particular Jewish community is *not* Yiddish-speaking. There are several indications throughout this Uchronic novel that these Jews don't necessarily speak Yiddish now that they live in Australia. One issue raised by Professor Adam Rover from the University of Denver in Colorado was the emphasis on Hebrew/Israeli Hebrew rather than Yiddish "given the Yiddishist emphasis of the Freeland League." Many Jews from Yiddish-speaking Europe immigrated to the United States, yet most modern American Jews have next to no relationship by and large with the Yiddish language aside from some well-known Yiddish words and phrases. Unlike in some parts of the Jewish community in Australia, particularly in Melbourne, most Jewish communities in America place an educative emphasis on biblical Hebrew or modern Israeli Hebrew, which is what tends to be taught in most primary and supplemental Jewish schools in America today. Prominent Jewish intellectuals such as Michael Chabon have, for example, erroneously declared Yiddish to be a "dead" language, (see also Michael Chabon's essay "Guidebook to a Land of Ghosts", which was discussed on page 69 of the revised document).

¹⁷¹ Parts of this paragraph are adapted from page 94 of Alexis Wright's *The Swan Book*.

¹⁷² Uplifted image of Indigenous People: "Mary", a black Aboriginal woman, is working as a nurse at an old folks home in 1975 in Australia.

¹⁷³ This is a reference linking Part Four to Part Two.

¹⁷⁴ The name "Rifkah" was chosen as this character's name because this is the name of a prominent character in Xavier Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country*.

¹⁷⁵ Channel Eight does not exist as a free-to-air channel on Australian television, though there is a channel, Fox 8, on Foxtel.

¹⁷⁶ Instead of a lush green park above the cliffs overlooking the Sydney Opera House, in this version of 1975, there is a multi-level car park built with concrete.

¹⁷⁷ Elliptical revelation of an alternate world history: Newspaper headlines elliptically reveal two Uchronic facts inherent to this world: that Harold Holt is still alive and politically active in 1975, (he does not drown in this alternate history of Australia), and that Israel loses Jerusalem in 1975.

¹⁷⁸ Despite the fact that Sachin Varadarajan is not wearing a turban in this scene, the notion that non-Indian bowlers would try to knock turbans off the heads of Indian batsmen is a reference to 'Indian tailender Captain Joginder Singh being unceremoniously carried off with a large bump protruding from his forehead after he had been hit in the 1932 tourists' match against [Nottinghamshire].... [Right-arm fast-bowler for England, Harold] Larwood and [Left-arm bowler for England, Bill] Voce had a bet—a pint of beer or a packet of fags—on who would be the first to ping Joginder's turban... Larwood... called across to Voce, "Look at that, Bill, let's both try and see if we can hit it.'" Page 24 of *Bodyline Autopsy* by David Frith, and Page 47 of *Cricket Lovely Cricket* by Frank Lee

¹⁷⁹ The Pavilion End and the Press Box Ends are in fact the two ends of the cricket pitch at the Colombo Cricket Club in Sri Lanka.

¹⁸⁰ Mushtaq Mohammed was the name of the actual cricket captain from Lahore circa 1975

¹⁸¹ This scene is reminiscent of a cricket match between the Marylebone Cricket Club and the Rest of England XI that took place in Folkestone in 1932 between “the towering and legendary left-hander Frank Woolley” and Harold Larwood, as described by David Frith in *Bodyline Autopsy*.

¹⁸² This sentence is adapted from the first full paragraph on page 287 of Frank Hardy’s *Power Without Glory*.

¹⁸³ Page 36 of Frank Browne’s *Some of It Was Cricket* as well as page 95 of David Frith’s *Bodyline Autopsy*

¹⁸⁴ That’s a pink Kimberley diamond, thereby linking Part Three with Part Four

¹⁸⁵ This is a less overt reference to Part Three

¹⁸⁶ This is a direct reference to “John West” from Frank Hardy’s *Power Without Glory*.

¹⁸⁷ A point mentioned previously toward the end of Part Tree: Diamonds! – the people of the Kimberley, the Jews, must obtain domestic travel permits to leave the Kimberley and/or Western Australia.

¹⁸⁸ The chauffeur’s name “Teakle” s taken from Patrick White’s *The Twyborn Affair*.

¹⁸⁹ Three revelations of an alternate history of American Presidents and First Ladies is elliptically revealed here: Gore Vidal is President of the USA, his wife is the Hollywood actress Joanne Woodward, and the Civil Rights Act is signed into law in the USA eleven years later than actually history.

