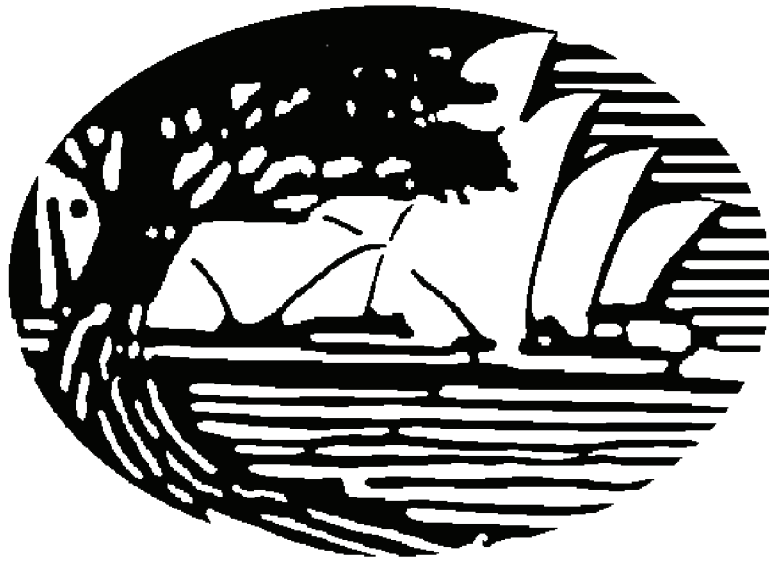


Literature & Aesthetics

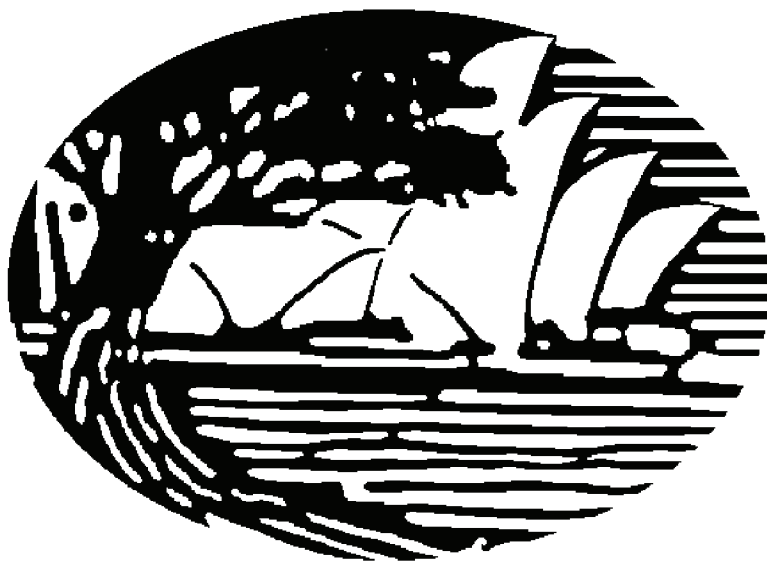
The Journal of the Sydney Society
of Literature and Aesthetics



VOLUME 21 (Special Edition) June 2011

THE SYDNEY SOCIETY OF LITERATURE & AESTHETICS

(Affiliated with the Australian and New Zealand Association
for Literature and Aesthetics – ANZALA)



The Society is established to promote the study of all the arts. It encourages such study from philosophical, psychological, sociological, scientific, historical, critical and educational standpoints. Its membership is open to those interested from all states in Australia as well as overseas.

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Literature & Aesthetics

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of Literature and Aesthetics

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Note:

This special edition of Literature and Aesthetics has been prepared in conjunction with an exhibition of artworks by asylum seekers who are held within Australian detention centres. Titled 'fear+hope', the exhibition is curated by Dr Safdar Ahmed and Anton Pulvirenti with the support of Dr Omid Tofighian, Bilquis Ghani and Lisa Worthington, who form The Refugee Art Project. The exhibition is to be held at Sydney's Mori Gallery during International Refugee Week in 2011.

Editor's Preface

The Sydney Society for Literature and Aesthetics has been bringing a philosophical eye to cultural manifestations for over 20 years now, principally through the publication of its scholarly journal *Literature and Aesthetics*. Despite this journal's focus in its title on literature and the study of aesthetics, over the decades our journal has published the work of scholars who have used a myriad of philosophical tools to study a number of cultural media including cinema, art, poetry, photography and sculpture. It is fitting then that one of our editions should appear in the form of an exhibition catalogue, as this edition does.

