

models as totally as it defies imitations—in other words, it is the antithesis of *My Island of Dreams*.

Avoiding commitment and even conversation, Morrow drifts through London, New York, Los Angeles and Brisbane. In Townsville he applies unqualified for a handyman's job on Doebin. When conflicts on the island escalate to violence, he escapes again, ironically in the dinghy that Rim abandoned.⁴⁹ Watching the Doebin fires from Rim's derelict camp on Culgarool, he rules out returning to help—"A craven's plea"—he was "running away again" (90). Yet Morrow's row to Dagoombah (240) ironically transmutes into the romance he cannot bring himself to write, as he becomes the proxy-narrator of a real-life adventure. Instead of participating in a 'story' (61, 72, 90, 94), '[h]e had experienced the real thing' (99).⁵⁰

As Morrow rows, Tristram and Uncle Toby 'paddle for their lives in the belly of the boat' (92, 97)—symbols for the literary aspiration that he is renouncing (89, 92). Later Sterne's classic transforms into a platform for a new realism when Morrow sketches Mrs Curthoys on the blank page reserved for the Widow Wadman. This attraction, and a new job as Sugarville's [Townsville's] 'voice of the North' denote a deepening in Morrow's self-knowledge and self-acceptance.

Conclusion

Possibly with a view to averting any demand for compensation, Astley's 'Acknowledgments' follows the model of *A Kindness Cup* by affirming that 'All characters are fictional.' This literal truth sidesteps *Multiple Effects*' dependency on sources, which is most obvious in respect of its exceptionally large cast. An abundance of Indigenous memory flows into Manny Cooktown, his family and forebears; most participants in the Curry crisis adapt character sketches and/or names provided by newspapers; *Prologue* inspired Mrs Curthoys, Leonie, Clare and Father Paddy Cullen; Father Donellan and Matthew Vine are composites of real-life Anglican and Catholic clergymen also chronicled in *Prologue*; of those Astley characters with significant roles, only Annette Quigley, Marie Laroche, Father Brimstone, the bishop, the feminist rebel Tinker, and Leonie's murderous suitor are fictions, created *ex nihilo*.

Multiple Effects declined to ride the wave of optimism about racial justice that swept through Australia in the mid-1990s. Astley's differential treatment of her sources nevertheless demonstrates unequivocally both where her sympathies lay and where her hope for justice and restoration began and ended. In fictionalising the 1930 Doebin catastrophe she freely reimagined characters and events, radically challenging the assumptions that she found in the news reports. Her novel's solidarity with Aboriginal resilience and resistance derives from her consultation, firstly of Indigenous writings (Prior, Rosser, Thaiday), secondly of missionaries' reports (Gribble, Cattle), thirdly of Aboriginal language guides (Baird, Oates, Gribble), and fourthly of revelations by white historians, notably Henry Reynolds. Chance reading of a letter by a minor London publisher led to the creation of Morrow and Rim. Finally, John Maguire's little-known and in many respects atypical history mediated the Catholic core of Astley's ethics, inspired major characters, and supplied events, sequencing and words for the novel's climax.

I speculate above on why *Multiple Effects* takes more from sources than any other Astley novel. Settings, events, characters, and much of what they say derive from writings by others. Consideration nevertheless reveals the freedom, even the idiosyncrasy, of Astley's choices as