¹⁹⁰ If one were to follow these directions from the Lodge in Canberra, one wil in fact pass by the Thai Embassy, the Greek Embassy as well as both the Polish and Israeli Embassies.

¹⁹¹ “The US in Cuba”, circa 1976; this implies many things. Coupled with “... on a grassy knoll...”, both are direct references to the Camelot era of American History.

¹⁹² Based on street descriptions, the High Commissioner for the British Raj is located in more or less the same place as the current embassy of the Republic of India in Canberra.

¹⁹³ The elliptical revelation here is Gandhi is dead and India is not fully independent or separate from the British Empire in the mid-1970s. The extensive and cumbersome International Super Test Cricket leagues are meant to exacerbate this aspect of Uchronic history.

¹⁹⁴ The image of women in Uchronic fiction: In an effort to complicate and “feminize” this character, Celia Corres-Patkin is depicted as defying gender norms as they are placed on her whilst simultaneously deflecting the pseudo-sexual overtones of dismissal from her boss.

¹⁹⁵ Gresley Drummond Clarkson is the name of an actual Royal Commissioner active in the second half of the 1970s.

¹⁹⁶ John Angus Limmo was, in fact, the bespectacled Justice of the Industrial Relations Court, and also another Royal Commissioner active in the second half of the 1970s.

¹⁹⁷ Hilton is still an international hotel chain in this alternate history

¹⁹⁸ Elliptical revelations: domestic travel permits for Jewish persons, “Menziess-era Terms of Settlement.”

¹⁹⁹ Mordecai Quonset, this is the first clue in revealing this unseen character is in fact a reconfigured historical figure, albeit an obscure and minor one; Mordecai Quonset is also known by the family name “Crossman”

²⁰⁰ In a previous scene, Kerry Packer insists Celia Corres-Patkin wear white gloves when on television, and at one point she derides the fact that Kerry Packer forces “the weather girl” to wear white gloves on the air, which Celia refuses to do.

²⁰¹ Elliptical revelation: Siggy is Israeli, we know she is Israel because linguistically, she’s an Ashkenazi woman speaking Sephardic-accented, “sandy” Hebrew.

²⁰² Page 103 of Michael Chabon’s *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*: “When they notice Landsman’s car, with its reek of plainclothesmen hubris and its inflammatory double-S on the grille, they leave off yelling at one another and give Landsman the Bessarabian fish-eye.”

²⁰³ Ron Barassi was in fact the coach for the North Melbourne Kangaroos in 1976 and 1977; his tenure as coach spanned 1973-1980. North Melbourne ultimately won the Grand Final in 1977, which initially was a draw and had to be replayed a week later for final resolution.

²⁰⁴ Mordecai Vanunu, who went to prison for publicly disclosing the secret details of the Israeli nuclear program, has been recast as one of Felix Morose’s bagmen.

²⁰⁵ Elliptical revelations: domestic politics in Australia appear “unstable”, and Greece is still a kingdom in 1978; both revelations stand in contrast to actual history.

²⁰⁶ In regards to “alien immigration” into Australia, then-Postmaster General HVC Thornby can be quoted: “If a person cannot speak English, he cannot use the telephone.” He insisted on banning the use of languages other than English on the telephone, and then banning the use of the phone entirely as a way to circumvent/allay the suspicions of “alien immigration” in an article dated June 11, 1940, from *Herald*.

²⁰⁷ Elliptical revelation: Durack, WA, is bigger than Sydney, NSW, by 1978

²⁰⁸ Estee Lauder – a Jewish cosmetician originally from Warsaw, Poland

²⁰⁹ This is a reference to the parallel *bar mitzvah*/initiation ceremony that appear side-by-side in Part Two: Across the Road.

²¹⁰ “*Shanda*” is the Yiddish word for “shame” and/or “scandal.”

²¹¹ “*Averah*” is stronger than “*Shanda*” and is the Hebrew term for “sin” and/or “transgression against God”

²¹² This line is adapted from Xavier Herbert’s *Poor Fellow My Country*.

²¹³ It was proposed by the Postmaster General HVC Thorby that the Jewish colony in the East Kimberley not be allowed access to the telephone so as to keep them separated from the rest of Australia; in this Uchronic version of events, the proposal is made and adopted, and the Jewish residents of the Kimberley instead use the telegraph to communicate with one another; this is mentioned on page 42 of Leon Gettler’s *An Unpromised Land* which cites a quote from Thorby: “If they don’t speak English, they can’t use the phone.” This quote is taken from the *Daily Telegraph* (newspaper) on January 18, 1938.

