

SPIES, LIES AND INTELLIGENCE: RECONFIGURING ASIA-PACIFIC CULTURES

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1. Explorers, Poets and Spies

How innocent were the Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, French and British navigators from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries who searched for and some of whom ultimately found and settled the Great South Land we now call Australia? The Australian poet James McAuley evokes high idealism and utopian expectations in his long poem 'Captain Quiros' (McAuley, *Collected Poems* 111-176) about the fifteenth and early sixteenth century sea voyages of Captain Pedro Fernando Fernandez de Quiros to the South Seas, the Solomon Islands and South America. McAuley's biographer Cassandra Pybus notes why Quiros was such a 'compelling figure' for McAuley: he was 'a brilliant navigator and devout Catholic, obsessed with the idea that he could find the Great South Land and create there an ideal world, the New Jerusalem' (Pybus 178).

But idealism and utopian expectations have their other darker side in the lives of navigators and poets. Quiros's expeditions, like those of many other navigators of his time and later, were underpinned by imperial ambitions, espionage and chicanery. McAuley's benign view of Spanish imperialism, and his focus on idealistic enterprise in preference to the underside of such voyages, is typical of much poetry and social commentary which ignores the rich, if problematic, underworld of intrigue and espionage.

This paper will argue that the dark side of human behaviour, and the secret negotiations that bring some to power and glory and others to destitution, also plays an important role in literature and socio-critical commentary. To understand Iago is to better understand Othello; and Hamlet's turmoils are best understood in the context of a Danish court inhabited by spies such as Polonius, the spymaster and operatives such as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

We will understand ourselves better in the context of international relations in the Asia-Pacific if we also explore the place of the 'dark arts' in our national and international lives. We may even find some entertainment and perhaps illumination in these explorations.

The case of James McAuley, the Australian poet, is instructive. During the Second World War, McAuley worked in a research and intelligence unit where he had special responsibility for considering postwar colonial policy. Taking their cue from President Roosevelt, McAuley and his colleagues considered the possibility of Australia and New Zealand taking a radical and expanded postwar colonial policy in the Pacific (Pybus 38-9). McAuley continued to take a special interest in New Guinea after the war and ultimately convinced himself of the necessity for colonial control there. His poem 'Captain Quiros' thus arises in part from McAuley's reflections about the pros and cons of colonialism and his conclusion that the colonial experience is justifiable. At the same time, McAuley strongly rejected Communism and its associated aura (for some) of idealistic and utopian egalitarianism. He accepted financial support for *Quadrant*, the literary magazine he edited, from the Congress of Cultural Freedom. This was an offshoot of the CIA. McAuley did this in part to counter the evils of communism.

Few Australians who have worked in intelligence, whether in military or civilian spheres, have had the leisure that McAuley and his poet friend Harold Stewart had in Army intelligence at Victoria Barracks in Melbourne. In 1943, they concocted one of the great hoaxes of Australian literary history, the Angry Penguins poems by an invented poet Ern Malley (Pybus 39-41; Heywood). Hoaxing, propaganda, poetry and spying have their points of connection.

When poet Michael Thwaites was interviewed for a position in the Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO) in 1950 he was told that there were people engaged in subversion and espionage (read here the Soviet Union and their supporters) and that a poet could help to counter these activities. Why a poet? Because, said Colonel Spry, the head of ASIO, both 'effort and imagination' were required: 'You write poetry, I know', said Spry. 'Much of the job will just be hard methodical work but imagination is also needed. I believe you could make a valuable contribution' (Thwaites 18). As it turned out, Thwaites supervised the defection of two important KGB agents, Vladimir and Evdokia Petrov, to Australia in 1954 and subsequently

ghost-wrote their biography (Petrov, *Empire*). In Australia, as elsewhere, poetry, intelligence and espionage are often inextricably linked.

2. Military Traditions and Spying

While a link between creative writers (and journalists) with intelligence work can be established in a number of cases, the link between intelligence and military experience is even more pronounced. When I took Singapore poet and academic Edwin Thumboo to a passing-out parade at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) in Canberra in the 1990s, he quickly identified half a dozen fellow Singaporeans on the parade ground (they had been students at ADFA) and remarked: ‘Those little fellows with the sun glinting on their glasses and the quick fingers—they will win the Third World War—not your big lumbering Aussie brute.’