Aesthetics, the philosophical study of beauty, may not at first seem the ideal paradigm through which to study the kind of outsider art that is represented in these pages from Australian detainees. 'Aesthetics' can seem cold and far too rational a process in the face of what is considered beauty, nevertheless, there is a strong political connection to our ideas of what constitutes the beautiful, and here I hope the political dimensions of the art in this edition is more than apparent. I am not speaking in the first instance of a politics that will instantly change government policy regarding its often inhuman treatment of asylum seekers, rather I hope the art here, and the articles that accompany it, provoke us to focus on a deeper politics: of what it means to be human, and of what it means to be a global citizen in a world that pleads for our help.

The art in the following pages has a beauty that seeks to engage our humanity. It asks us to consider why the Australian population's recent hysteria over the trickle of 'boat people' has become so influential to our policy makers. It asks us also to wonder on the uses of art in the wider scope of human existence. My co-editor Alex Norman and I are thrilled that the organisers of this exhibition asked *Literature and Aesthetics* to be involved in this significant and heartfelt project. We congratulate everyone involved: our contributors, the curators of the exhibition, and those who have helped with publicity. Most of all, we hope that our efforts on this side of the razor wire demonstrate to those on the other side that we hear them and are trying as best we can to understand their plight.

Christopher Hartney

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Contributors

Omid Tofighian

Omid Tofighian completed his PhD in Philosophy at Leiden University, the Netherlands, and graduated with a combined honours degree in Philosophy and Studies in Religion at The University of Sydney. Over the past seven years he has lived variously in the UAE where he taught at Abu Dhabi University; Belgium where he was a visiting scholar at K.U. Leuven; the Netherlands for his PhD; and short periods in Iran and Australia. During this time he has organised numerous art and cultural events which focus on cultural awareness and social justice. The Refugee Art Project fear+hope is the most recent project he has been involved in. Omid also works with and supports refugees who have been released from detention. He has published academic articles on various subjects and currently teaches at the University of Sydney and UWS Bankstown.

Louise Newman

Louise Newman is the Professor of Developmental Psychiatry and Director of the Monash University Centre for Developmental Psychiatry & Psychology. Prior to this appointment she was the Chair of Perinatal and Infant Psychiatry at the University of Newcastle and the previous Director of the New South Wales Institute of Psychiatry.

In January 2011 she was appointed as a Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia.

She is a practising infant psychiatrist with expertise in the area of disorders of early parenting and attachment difficulties in infants. She has undertaken research into the issues confronting parents with histories of early trauma and neglect. Her current research is focussing on the evaluation of infant-parent interventions in high-risk populations, the concept of parental reflective functioning in mothers with borderline personality disorder

and the neurobiology of parenting disturbance

She has published in the areas of infant mental health, attachment disorders trauma, and prevention of child abuse. She is co-author of the textbook *Clinical Skills in Infant Mental Health* and the forthcoming *Contemporary Approaches in Child and Adolescent Mental health*.

She is the Convenor of the Alliance of Health Professions for Asylum Seekers and an advocate for the rights of asylum seekers and refugees. She is the Chair of the Detention Expert Health Advisory Group an independent body providing advice to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship on the health needs of asylum seekers. She has been involved in research into the impact of immigration detention on child asylum seekers.

George Newhouse

Newhouse attended Sydney Grammar School and then studied Law and Commerce at the University of New South Wales.

After leaving university, Newhouse joined JPMorgan in Sydney as a corporate finance executive and was later transferred to JPMorgan's New York office. From New York, he moved to London where he worked for two years as a capital markets lawyer for Clifford Chance. In 1990 he returned to Sydney and continued working as a lawyer with Swaab & Associates. He became an accredited mediator and was a member of the Consumer Trader Tenancy Tribunal from 1999 to 2007 and a mediator for the Workers Compensation Commission from 2001 to 2010.

In August 2008 Newhouse was invited to participate in the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd's Australia 2020 summit in the area of Indigenous Affairs.

Newhouse is currently Corporate Counsel at Surry Partners Lawyers where he practices in the area of Corporate, Environmental, Family and Human Rights Law. He is also the chapter editor of Thompson Reuters 'The Laws of Australia: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders - Civil Justice Issues'.

He is most remembered for representing Vivian Solon, who was deported from Australia to the Philippines; Cornelia Rau, who was detained in an Australian detention centre for 10 months; the Sudanese Dafurian Community and the family of the late Richard Niyonsaba. Newhouse has also acted for many Chinese, Palestinian and Iranian asylum seekers in their detention cases following the Rau and Solon cases.