²¹⁴ The Rabbis is talking about the Vicar from Parts One and Two.

²¹⁵ “Land-of-Smiles” is taken from Page 132 of Philip K Dick’s *The Man in the High Castle*.

²¹⁶ The name “Savitra” and the phrase “*puggin*” are both taken from Xavier Herbert’s *Poor Fellow My Country*.

²¹⁷ In this Uchronic version of Australia, the airport is called “Brindabella” and not RAAF Fairburn. James Fairburn was a Menzies Government Cabinet Minister killed in the Canberra Air Disaster of August 1940. In this Uchronic version of Australia, the plane Fairburn was on in August of 1940 landed safely and did not crash. The actual history of this tragedy is written about in *Air Disaster Canberra: The Plane Crash that Destroyed a Government* by Andrew Tink.

²¹⁸ Felix quotes Act 1, Scene 3, Line 108 from William Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*.

²¹⁹ Major aspect of the alternate world history thus revealed: In 1973, during the Yom Kippur War, Israel surrounded the Egyptian Third Army, eventually repatriating those soldiers back to Egypt. In this alternate history, the Israelis use low yield tactical nuclear devices they developed using technology obtained from Felix Morose that made the Egyptian Third Army “disappear.”

²²⁰ The phrase “heavy thicket of iron and lawyers” is adapted from page 199 of Michael Chabon’s *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*.

²²¹ Ergo, in this Uchronic version of Australia, there’s no Gough Whitland Dismissal in 1975.

²²² This paragraph is adapted from page 230 of Frank Hardy’s *Power Without Glory*.

²²³ Another elliptical revelation, this time dovetailing to the garden party scene earlier; the People’s Republic of China is in possession of Taiwan in this Uchronic version of history.

²²⁴ This line implies that the Winter Olympics were possibly held in Mt Buller, Victoria, at some point prior to 1981. Also, 1981 is the first year Disney sent their version of the Ice Capades on world tour, the name of the show: Disney’s *World on Ice*.

²²⁵ Lord Louis Mountbatten, the Earl Mountbatten of Burma, survives assassination in Ireland in 1979.

²²⁶ “Levantines” was included in this mix because “Levantines” appears on page 122 of Patrick White’s *The Twyborn Affair*.

²²⁷ The hyphenated phrasing: “ – just like that – ”, is taken from page 177 of David Malouf’s *Remembering Babylon*.

²²⁸ This is very different from how it actually is: if one travels to Kununurra today, and thus heads right to the water’s edge to look up towards the sun, one will inevitably see a mass plethora of birds not just in the sky but indeed wandering along the grass of the famous “Celebrity Tree Park” as well as flying in between the many different trees—among them boob trees—that people that section of town. That is to say that when Devorah looks up at the sky from the very same spot in this alternate history only to see the same stretch of sky “void of life” save for an airliner, she is- in effect- looking up at an alternate version of the sky over Kununurra which, in this Uchronic narrative, does not exist per se.

²²⁹ The notion of “translucent barramundi” with “glowing whiskers” is not entirely fictional but based somewhat on unrelated fact: “Fluorescent barramundi growing in Lake Kununurra,” written by Ben Collins, November 4, 2013, for ABC the Kimberley website page: <http://www.abc.net.au/local/audio/2013/11/04/3883341.htm>

²³⁰ *The Twyborn Affair* by Patrick White.

²³¹ This line is adapted from page 22 of David Malouf’s *Remembering Babylon*.

²³² This paragraph is adapted from pages 2, 3, 7 and 8 of David Malouf’s *Remembering Babylon*.

²³³ This sentence is adapted from pages 4 and 8 of David Malouf’s *Remembering Babylon*.

²³⁴ The last sentence of this paragraph is adapted from page 411 of Patrick White's *The Twyborn Affair* and also from David Malouf's short story "The Only Speaker of His Tongue" on page 68 of David Malouf's *Antipodes*.

²³⁵ DNA testing was first developed in 1985 but not available for widespread use until 1987, according to "Eureka moment that led to the discovery of DNA fingerprinting," written by Robin McKie for the 24 May 2009 edition of *The Guardian*, and also "A Brief History of DNA Testing," written by Randy James for *Time* magazine, June 19, 2009.

²³⁶ The line, "This is the life that survives us," was told to me by a local Aboriginal man on or about June 14, 2014, whilst leaving Casaurina nude beach in Darwin, Northern Territory.

²³⁷ This line is adapted from the fifth page of David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon*.

