

Editors' note

Sadly it is sometimes necessary to use this space in the journal to farewell a member of the editorial team. In this case it is no less than three (the entire editorial team for the recent issues of *JASAL*!) who are moving on. So in effect we are going to farewell ourselves and write some very nice things about us in the process.

The focus of attention, however, needs to be Susan Lever. Susan has been working in an editorial role since *JASAL 6* while also serving as the managing editor. It has fallen to Susan to take on the responsibility for maintaining the journal on a day-to-day basis, in both its print and online versions. She has achieved this with extraordinary efficiency and goodwill, and the continued well-being of *JASAL* as it has made the transition to its electronic format is largely due to her capacity for hard work and attention to detail. Many readers will be aware that Susan made a transition of her own, into 'retirement', during this period, but this in no way diminished her commitment to the journal. Those of us who have worked with her during this time have been encouraged and inspired by her devotion to making *JASAL* a significant and sustainable feature of the Australian literary and cultural landscape.

Tanya Dalziell and Paul Genoni are also departing the editorial team. Tanya has achieved wonders as the reviews editor, as is evidenced by this current issue which features by some margin the largest number of reviews included in a single issue of *JASAL*. Hopefully this also reflects to some extent a healthy period for 'Oz lit' publishing. Paul has been called to high office (the ASAL Presidency) and has therefore thought it judicious to surrender the editing role. Paul and Tanya edited the first conference issue of *JASAL* to go online, the 2007 *Spectres, Screens, Shadows, Mirrors*, and were inveigled into taking on the main editorial tasks. They have patiently adapted their editorial expertise to the electronic format, with Paul leading the team in producing this 2009 issue. We know he will lead the ASAL community with the same patience, good-humour and enthusiasm.

But where there are losses there are also gains. We are extremely pleased to announce and welcome a new *JASAL* editorial team. This will consist of Frances Devlin-Glass (Frances has commenced her involvement with this current issue); Tony Simoes da Silva (who has worked previously as co-editor of the 2009 special issue, *Australian literature in a global world*); and Bernadette Brennan, who will be the new reviews editor. We wish them well in their roles, and trust that the community of scholars of Australian literature will continue to support the journal.

It should be noted that *JASAL 9* is the first of the 'regular' issues of *JASAL* to appear in an electronic version only. This decision was taken reluctantly as we are aware that for some readers the print version was their preferred choice. The economics of printing and distributing the print version had, however, become unsustainable for ASAL. We are also conscious of the advantages of the electronic version, both in its ability to reach a greater number of readers and to include types of content and features that cannot be included in the print version. We also hope that the 'rolling' release of papers and reviews has added some immediacy to the content, bringing benefits to both authors and readers.

As usual we hope that *JASAL 9* brings you a diverse and challenging array of articles and reviews. It is quite fitting that this issue should include a contribution from Susan Lever, in which she expands her recent research on Australian television history to include a paper on a

recently rediscovered television drama produced by the BBC in 1962, Peter Yeldham's *Reunion Day*. Lever discusses *Reunion Day* in the context of an Anzac day drama which can be informatively compared to the Alan Seymour's classic *The One Day of the Year*, and proceeds to further situate the play within the context of innovations in Australian theatre and television performance of the period. It is also a great pleasure to publish for the first time, in association with Lever's article, the text of Yeldham's play. Readers will find it a fascinating and contrary account of the Anzac Day spirit.

Yeldham isn't the only writer to have his work rediscovered in *JASAL 9*. Pat Buckridge provides a reconsideration of the work of the 'largely forgotten literary intellectual', Alan D. Mickle. Buckridge succinctly describes the breadth and extent of Mickle's *oeuvre*, the central conceits that united his output, and the various intellectual and literary circles that supported his continued writing and publishing. Buckridge leaves the reader to ponder questions regarding the significance of Mickle in Australian literature, and the future place his books might have in a crowded marketplace of ideas which nonetheless needs—in the interests of building an appreciation of the rich diversity of Australia's literary output—to give space to the quirky and the unusual.