Leo Braudy’s monumental study of war and the changing nature of masculinity is a salutary reminder that although stereotypical ‘men are y and women x’ formulas partially collapsed during the Vietnam War, stereotypes still remain in some quarters (Braudy 534). In this context, military intelligence has seemed to attract renegade officers—or perhaps military misfits—who perhaps are better at thinking critically or imagining alternatives than at taking orders and fighting on the battlefield. Although Braudy does not explicitly make the connection, it seems at least plausible that relatively straightforward traditions of war, honour and nationalism in the shaping of personality are complicated when officers switch from military roles to intelligence work.

3. Australia’s First Spymaster

The career of Australia’s first spymaster George Steward, raises some of these questions. Born in London’s East End in 1865, Steward joined the London Post Office when he was 15 and had the ideal apprenticeship for a future spy: he was night messenger and sorter of foreign parcels at the Post Office (Cunneen, *ADB* 81). Steward married in London then moved with his family to Tasmania in 1892 but the marriage did not last: his wife and their two sons returned to England in 1894. An ambitious and able administrator, Steward rose rapidly to be town clerk in Hobart before transferring in 1901 to the new Commonwealth Department of External Affairs in Melbourne.

In 1902, George Steward became official secretary to the governor-general, Lord Tennyson. For the next seventeen years Steward remained as official secretary to five governors-general—a position funded by the Australian government to ensure effective communication and proper financial control of the office. From this official position, in 1916 Steward founded and headed the Counter Espionage Bureau, Australia's first secret service (Cunneen 82). Frank Cain has described how a bureau, which set out to be an intelligence arm that coordinated the information of other bodies and communicated by cipher with London on matters of international security, became a domestic political surveillance body giving special attention to Germans in Australia (most of whom were interned), and the sometimes fractious opponents of military conscription in Australia—especially the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or 'Wobblies'), Sinn Fein and others perceived as leftists (Cain 1-36). The rejection of conscription to fight in Europe at two referenda in Australia was of course a bitter blow to the British and their representatives in Australia.

Along with other espionage bodies in the Asia-Pacific and elsewhere that attempted to retain British influence in the twentieth century (e.g. in Singapore, as we shall see, and India), Australia's Counter-Espionage Bureau was chiefly concerned with domestic surveillance—but its leaders were ever alert to extend their influence internationally when opportunities arose. As such, subversive activity in Australia was often linked to international movements. In style and in substance, the military influence on early Australian intelligence organisations was paramount. George Steward, for example, was a keen citizen-soldier and was a major in the Australian Intelligence Corps before rising to honorary lieutenant-colonel from 1917 until his death in 1920. Fully moustached and upright, Steward appears to have combined military discipline, powers of persuasion and the kind of devious mind that enabled him to understand plots and trace suspected enemies of law and order.

Despite Steward's 'remarkable gifts' as chief spy, he had trouble resolving the conflict between his two jobs. Munro Ferguson, his fifth Governor-General (all of them British to this point), complained to Prime Minister Hughes about the other 'usages' to which Steward's time was put (Cunneen, *King's Men* 141). The Governor-General objected to 'unsavoury characters' who lurked about Government House on secret political business and he dubbed his secretary 'Pickle the Spy' (Cunneen, *ADB* 82). Since Munro Ferguson was a Scot, he

was probably referring to the secret agent code-named Pickle who, in the Scottish writer Andrew Lang's novel *Pickle the Spy* (1897)—and perhaps in real life—spied on Prince Charles Edward after 1750. On the other hand, Munro Ferguson may have thought of Steward as a nuisance whose divided duties had got him into a 'pickle' in the Shakespearean sense noted by Dr Johnson: 'How cam'st thou in this pickle?' (Johnson, 292-3).