²³⁸ These three lines are adapted from pages two and five of David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon*.

²³⁹ This line is adapted from the second page of David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon*.

²⁴⁰ This name, "Joseph Brill," is taken from Cynthia Ozick's *The Cannibal Galaxy*.

²⁴⁰ From 1926 to 1931, there were two states: North Australia and Central Australia; in lieu of the Northern Territory. In this Uchronic version of Australia, North Australia and Central Australia still exist and/or were reinstated.

²⁴¹ Twisting and adapting the rules of Kabbalistic numerology, $8 \times 5 = 40$, as in forty days and forty nights.

²⁴² This "bed of orderly wildflowers" is a direct reference to a crucial plot point taking place later in Part Six: The Cyclones and Batsheva.

Summary of Revisions

Many suggestions for revising the research presented for examination were received with an open mind. Typographical and other errors were revised on a case-by-case, line-by-line basis. Of the two examiner's reports, one report was particularly thorough in pointing out where various typographical and other errors were in need of revision. In that respect, the examiner's report from Professor Chris Palmer of Latrobe University in Melbourne served as starting point and general guide for most revisions.

It was suggested, for example, that "a consolidated discussion [be placed] at the end of [my] comments at the end of [my] own novel" regarding the discussion of women and Aboriginal people. In Professor Palmer's estimation, he did not "think the discussions of the depiction of female characters... yielded much," adding "the same to the discussions of indigenous characters."⁵⁸² Rather than truncate or, in Professor Palmer's words, "consolidate" these discussions, three paragraphs were added to the introduction under a new subheading: "The Image of Women in Uchronic Fiction" starting on page 10 of the revised document:

The Image of Women in Uchronic Fiction

The thematic framework for this genre study includes a discussion regarding the image of women in Uchronic fiction. As this research will indicate, there does not appear to be a specific archetype of woman character for the Uchronic genre. Instead, there is a wide variety of how women characters are depicted; some are trite or inconsequential to the plot while others are integral to the story. This research initially included two other categories, one of which focused on Uchronic novels premised on Muslim-centric worlds. The discussion of the image of women was thus relevant in particular regard to that category where, for instance, it was important to address the way authors of Uchronic narratives based on Muslim-centric worlds depict or, perhaps more aptly, *deal*

⁵⁸² It is important to note that while extreme care was taken on my part to capitalize the "I" in Indigenous, as well as the "A" in Aboriginal, the fact that one of the examiners chose to use a lower case "i" for Indigenous in his examination report strikes me, in this particular instance, as odd.

with the perception held by many in the West that women in Muslim countries are subjugated or treated poorly by Muslim societies and cultures.⁵⁸³

This aspect of the framework was also included to emphasize the diverse images of women depicted in Uchronic fiction and to indicate how these diverse images influenced the depiction of women characters in the creative narrative. Celia Corres-Patkin, for example, a character in Part Four of the creative narrative, is loosely modeled on some of the characterizations attributable to the Marcia Sawtell character from John Hooker's *The Bush Soldiers* but was, for the most part, written in response to the Mindi MacCallum Ricklesby character in Part Three of the creative narrative who is, in turn, written in a response to the Barbara Barga character from Len Deighton's *SS-GB*. By extension, Miriyam Freedel's depiction as a Jewish wife and mother in Parts Four, Five and Six of the creative narrative is, to some degree, modeled after one of the Jewish mothers—Bess Roth—depicted in Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America*. For that matter, Liesel Freedel's characterization in Part Two of the creative narrative is similar to Philip Roth's depiction of Selma Wishnow, the other Jewish mother from *The Plot Against America*.

Another important reason for this aspect of the thematic framework: of the nine novels reviewed for the genre study, all of them were written by men. As the research suggests, some writers of Uchronic fiction draft women characters better than others, though this may be a question of taste, opinion, conjecture or preference.

These three paragraphs add an extra layer of justification explaining why this aspect of the thematic framework is important: because it has directly influenced the development of *women* characters in the creative narrative.⁵⁸⁴ The suggestion that the discussion regarding “indigenous characters” be similarly “consolidated” was patently ignored for the following

⁵⁸³ This category was entitled “Islam Insh’Allah” was cut from the dissertation due to university-regulated word-count restrictions.