JASAL 9 has much to offer readers interested in Australian poetry. David McCooley leads these papers by providing a provocative reminder of the potency of poetry when it assumes the form of public speech. McCooley builds his discussion on three widely different examples; Michael Leunig's 'poem-cartoons'; Les Murray's drafting of a preamble to the Constitution of Australia; and the quotation by Timothy McVeigh (the 'Ohio Bomber') of William Ernest Henley's 'Invictus' in the final statement issued before his execution. The evocation of these extraordinarily various manifestations of poetry in the public sphere calls upon the reader to reconsider the role of poetry when it is invoked as an intervention between the individual and the state.

This issue of *JASAL* also offers exemplary readings of the work of three major Australian poets. Firstly, Toby Davidson refuses to dodge the question of defining mysticism in discussing John Shaw Neilson as a poet in the Christian mystical tradition. That Neilson writes within the mystic tradition has been axiomatic in Australian criticism since Neilson was first promoted by A. G. Stephens, and Davidson demonstrates how the term has been used to define and corral the poet according to the prejudices of the range of critics who deploy the term as a descriptor, but with little precision. For Davidson, what is unique in Neilson's particular expression of his mystical consciousness is the use of intermediaries drawn from the natural world as a way to achieve union with God, but he notes that this is a way of transcending a religious metaphysics which Neilson found to be fundamentally flawed.

Secondly, Bernadette Brennan finds in Francis Webb's late poems an increasing willingness to address the inevitability of death. Brennan recalls the earlier poems that focused on the journey towards death while refusing to contemplate the moment of death itself or what lay beyond—a poetic journey which stopped short of facing the nothingness or the void that lay beyond life. She finds, however, that in Webb's final poems, commencing with the transitional 'Sturt and the Vultures', the poet is finally able to confront and name death, and his poetry is free to 'move forward into [a new] space'.

Thirdly, Katrina Hansord examines C.J. Brennan's *Poems [1913]* and finds therein a representation of female sexuality that challenged many of the concepts that prevailed in pre-War Australia. Hansord places these poems in the context of the emergence of first wave feminism, and of Brennan's relationship with the Catholic Church and liberal intellectual circles. In her careful reading of the poems Hansord focuses on those that include the figure of Lilith, demonstrating how the poems create a tripartite representation of female sexuality through the symbolism associated with Lilith, Eve and Mary. Hansord finds in Brennan's use of Lilith an expression of female desire that is liberating and empowering.

It is also gratifying to be able to bring some international perspectives on Australian texts through the 'pages' of *JASAL* 9.

Nicolas Birns (Eugene Lang College, New York) tellingly contrasts D. H. Lawrence's *Kangaroo* with Elliot Perlman's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* and Christos Tsiolkas's *Dead Europe*. Birns demonstrates that Lawrence anatomises the 'failure' of political consciousness to fire in the Australian context as inherent in a flattened out democratisation, whereas the twenty-first century writers, Tsiolkas in particular, focus on the failures of imported European neoliberalism. Birns offers a reading of the three novels that foregrounds the importance of regionalism in each novelist's response to his representation of political consciousness in Australia, and one that resists notions of unitary nationhood.

Danica Cerce (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia) presents an intriguing comparison between Frank Hardy's *Power without Glory* and John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. Cerce highlights that in addition to their status as landmark texts of mid-century social realism, these novels also share a more obscure but nonetheless revealing point of comparison in their authors' ambivalent reactions to writing large, confronting novels that proved to be contentious in both literary and political circles. Cerce also considers the post-publishing histories of these novels as they eventually assumed a 'life' beyond the control of their authors, that eventually led to both writers publishing secondary books reflecting on the creation of their novel.

We hope that you find much to enjoy in the impressive scholarship and learning that is collected in this volume. Don't forget that the *JASAL* website allows you to post your thoughts and responses to the papers, so please feel free to do, and in the process join us in taking Australian literary scholarship into the age of Web 2.0.

Susan Lever, Tanya Dalziell, Paul Genoni & Frances Devlin-Glass