4. The Singapore Connection

Internal security departments bred intelligence analysts and spies in a number of countries of the Asia-Pacific. In Singapore, for example, a Special Branch was founded in 1916 and operated in British Malaya and Singapore until the Second World War. In his history of Special Branch operations, former National University of Singapore academic Ban Kah Choon notes that the Branch 'never thought of itself as a domestic policing unit concerned only with the immediate problems of native or local origins' (Ban xii). Singapore and Malaya were too involved in international trade for an isolationist stance and security threats in the region reflected 'the burgeoning unrest in Europe, Northeast Asia and the Eurasian heartland as community ideology, strikes, extremist religious outlooks, Pan-Asianism and nationalism struggled to gain centre stage' (Ban xiii).

If a British colonialist standpoint dominated in both Australia and Singapore in the earliest phase of active intelligence in both countries during the First World War, the focus was somewhat different in each country. Whereas the IWW, Sinn Fein and German settlers were a principal focus in Australia, Malaysians and Singaporeans heard a wake-up call in Chinese New Year 1915 when there was an attempted mutiny by Muslim Indian troops of the 5th Light Infantry (Ban 3). Ban remarks that the mutiny was considered dangerous because 'it coincided with plans by the Germans with whom the British were at war to undermine the British Empire by fomenting unrest among its native subjects ...' (Ban 6-7).

A significant outcome of these events was the formation of the Special Branch—'a group of men trained in the arcane arts of internal security such as intelligence gathering, the monitoring of suspects, counter-espionage and the running of agents ...' (Ban 8). The most noticeable success of the Special Branch was 'the successful infiltration of its main adversary, the Malayan

Communist Party' (Ban 8). Later activities of the Branch included attempts to counter Japanese espionage and the quite successful Japanese propaganda campaign about a pan-Asian vision for the region. The subsequent Japanese occupation of Malaya, in Ban's view, 'signalled the death knell of British colonial power and its prestige throughout Asia' (Ban 182). Japan's military strategies were the result of careful and patient intelligence gathering over a long period aided by a key British air force officer who spied for them (Ban 183-7, Elphick and Smith).

5. Spying on allies in the Pacific theatre: Churchill's 'eyes and ears' on MacArthur

The Second World War, and especially the Pacific War, contributed to some bizarre intelligence links in the Asia-Pacific. Some of these involved allies spying on each other. An example that links Australia and the Philippines is the case of Gerald Wilkinson, a British liaison officer. He was with General Douglas MacArthur in Australia. MacArthur was Winston Churchill's spy reporting on the American General and Australian responses to the war. In his book *MacArthur's Undercover War*, the American historian William B. Brewer describes the covert war waged in the Philippines and elsewhere by General MacArthur from Australia (after his strategic retreat from Corregidor in 1942) as the largest undercover operation ever undertaken. But the book carries no mention of Churchill or Wilkinson keeping an eye on MacArthur, the Americans and the Australians. I have read Wilkinson's secret journal of these years in the Churchill College Library in Cambridge and was impressed with the observational and writing skills and the sheer human percipience of the best spies. In Wilkinson's case, his observations range from trade, politics and war strategy to MacArthur's ego and Australian Prime Minister Curtin's apparently shifting allegiance from Britain to America as pressure in the Pacific grew.

Wilkinson, who was in his early thirties, had been a businessman in the Philippines, as well as a spy for the British. After the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Wilkinson joined MacArthur on Corregidor then made his way to Britain where he saw Churchill, before he returned to Australia. Wilkinson's wife and two children remained in the Philippines and were captured and interned by the Japanese. Hence, personal tensions inform

Wilkinson's journal. But to a later reader, what stands out is Wilkinson's ability to convey the tensions and changing relations between Britain, Australia and the United States which were in 'a fluid and in some ways critical condition' (Thorne I 54).

This then is the fascination of reading intelligent intelligence. Becoming engaged with a sensitive, perceptive observer at a time of international crisis has a similar buzz for this reader to a good novel. Ban Kah Choon writes that Special Branch work in Singapore meant that 'it sought and almost always possessed a view of the other side of things, of what the potential adversary thought and believed in' (Ban xiii). One of the classic films of our time, *The Lives of Others*, set in East Germany, shows this dynamic in operation—and how the intense voyeurism involved in watching other people can sometimes engage one's sympathies and even (as in this film) subvert the spy's mission. Wilkinson was never entirely 'won over' by MacArthur's powerful ego, however—he kept his eye on the international historical drama that was being played out during MacArthur's period in Australia when the US became a significant factor in Australian national life. This culminated in 1951 with the ANZUS Pact.