In June 2010 Newhouse represented 8 Tamil asylum seekers in their complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission regarding the suspension of the processing of their visas. All have now been processed and released.

In February 2011 Newhouse was successful in securing the release of Seena Akhlaqi Sheikhdost an orphan whose parents had died in a shipwreck on Christmas Island from immigration detention. He was also able to have a family with two vulnerable children moved from Inverbrackie Detention Centre in Adelaide to community detention in Sydney.

Newhouse has championed the use of the Commonwealth's common law duty of care to have children released from fenced detention. In 2011 he represented the survivors and relatives of those who died in the Christmas Island Boat Tragedy in the WA Coroner's Court.

Annarose Robinson

Annarose Robinson is a refugee caseworker at Amnesty International Australia. She is currently studying International and Global Studies at the University of Sydney. In 2010 she volunteered for three months with the charity 'Australian League of Immigration Volunteers', which provided activity programs for asylum seekers within the detention centres.

Navid Tofighian

Navid Tofighian completed his B.A. in sociology and social policy at The University of Sydney in 2010. And having recently returned after undertaking his final semester abroad at the University of California, Santa Cruz, completing two quarters there in sociology and community studies.

Also while there Navid was part of an independent unit of study, with the aim of creating a map atlas of California in which the aim was to sociologically identify key factors in the present development and the future development of the state. Navid is a candidate for the honours program at The University of Sydney, and will begin in 2012. His area of study will focus on Indigenous Australians and their relations with the state.

Anton Pulvirenti

Anton Pulvirenti completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts and finished his Honours degree at the Australian National University in 2001. He is currently completing a PhD on Australian internment camps in the Second World War at the Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney. He is a practicing visual artist who has exhibited both domestically and internationally. He has been conducting weekly art classes with refugees inside the Villawood detention centre.

Ian Rintoul

Ian Rintoul is a long time political and refugee activist. He has been involved in refugee issues since the introduction of mandatory detention in 1992. He was a founding member of the Refugee Action Coalition, and is a regular media commentator on refugee issues. Ian has been a key organizer of World Refugee Day rallies since 2000. He is a regular visitor to detention and recently visited asylum seekers and joined protests at Curtin detention centre.

Antony Loewenstein

Antony Loewenstein is a Sydney-based independent freelance journalist, author, documentarian, photographer and blogger. He has written for many major domestic and international newspapers and websites. Antony contributed a major chapter to 2004's Australian best-seller, *Not Happy, John!* on the Middle East. His best-selling book on the Israel/Palestine conflict, *My Israel Question*, was released by Melbourne University Publishing in 2006. The book was short-listed for the 2007 New South Wales Premier's Literary Award. Antony was a contributor to the 2008 Verso Books release, *A Time to Speak Out: On Israel, Zionism and Jewish Identity*. His second book, *The Blogging Revolution*, on the internet in repressive regimes, was released in 2008 by Melbourne University Publishing. He is a contributor to the 2011 book *My Favourite Teacher*, published by New Press. Antony is currently working on a book about disaster capitalism and privatisation in Australia, the Asia-Pacific and beyond and a book about the role of the Left in modern politics. His 2010 ABC Radio National feature documentary, *A Different Kind of Jew*, was a finalist in the UN Media Peace Awards. Antony is a board member of Macquarie University's Centre for Middle East and North African Studies. He is an Associate at the University of Technology Sydney's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and a Research Associate at the University of Technology Sydney's Australian Centre for Investigative Journalism.

Safdar Ahmed

Safdar Ahmed completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the National Art School in Sydney in 1999, and completed his PhD with the University of Sydney's Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies in 2009. His dissertation analysed the connections between modern Muslim reformism and European paradigms and theories of modernity. He is currently researching modern exegetical approaches towards the Quran and

gives weekly art classes for refugees inside the Villawood detention centre.

William Maley

Professor William Maley assumed the position of Foundation Director of the Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy on 1 July 2003.

He taught for many years in the School of Politics, University College, University of New South Wales, Australian Defence Force Academy, and has served as a Visiting Professor at the Russian Diplomatic Academy, a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Public Policy at the University of Strathclyde, and a Visiting Research Fellow in the Refugee Studies Programme at Oxford University.

He is also a Barrister of the High Court of Australia, a member of the Executive Committee of the Refugee Council of Australia, and a member of the Australian Committee of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP). In 2002, he was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM).