⁵⁸⁴ It is important to note the extreme care taken to use phrases such as “women characters” or “the image of women” in the presenting this research instead of the somewhat clinical “female characters” or “the depiction of the female” where, it could be argued, women seem to be robbed in a sense of basic humanity with the use of the word “female.” This is the reason why the phrase “female” was patently avoided in the final thesis.

reason: the creative narrative that accompanies this research specifically depicts Aboriginal Australians and, as a result, the discussion regarding the depiction of *any* Indigenous characters in *any* novel reviewed for the genre study is very important. Given the highly political and, dare I say it, controversial nature of non-Aboriginal depictions of Aboriginal characters, I find the repeated suggestion that the final presentation of research somehow truncate, minimize, limit, “consolidate” or even excise “the discussion of indigenous characters” to reek of what I’ve come to view as white Australia’s general reluctance to, in the words of John Hooker, “face up to [your] colonial past.”⁵⁸⁵ The discussion of Indigenous characters in Uchronic fiction will remain as written with no apologies made to any discomfort that discussion might raise for any non-Indigenous consumer of this research.

“The discussion of the names of indigenous characters” was declared “puzzling” and in “need” of “reconsideration.” Two questions in regard to “the names of indigenous characters” were asked. Those two questions are addressed in the following excerpt taken from page 113 of the revised document:

A question regarding the use of the name “Mary” to indentify various Aboriginal women depicted in the creative narrative was raised: “When is renaming aboriginal [*sic*] people with Western names such as ‘Mary’ demeaning and when is it not demeaning? Are the Jewish names of Miriyam and her two daughters demeaning or not, given that she is aborigine [*sic*]?”⁵⁸⁶

First, the issue of the name “Mary”: the fact that all the Aboriginal women in *The Jew Lizard Suite* are named Mary prior to Parts Three and Four highlights the notion that arbitrarily changing someone’s Indigenous name for an English one could be viewed as a demeaning form of colonization; the Vicar’s flippant remark toward the end of Part One—“they called all the black women ‘Mary’”—is certainly meant to indicate that.⁵⁸⁷ The Vicar is, after all, depicted lusting over a black woman in that scene and that black woman—so the Vicar’s flippancy suggests—is no doubt indistinguishable to him from any other black woman. This

⁵⁸⁵ Aashish Kaul, “The Red of the Rust: On John A. Scott, ‘N’,” *Academia.com* 2014: accessed June 2, 2016, http://www.academia.edu/12868199/The_Red_of_the_Rust_On_John_A._Scott_N

⁵⁸⁶ These questions are taken from the examiner’s report from Professor Chris Palmer of Latrobe University in Bundoora.

⁵⁸⁷ Muller, 203.

scene was included in the creative narrative in an effort to maintain an element of consistency with Australian history in a way that simultaneously satirizes this particular aspect of British colonization in Australia.

In regards to the name “Miriya” and whether or not this name change is demeaning; the short answer is no, it is not demeaning: “Mary” likely chose the name “Miri” on her own volition as part of her decision to convert to the Jewish religion sometime prior to her initial appearance in Part Three. In modern Jewish culture, when someone who is decidedly not Jewish—an Aboriginal woman arbitrarily named “Mary”, for example—chooses to convert to Judaism, it is quite common for the convert to choose a Hebrew name as part of their conversion process.⁵⁸⁸ A Jewish convert originally named Geraldine might, upon her conversion to Judaism, select the Hebrew name Gila or Gilda to indicate her transition from non-Jew to Jew.⁵⁸⁹ The precedence for a name change of this sort is derived from that iconic moment in Genesis where God changes Jacob’s name to Israel; today many Jewish converts, in a similar vein, also change their names, often retaining similar letters from one language to the next in a manner similar to “Miri” who, it ought to be imagined, is motivated to convert to Judaism for many reasons, one of which is the desire on Baron’s part to marry a Jewish woman.

Professor Palmer also pointed out “unclear” use of terms such as “problematic”, “uplifted” and “agenda.” In the dissertation submitted for examination, the word “problematic” appeared 22 times without any explanation or definition. In that regard, Professor Palmer was, in retrospect, correct in his assessment that “critical terms... used often [such as] ‘problematic’ or ‘uplifted’... are made to work too hard and need more definition.” A definition for the term “problematic” in specific regards to character depictions in Uchronic fiction was added to page 77 of the revised document:

⁵⁸⁸ Alfred J. Kolatch. *The Second Jewish Book of Why* (New York: Jonathan David, 2000).

⁵⁸⁹ This in fact what the author’s mother—Gerri Muller—did when she converted to Judaism prior to marrying my Jewish father, Steven Muller.