These events also served to form a link between Australia and the Philippines which would grow in the postwar years. Under MacArthur's general direction in the Allied Intelligence Bureau which he had set up, Australians and Filipinos who had escaped the Japanese invasion combined resources. Men like young Filipino Jesus Villamor and Australian Captain Allan Davidson played leading roles in infiltrating spies and Australian radio equipment into the Philippines with the ultimate aim of dislodging the Japanese invader (Brewer 49-55). These were early signs of defence and intelligence cooperation between Australia and the Philippines which have grown and continue to the present day. In May 2007, for example, President Gloria Arroyo witnessed the signing of a defence pact in Canberra which significantly boosted Australia's involvement in combating terrorist cells in Mindanao (Peake 5). Intelligence is a field of frequent exchanges between the defence establishments of both countries. As if to highlight the need for such cooperation, it has been reported recently that two leading suspects involved in the 2002 Bali bombings are probably hiding in the southern Philippines (O'Brien 2). The targets change, but the work of spies and their agents continues.

6. The literary dimension

A small number of eminent Australian and Philippines novelists have explored aspects of ‘the spying game’ in their work. I do not refer to the writers of spy thriller genre novels (which deserve to be studied separately) but to recognised literary novelists. The writers to be considered briefly here use both historical and contemporary settings; they illustrate some of the different modes available to writers who engage with the largely concealed worlds of espionage and terrorism.

6.1 *Historical enigmas: Nicholas Hasluck*

Historical dimensions of spying are recurrently explored in novels by Australian author Nicholas Hasluck. Hasluck is a lawyer—now a Supreme Court judge—in Western Australia. His father Sir Paul Hasluck was an historian who rose to become Minister for External Affairs and Governor-General of Australia. Hasluck’s mother was also an historian. Hasluck’s first novel *Quarantine* (1978) creates a Kafkaesque atmosphere of impotence in the face of intrigue when a ship from Australia is detained in a quarantine station in the Suez Canal. In Hasluck’s fourth novel *The Bellarmine Jug* (1984) an Australian student at the Grotius Institute in Holland discovers a long-lost fragment of the journal of Francois Pelsaert, whose ship *The Batavia* was wrecked off the West Australian coast in 1629 with disastrous consequences for the survivors. Through his student’s research, Hasluck forensically reconstructs both historical and imagined events, revealing the political intrigue in a Rosicrucian plot to take over the recently discovered Great South Land. Hasluck deftly draws his plot into the novel’s present time when his student discoverer is interrogated by a counter-espionage expert about evidence gathered by security agencies in Amsterdam, Indonesia and Australia.

A different tack is taken in Hasluck’s ninth novel *Our Man K* (1999) in which he uses other sources and his own research to develop the story of Egon Kisch, a Czech journalist and suspected spy for the Soviets whose visit to Australia in 1934 controversially divided left and right in Australian politics. Hasluck learnt that Kisch and Franz Kafka had been students together at the Altstadter Gymnasium in Prague and the idea of a novel of intrigue and speculation was born (Hasluck, *The Legal Labyrinth* 4). Like his earlier novels of espionage and intrigue, Hasluck’s *Our Man K* begins with established fact

and develops its themes through the writer's imagination. Hasluck explains: 'My novel about the enigmatic Egon Kisch—*Our Man K*—must be shaped (as all novels are shaped) by serendipity masquerading as research, and by constant speculation' (Hasluck 56). Nor does the past necessarily remain remote. In Hasluck's words, 'The past is a foreign country. They do things differently there, but what they do may linger in the mind to haunt us' (Hasluck 158). Hasluck's work prompts these hauntings.