Tahmineh Jafari

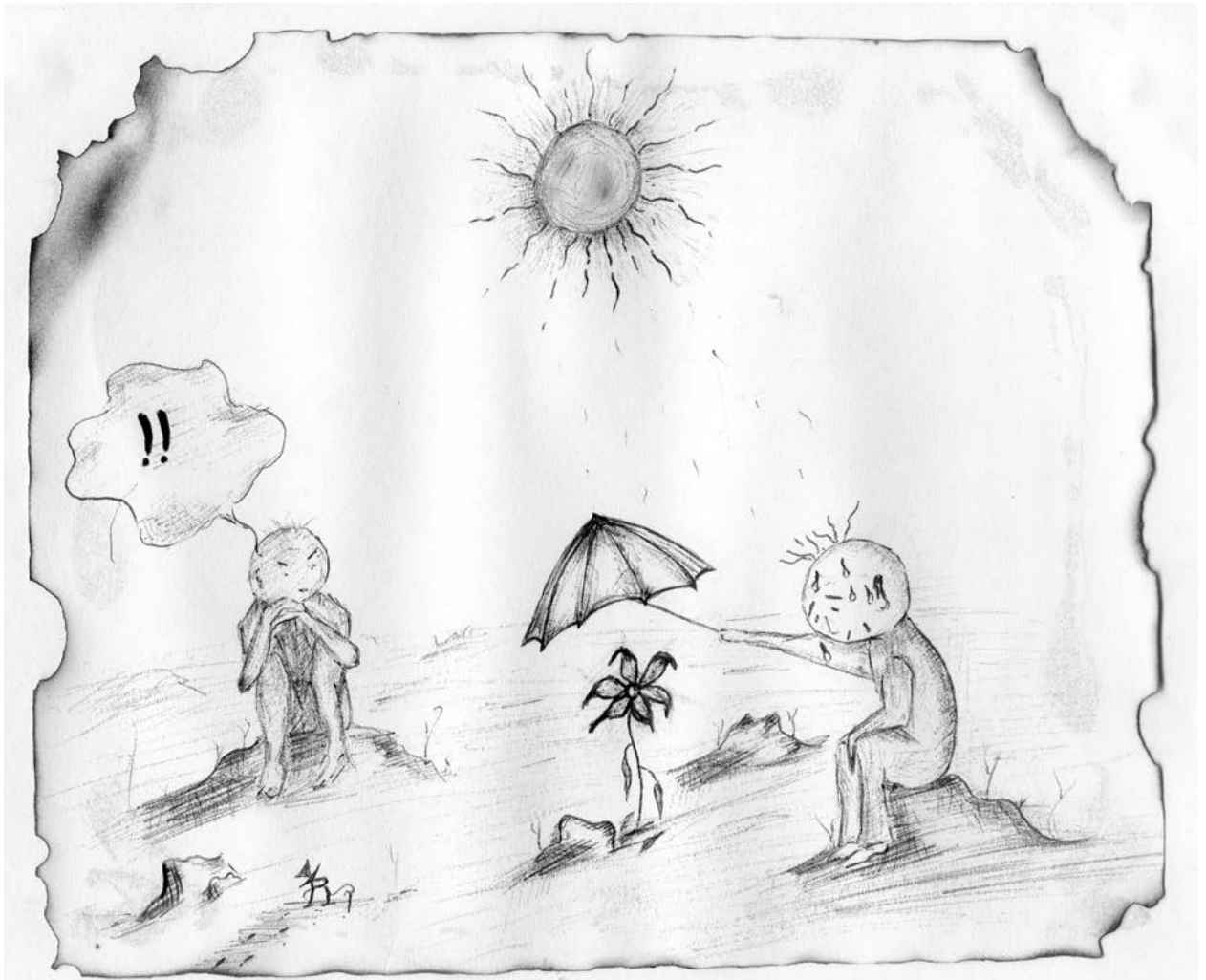
Tahmineh Jafari is a 19 year old artist, singer and single mother from Afghanistan. She is a member of the Hazara ethnic minority and lived in Iran before seeking asylum in Australia. Tahmineh was detained in the Christmas Island and Darwin detention centres and now resides in Sydney.

Ramanan

Ramanan is a Tamil asylum seeker from Sri Lanka who currently resides within the Villawood detention centre. His full identity shall not be disclosed.

Jim Shumile Adriel

Jim Shumile Adriel is the pseudonym of Shumile Arif. He has been detained inside the Villawood immigration detention centre for a period exceeding two years.



Ramin Khorshidi, Mercy, pen on paper, 10x10cm