Both *The Plot Against America* and *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* depict Jewish rabbis who are problematic in the sense that their overtly negative depictions constitute a problem regarding what is considered by the other characters in those narratives, and most other reasonable people for that matter, to be appropriate behavior for a rabbi.

The word “problematic” was given a break from working “too hard” and deleted from 17 different other places and now appears in only four places: on page 13 in regard to the phrase “anti-Semitism”, on page 47 where it appears in a quote from Elaine B. Safer, at the bottom of page 33 in footnote 107, and on page 77 where it is given the definition excerpted above. The word “uplifted” was also, in retrospect, “made to work too hard.” In the original submission, “uplifted” appeared about 22 times, usually in connection to the reconfigured image of Indigenous people. In the revised document, “uplifted” now only appears once on page 10 where an additional revision was added to the sentence for clarity:

“In Michael Chabon’s *The Yiddish Policeman’s Union*, for instance, the image of Indigenous people, in this case Native American Tlingit people, is reconfigured but not necessarily elevated or uplifted, as will be shown in the Israel Endangered category of the genre study.”

The word “agenda”, which appears about 35 times in the thesis, was also accused of working “too hard.” Though not initially believed necessary, it was suggested a definition for the word “agenda” was in fact needed. Two appropriate definitions for “agenda” were thus added to page 7 of the revised document:

For this part of the framework, “agenda” is defined according to *The Oxford English Dictionary* as “the underlying intentions or motives of a particular person.” This definition is echoed by *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, which defines agenda as “a plan or goal that guides someone’s behaviour” (or, in this case, writing), that is often hidden or “kept secret.”

The other examiner, Associate Professor Adam Rover from the University of Denver in Colorado, raised “the point that perhaps [this research is] merely cherry-picking thematic features and then finding novels that reflect those features.” While Professor Rover does “not... think this to be the case,” he nevertheless cited “the essential problem of thematic criticism” and suggested the addition of “a short subsection... that attempts to head-off [that] criticism.” Professor Rover recommended *The Return of Thematic Criticism*, edited by Werner Sollors, which was immediately reviewed, along with a few others, leading to the insertion of the following two paragraphs starting at the bottom of page 125 of the revised document:

It has been raised as a concern that the thematic framework driving this research cherry-picks various trends and features recurrent to the Uchronic genre. There is of course the “perception... that anything may represent everything as long as [it is framed within] a suitable interpretive context.”⁵⁹⁰ “The problem with finding patterns,” writes Jodie Archer and Matthew L. Jockers in *The Bestselling Code: Anatomy of a Blockbuster Novel*, “is that if you want to find them you very often will.”⁵⁹¹ According to Claude Bermond, author of “Concept and Theme,” “literary critics... have received from the gods the... mesmerizing... power to make every text they lay their hands on channel the... message they want to hear. Our gaze,” in other words, changes “texts into what we desire them to be,”⁵⁹² yet the “quest for... themes... is always a quest for something that is not unique to [a] specific work.”⁵⁹³ After all, “we frequently wish to sort or classify documents according to their similarity”⁵⁹⁴ and “we often group together texts... according to their themes with different aims in mind.”⁵⁹⁵ In this case, the aims are clearly explained: to define the recurrent features—the poetics—of the Uchronic genre exemplified across key Uchronic texts and to illuminate “the creative process...

⁵⁹⁰ Menachem Brinker, “Theme and Interpretation,” in *The Return of Thematic Criticism*, edited by Werner Sollors (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 33.

⁵⁹¹ Archer, Jodie, and Matthew L. Jockers, *The Bestseller Code*, (New York: St Martin’s Press, 2016), 148.

⁵⁹² Thomas Pavel, “Thematics and Historical Evidence,” in *The Return of Thematic Criticism*, edited by Werner Sollors (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 121.

⁵⁹³ Brinker, “Theme and Interpretation,” 21.

⁵⁹⁴ Archer and Jockers, *The Bestseller Code*, 25.