6.2 *Secrecy and revolution: F. Sionil Jose's Mass*

F. Sionil Jose uses the past with a sense of personal urgency in his quintet *The Pretenders* (1962), *My Brother, My Executioner* (1973), *The Tree* (1978), *Mass* (1983) and *Po-on* (1984). Jose's sympathies clearly lie with the rural poor and oppressed in the Philippines over the more than three hundred years of Spanish rule and subsequent American colonisation. The consequences that make for espionage, division and internal conflict in the Philippines are set. As Dudley de Souza explains, the revolutionary, peasant-based Hukbalahap movement which appears in several novels brings on situations ripe for conflict, betrayal and revenge—'where brother is pitted against brother on two sides of the same fence: the exploiter and the exploited, the landowner and the dispossessed' (De Souza 156).

Jose's celebrated novel *Mass* dramatises some of these conflicts and their consequences in 1960s Manila. The strength of this novel lies in its dramatic portrayal of attempts to create a popular movement for democratic change in the *barrios* and universities of this time and in the loyalties, betrayals and moral conflicts that such times of social revolution engender.

One of the features of Jose's work that has always impressed me is its earthy sense of moral purpose. But in *Mass* we also see conflicting senses of loyalty, belonging and identity and the incipient corruption of mass movements as well as of dictatorships. Thus Pepe Samson, as his biblical name might suggest, is a problematic hero—the most interesting kind—as his joining of the Brotherhood movement shows. When Professor Hortenso tries to win Pepe over to the Brotherhood with Marxist rhetoric and ideology, Pepe retorts: 'What can we expect from the Brotherhood? Why should I give it loyalty? What can I get in return?' (*Mass* 24). This almost streetwise young man who comes from the backblocks of Cabugawan will not be recruited to a cause by words alone. Psychological factors come into play: Pepe has been rejected by

his father and like his orphan friend Toto he might find in the solidarity of the Brotherhood a sanctuary, an alternative family. Helping to set up a cell of the Brotherhood in the Barrio appeals to Pepe despite the sexual and erotic diversions he encounters.

Involvement in an underground movement often depends on respect for a leader. In his search for a leader—and an alternative father figure—Pepe Samson finds he has much to learn from Ka Lucio who had fought for the Huks but has recognised their failure to win over ‘the masses’ (*Mass* 109). But Pepe also worries about ‘the raucous voice of the mob’ (112) which can override rational judgment. He is ‘in’ the Brotherhood but not yet ‘of’ them. As he becomes more deeply embroiled in underground activities, Pepe finds himself drawn into cunning, deviousness, conspiracy and the violence he mentally rejects. His older mentor Ka Lucio advises him to ‘lead alone ... The general idea, you must relay to everyone—but the details, you must keep to yourself’ (*Mass* 153). While these are prudent tactics learnt by the communists, they have uncomfortable echoes of Sun Tzu, Machiavelli and the Bush regime’s conduct of the war in Iraq which left the door open for Abu Ghraib and other atrocities to occur. Nor do such tactics lead in the end to popular support for a cause.

For Pepe Samson, ideology cannot overcome his feeling for individuals. Ka Lucio tells him that he must identify his enemy as the rich: ‘[W]hen you point the gun between their eyes, you must do it without passion—or compassion. Do it as a duty, do it to survive’ (152). But this is too calculated, too ruthless for Pepe, whose feelings are at least partly influenced by the fact that his girlfriend Betsy is rich. Repelled by this conspiratorial and violent aspect of the Brotherhood, Pepe wants to remain in the shadows but feels himself ‘sucked into a whirlpool slowly’ (167). This is a central experience in many studies of conspiracy and spying.

The conflicted Pepe Samson, a student revolutionary who has come to doubt the motives and purposes of the underground movement he has joined, might seem ripe for ‘turning’ into a double agent who would spy on members of the Brotherhood and inform on them to agents of the president. Seeing this, the homosexual intellectual Juan Puneta sets out to ‘turn’ the heterosexual Pepe into a willing accomplice in undermining and destroying the Brotherhood. This is a fatal mistake. Ka Lucio is murdered—possibly by Puneta. Five student leaders disappear without a trace (178). The President’s internal security agents ‘trail’ and spy on Pepe. When he is arrested, imprisoned, interrogated and

tortured, Pepe is questioned about a shipment of guns for the Brotherhood and recruitment methods in the Quezon sector (neither of which he knows about) (189). His captors claim Pepe is ‘a member of a conspiracy to overthrow by force a democratically elected government’ (191). Nothing is as it seems. The wilful opponents attack each other: those who question their own side are traitors. Loyalty is all—but loyalty to what or to whom?

