

## Introduction

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This issue brings together four different sections, each of which speaks to a different aspect of *JASAL* and its aims, both as an academic journal and as the main publication of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature. Although primarily a peer-reviewed journal, *JASAL* has always attempted to reach beyond a strictly academic audience. The journal is open access and so is available to anyone interested in Australian literature, whether or not they are associated with a university library. Similarly, 'Notes & Furphies' is a non-peer-reviewed section that invites research notes and comments on Australian literature and literary culture from general readers. In this issue we have a fantastically detailed set of notes from independent scholar Alan Thompson on how we might go about mapping the setting of chapter 3 of Joseph Furphy's *Such is Life*. Since its first issue in 1994 *JASAL* has also been the main location for the publication of papers from the ASAL annual conference and ASAL mini-conferences. This issue contains a Special Section, guest edited by Tony Hughes-d'Aeth, with a selection of papers from the ASAL's 2019 annual conference, DIRT, held at the University of Western Australia last July. Finally, *JASAL* has maintained a commitment to publishing extensive reviews of scholarly works on or related to Australian literature. In this issue we have five reviews of recent works of literary criticism.

The general section of this issue brings together four papers that reflect the diverse and often interdisciplinary work happening in Australian literary criticism at the moment. Daniel Moss's essay traces the parallels between invitational and narrative psychological therapeutic approaches that developed in Australia in the 1980s, and representations of male abusers in a selection of contemporary Australian novels. Sitting in direct opposition to punitive psychological therapies, invitational and narrative therapies seek to use non-judgemental storytelling in order to understand the perspective and experience of men who abuse and to help them to 'discover their own preference and capacity for respectful ways of being and relating' (1). Moss finds resonances with these approaches in depictions of male abusers in a selection of contemporary Australian novels. This genuinely interdisciplinary essay is fascinating for the links it draws between literature and the world of applied psychology, demonstrating a shared sensibility between these two areas of thought. It also reminds us of how literature continuously offers up new insights, depending on readers, the places they read from and the questions they ask of works of fiction.

Dougal McNeill's essay is a similarly interdisciplinary reading of Dorothy Hewett's *Bobbin Up* in relation to recent activist work on social reproduction theory—a 'cluster of work in the Marxist tradition paying renewed attention to the connections between waged labour and unwaged social reproduction' (1). As McNeill summarises, social reproduction theory shows that activities that are often considered to be outside of the realm of capitalist production—care, domestic work, social bonds and the maintenance and reproduction of physical bodies—are in fact essential to the way capital reproduces itself. Reading Hewett in relation to social reproduction theory allows McNeill to make two major interventions. Firstly, he resolves the critical tendency to read Hewett as *either* feminist *or* Marxist by demonstrating the way Hewett's attention to the domestic sphere is part and parcel of the text's Marxist analysis. Secondly, he suggests that *Bobbin Up* might have something to teach us about social reproduction theory itself. Fiction's capacity for what McNeill calls 'associative leaps' (8)

allows it to register the invisible and affective dimensions of social processes and class as a social totality. Furthermore, in Hewett's commitment to representing competing and incoherent voices, positions and perspectives, *Bobbin Up* refuses the logic and order of the social realist novel, insisting instead on a more capacious social and socialist vision. Contained in this deeply original reading of Hewett's novel is an expansive claim about the work that literature does, often unconsciously and ahead of its time, to produce new political aesthetics.

In his essay on Carrie Tiffany's 2005 novel, *Everyman's Rules for Scientific Living*, Jack Kirne gives us an intelligent and original reading that puts the novel in the context of the Australian farm novel, a key genre of settler-colonial writing. As Tony Hughes-d'Aeth has argued and Kirne neatly summarises, the settler-colonial farm novel works to signify the 'reality of successful colonization' by bringing together the 'work of the field' through clearing the bush and the 'work of the hearth' through the reproduction of children who will inherit that land (1). Tiffany's novel both draws on and subverts these narrative tropes in order to critique the logic that underpins settler occupancy. Kirne goes on to situate Tiffany's novel in conversation with a series of other contemporary Australian novels that have worked to 'produce imaginaries for belonging on contested ground' (3). Kirne's essay shows the extent to which the work of imagining new and less possessive and destructive modes of being and belonging on Indigenous Australian land may also involve wrestling with histories of literary genre that have determined what kinds of stories we can tell about this place.

Finally, Aiden Coleman has given us a terrific essay about how to read the notoriously difficult and erudite poet, John Forbes. Coleman's claim is simple: to get the most out of a Forbes poem you need to do 'research' or 'homework.' Forbes's poetry, for the most part, won't do the work of comprehension for you or instruct the reader in how to understand the relationship between different aspects of content and images. This means that without some extra knowledge the myriad references and details of the poem will lock the reader out and the best of the poem will be missed. Drawing on George Steiner's essay 'On Difficulty,' Coleman gives us a way in to a series of Forbes's poems, which also serves as an excellent lesson in how to read difficult poetry. Coleman's readings are nuanced and illuminating, reminding us that the best close reading will also require us to look beyond a particular text; that is to say, to do some 'homework.' In both its capacious set of references and its grammatical complexity Forbes's poetry appears in this essay as a lesson in how to access the surprise and the delight of the difficult non-sequitur.

### **A note from Tony Simoes da Silva**

Writing as one half of the current editorial team, this will be my last issue editing *JASAL*. I took over as Co-Editor of *JASAL* in 2009, after the publication of the issue of the 2008 ASAL Conference, an issue I co-edited with Wenche Ommundsen. If memory serves me right, I took over as Journal Administrator and Co-Editor just as the journal moved fully online, initially hosted by the National Library of Australia and now by Sydney University Press. In the last 10 years I have been immensely privileged to work as Co-Editor with Frances Devlin-Glass, Brigitta Olubas and more recently Ellen Smith. I could not have asked for more intellectually passionate and committed colleagues, all three generous to a fault. Over the same period, I will note also the work of Review Editors Jay Daniel Thompson and Joseph Cummins and over the last few years of Angela Rockel as Copy Editor. The support of staff at the NLA and the SUP has been hugely appreciated, as has the prodigious archive Susan Lever carries in her head and shares so willingly! For me, editing *JASAL* has been an oddly stimulating

experience, as Australian Literature and Studies occupied an ever-smaller place in my own research, even if I continued to soak up the body of fictional and scholarly work in Australian literary studies. I have particularly enjoyed working closely with Early Career Researchers and postgraduate researchers as they published their work for the first time. The journal will go on under the editorial care of the super-capable Ellen and I know scholars in the field of Australian literary studies will embrace *JASAL* anew under her leadership.