⁵⁹⁵ Brinker, “Theme and Interpretation,” 21.

by analyzing [those works]... by placing [them] into a chain of texts”⁵⁹⁶ This thematic framework then demonstrates the creative use of these poetics in crafting a new Uchronic novel premised on a different outcome to the Kimberley Plan. This thematic framework, coupled with the historic discussions appearing in the addendum, provides an “infrastructure” to both the presentation of the research and to the “story” taking place in the creative narrative that follows.⁵⁹⁷

In terms of the thematic framework utilized here to discuss the various features of Uchronic fiction, it is first of all a given that “the audience need[s] to understand numerous things [regarding the] connection” between actual history and the alternate history depicted in a Uchronic novel “in order to respond... to its reversals and recognitions.”⁵⁹⁸ Uchronic alternate history narratives “set in imaginary... worlds in which history has taken a broadly different course are quite demanding both for the author and reader... [as] they require... some familiarity with actual history.”⁵⁹⁹ In regards to Uchronic fiction and the hitherto undefined poetics of the genre, previous scholarship into alternate history narratives has as a starting point—a ground zero, so to speak—the point of historic divergence.⁶⁰⁰ From then on, the poetics for the alternate history genre are undetermined, yet if one examines a large scope of alternate history novels, one will see a series of recurrent features that in one way or another appear in some form or other across different Uchronic texts depicting different Uchronic scenarios. Although it is “an impressive novelty” for “literary texts [to] obey... conventions... described in abstract terms,” this thesis demonstrates that the Uchronic narratives discussed here do in fact “obey... conventions... described in abstract terms” according to a framework that “group[s] together”⁶⁰¹ “models of

⁵⁹⁶ Raymond Trousson, “Reflections of *Stoffgeschichte*,” in *The Return of Thematic Criticism*, edited by Werner Sollors (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 290.

⁵⁹⁷ Brinker, “Theme and Interpretation,” 23.

⁵⁹⁸ *ibid.*, 30.

⁵⁹⁹ William Gibson, “Introduction,” in *The Alteration* by Kingsley Amis (New York: New York Review Books, 1976), viii.

⁶⁰⁰ As stated on page 6 of this thesis, previous alternate history scholars such as Steven Silver, Karen Hellekson along with Andrew Roberts, Edgar Chapman, Carl Yoke, Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, and Edgar Vernon McKnight, have consistently referred to the point of historic divergence as “the point of divergence,” omitting the word “historic.”

⁶⁰¹ Brinker, “Theme and Introduction,” 22.

... thematic interpretations.”⁶⁰² When these conventions—features—are subsequently itemized and extrapolated empirically and out of immediate narrative context, a set of poetics for the genre soon emerges. These poetics, in turn, enable a definition for the Uchronic genre that is, as a result, broadly applicable to any Uchronic alternate history narrative.

The academic research included in this dissertation identifies for the first time many of the Uchronic features inherent to the creative narrative whilst also critically examining some of the reasons why the Australian government rejected the Kimberley Plan, which is itself a footnote in Australian history.

Professor Rovner also raised “one thing [he] did not like... the term ‘info-dump’”, asking if there is perhaps a more precise term for this recurrent feature of Uchronic fiction. There is in fact such a term: “the direct revelation of an alternate world history”, which was discussed in contrast to the elliptical revelation of an alternate world history in regards to Michael Chabon’s *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union* in the Israel Endangered category of the thesis submitted for examination.⁶⁰³ It is understood that the term “info-dump” is less-than-elegant. The reason for its frequent use is simple: word count. One phrase: “the direct revelation of an alternate world history”, has eight words, whereas the other—“the info-dump”—usually involves two. As a result, the less formal term was used frequently in a small, perhaps insignificant attempt to keep the word count under some type of control. Another issue raised by Professor Rover was the emphasis on Hebrew/Israeli Hebrew rather than Yiddish “given the Yiddishist emphasis of the Freeland League”; this concern is addressed in endnote 112 on page 287 of the revised creative narrative ahead of the appendices.

One of the most interesting suggestions to emerge from a thorough review of the reports received from the examiners is the advice from Professor Palmer to “add an epilogue to part 2 of the novel summarizing what happens next.” Palmer adds “this could take a form like those notes on the subsequent fates of the main characters... sometimes [found] at the end of novels.” This

⁶⁰² *ibid*, 30.

⁶⁰³ That part of the discussion appears under a subheading: “The Elliptical Revelation versus the Info-Dump in *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*” on page 62 of the revised document.

idea for an epilogue at the end of Part Two was, to my surprise, also met with an open mind. The fact is the idea was embraced but perhaps not in the exact way it was suggested.