The quest motif in *Mass* shows Pepe Samson attempting to thread his way through this confusion. He identifies the enemy in Juan Puneta who believes in ‘exploiting the poor’ (216). Typically of Jose’s *Rosales* saga, though, the source of Puneta’s evil derives from his family history. We are told that Puneta’s grandfather ‘sold out the Revolution and went over to the Spaniards. Then, it was the Americans, and the Japanese’. He was a turncoat. Now, says Pepe, as he holds Puneta at gunpoint, ‘you will subvert the revolution again and claim it as yours’ (216). In shooting Puneta in his own shooting gallery and presenting it as suicide, Pepe offends against his non-violent principles but rationalises his action as ‘justice’ for the common people and the nation.

At this point, *Mass* is ‘down and dirty’: it takes its readers to the depths of the spying game as extreme opponents conspire to obtain power and control. The moral ambivalence which Jose reveals in his protagonist towards the end of the novel is suddenly resolved for Pepe, as we have seen, when he murders (or assassinates) Puneta. Pepe claims to feel no guilt and obtains qualified support from the Church—or rather, from Father Jess who says he believes that social justice can only be achieved by violent means (223). Pepe’s new clarity of purpose, as he prepares to head for the mountains to fight for the revolution there arises from a recognition of where he now belongs—not with the rich people and intellectual elites of the city but with Rosales, the poor village where he started and a wish to serve those people. He leaves behind the spying, lying and compromises of the city where the *ilustrados*—the intellectuals—lose a clear sense of purpose and their revolutionary zeal becomes ripe for compromise and corruption.

6.3 ‘Spotters’ and ‘Sparrows’: Jose Y. Dalisay’s *Killing Time in a Warm Place*

Like *Mass*, Jose Y. Dalisay Jr’s novel *Killing Time in a Warm Place* (c1992; new edition 2006) deals with growing up in the Philippines during the Marcos years. Less elemental than his story *The Island* (1996), *Killing Time* explores the moral and psychological dimensions of opposition to a dictator from the

point of view of Noel Ilustre Bulaong, a participant in the demonstrations and other forms of opposition to Marcos. In an Introduction to the 2006 edition of *Killing Time*, Dalisay notes that at the age of nineteen he was himself arrested by military intelligence agents in 1973 and imprisoned during a university year in which he admits to ‘studying Mao instead of math’. A recurrent fear in prison was that of ‘the dreaded “ajax”—our slang word for “agent”, the government’s and our jailers’ ears’.

Less epic in scope than *Mass*, *Killing Time* explores the Marcos years retrospectively some twenty-five years later from the ironic perspective of a survivor who has gone on to higher education in the USA and survived. His memory of the atmosphere in middle-class family homes after martial law in the early 1970s recalls its domination by the fear of spies:

Now and then we had casual visitors over and who knows how many of them may have been government spies checking out the place—say, the cupboard—for a cache of weapons or Communist Party membership cards, which we were supposed to carry if you believed the papers, but which none of us, to my knowledge, had ever seen (77).

The fear of government spies has repercussions. Underground or ‘safe houses’ become necessary: within them, the inhabitants learn to camouflage their political ideologies, stripping their rooms of revolutionary literature and replacing them with *Time*, *Good Housekeeping* and other anodyne publications and preparing themselves for raids. The narrator, Noel Bulaong, is aware of the destructive power on morale, motivation and personal freedom of government agents: ‘no word buzzed more quickly around the HQ than *ahente*, “agent”, the secret weaver of our destruction’ (87). In these circumstances, rumours and suspicions multiply and nothing can be more conducive to undermining a clandestine organisation than suspicions of treachery by a ‘mole’ or a ‘plant’.