An epilogue entitled “The Apocrypha: The Prologue to Part Six” has been drafted in Atlanta against the backdrop of many personal and historical events, chief among them the reunification of my immediate family as well as the US presidential election and the receipt of valued feedback from examiners regarding the recent PhD submission. More importantly, this epilogue has been written alongside the ongoing development of Part Six: The Cyclones and Batsheva, the concluding section of the creative narrative that accompanies this research.⁶⁰⁴

“The Apocrypha: A Prologue to Part Six” is in general an homage to the “Afterword: October 2001” epilogue at the end of John A Scott’s *N*, which takes a giant leap forward from 1945 to 2001 in the span of a single page. “The Apocrypha”, which could be placed at either the end of Part Two, where it might seem overly cryptic at best, or at the end of Part Three, the author’s preference, takes a similar leap forward from either 1957 to 1995 if placed at the end of Part Two, or from 1965 to 1995 if placed at the end of Part Three.⁶⁰⁵ Like Scott’s “Afterword” in *N*, “The Apocrypha” is intentionally esoteric, yet the ten odd pages of “A Prologue to Part Six” in one way or another reference some of the major plot points taking place throughout Parts Three, Four, Five and Six of *The Jew Lizard Suite*. “The Apocrypha”, by definition, also leaves out large swaths of creative narrative. The nature of the relationship between Dingo and Batsheva, for example, is not entirely clear as depicted in this epilogue, nor is it meant to be; this relationship is instead thoroughly explored in Part Six of the creative narrative. On that note, the final moment in “The Apocrypha” is deliberately reflective of a similar scene depicted in a type of dreamtime dream sequence appearing in Part Six. This lends credence to the notion that “The Apocrypha” is, on one hand, a prologue to events mostly taking place in Parts Six but also, on the other hand, a short companion piece to *The Jew Lizard Suite* in general and Part Six in particular. When placed at the end of Part Two, as was suggested, or at the end of Part Three, as

⁶⁰⁴ At the moment, “The Apocrypha: The Prologue to Part Six” appears at the end of Part Two: Across the Road ahead of the appendices. It is not known yet if this “Prologue” will be part of the final novel. Maybe this “Prologue”, for the sake of discussion, will be placed at the start of the novel ahead of Part One; who knows? The suggestion was a great idea!

⁶⁰⁵ “The Apocrypha” within itself also takes a leap forward from 1995 to 2015. “The Apocrypha” appears in the Appendices between Parts Three and Four.

preferred by the author, “A Prologue to Part Six” can also, on some level, function as an abrupt epilogue to an otherwise sprawling narrative.⁶⁰⁶

“The Apocrypha” makes use of the direct revelation of an alternate world history specific to some of the personal histories of the characters depicted thus far in the creative narrative. The direct revelation of an alternate world history is a recurrent feature of Uchronic fiction discussed in regards to *Fatherland* by Robert Harris and again in Michael Chabon’s *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*. Also known as the “info-dump,” an admittedly less-than-elegant moniker for this feature, the direct revelation appears in “The Apocrypha” in two forms: first in 1997 as a set of discs containing a digital encyclopedia known as *Nineveh*, then again in 2015 as an online encyclopedia called the *Library of Alexandria* (*L of A* for short). *Nineveh* is meant to be reflective of Microsoft Encarta, which was a digital encyclopedia accessible via compact discs inserted into a computer that first became widely available in the 1990s. In my memory, these discs “whirled and spun” whilst in use, yet the name “*Nineveh*” is in fact a sly reference to Matt Ruff’s *The Mirage*, a Uchronic novel premised on a Muslim-centric world not included in the final submission. In that novel, Matt Ruff makes extensive and repeated use of an online encyclopedia similar to Wikipedia known as the Library of Alexandria (which is, incidentally, what the *Library of Alexandria* in the 2015 section of “The Apocrypha” is based upon). This online encyclopedia functions as an info-dump that directly reveals the alternate world history of the Muslim-centric setting inherent to *The Mirage*. Until the development of “The Apocrypha”, the creative narrative, unlike *The Mirage*, intentionally avoided the use of the info-dump, but this changed to some degree in drafting this epilogue and in drafting the final section of the creative narrative, which will include a brief, yet notable info-dump involving at least one of the characters depicted in “The Prologue to Part Six” which has, in turn, a direct connection to Part Four: Once Upon A Time, A Cricket Match.

One last revision that was suggested involved the reorganization of the extended bibliography. In the initial submission, the extended bibliography was one long list of books, journal entries and papers that had contributed in some way to the overall development of this project. That long list has been revised and divided into eleven different subheadings as suggested: Aboriginal Australia; Alternate History Criticism and Scholarship; Alternate History

⁶⁰⁶ These highlighted words were incorporated into the thesis and can be found on page 131 of the revised document. Also, a brief scene was added to the end of Part Four.

Narratives; Australian Fiction and Literature; Australian Flora and Fauna; Australian History and Politics; Cricket; General Fiction and Literature; Israel and the Jews; Jewish Australia; and Other.