Stories are swapped in the underground to increase awareness or reduce fears. One such bizarre story is told of a woman in one unit of the New People’s Army who is suspected of, and confesses to, being a government agent. She is sentenced to death. Her husband asks to carry out the execution. They are allowed to sit on the bank of a river and weep in each other’s arms ‘for things that were and might have been’ (103). She nods. He shoots her. The narrator’s response to hearing this story is instructive: he would never have been able to

do the same thing. 'I would have written novels to demonstrate the numbing complexity of truths, decisions, errors, and so on'. He concludes: 'I was the most unreliable comrade I knew' (103). This is the area of dilemmas, uncertainties, hopes and fears in which the modern novel flourishes and where the spying game and its outcomes can be explored.

Identifying the enemy is a key aspect of most intelligence work, whether in domestic or international conflicts. We have seen Pepe Samson's dilemmas and difficulties before he is able to personalise the enemy in the figure of Juan Puneta. Dalisay's narrator recalls the way 'the [government] informers—"spotters" in police parlance—picked out Sparrows based on tattooed moles on their faces':

Col. Jesus Garcia, Pasay City police chief, said a mole on the chin means the person is a communist lecturer; on the center forehead, a runner; on the forehead just above the left eyebrow, a Sparrow intelligence agent; two moles on the left cheek, a member of a Sparrow unit; a mole each on the left and right cheeks and one on the forehead, a liquidator; and two moles on the right and one on the left cheeks, a general. (137)

The absurdity of such theories and surveillance techniques is left to the reader's imagination by a narrator in exile from the Manila where he had held a senior government post until he opposed Marcos. Dalisay's protagonist, Noel Bulaong, recalls his detention in prison, the interrogation and torture but also the clash of cultures between uneducated provincial soldiers and their urban intellectual prisoners. The prisoners, like many students and teachers sent to remote communities in China during the so-called Cultural Revolution, often resent their inability to communicate with their captors and violence results.

A witty, ironic tone interspersed with more sombre moments characterises *Killing Time*. The hothouse atmosphere of prison life fertilises dreams, fantasies, rumour, innuendo and (in some) humour. Intelligence agents are prime targets in an unequal tussle of intellects. The narrator recalls one ill-educated major in government intelligence who was promoted on the basis of his theory that communists could be recognised by their composite mask of 'guilt, depravity and outright menace' (141). However the satiric critique is not all one-way. Unlike Pepe Samson, who takes up arms and heads for the mountains to continue the revolution, Noel Bulaong is left with the classic

dilemma of the intellectual: he sees both sides of a problem. When he leaves for America—for ‘the distance and the difference and the antithesis’, he says, rather too neatly—he has a discomfiting sense of guilt for opting out and thereby betraying democratic causes and individuals in the Philippines. ‘What next would I betray?’ he asks himself (191) and contrasts his fate with that of his former girlfriend Laurie who has gone north to fight with ‘the comrades’ in ‘a liberated zone’ (192).

6.4 *An Australian in Asia: Robert Drewe*

Robert Drewe’s second novel *A Cry in the Jungle Bar* (1979; 1993) offers some remarkable complementary perspectives to those of Jose and Dalisay on spies, lies and intelligence in the Philippines and Southeast Asia during the Marcos era. Inevitably, Drewe’s point of view is different from theirs. His protagonist Richard Cullen works for a UN Agency in Southeast Asia where he has become an expert on *bubalus bubalis*, the indispensable buffalo in Asian agriculture. Drewe adroitly places his fleshy, middle-aged Australian protagonist as a man who engages sympathetically with rural workers in the region. More than once, Cullen identifies with the working buffaloes that he knows so well. But he is beset by personal demons, a crumbling marriage and a sense that life is passing him by.

Cullen’s personal vulnerability together with his frequent communications and visits with rural Islamic communities in the southern Philippines, attracts the attention of journalist Ted Orosa who has strong American connections and, Cullen comes to suspect, ties to the CIA. When Orosa makes some none-too-subtle attempts to recruit Cullen as a source, Orosa expresses interest in the Muslims in the south and the highly visible Moros in Mindanao. But other persons of interest to Orosa and his masters include ordinary people of Cebu and Iloilo: ‘Less prominent groups in small *barrios* who might [be] more forthcoming to you people’, Orosa says to Cullen, ‘because of your neutrality. Subversive rather than blatant’ (Drewe 49). Workers for international agencies are frequently sought out as spies because their cover seems impeccable. But Cullen, despite his problems, is a basically decent Australian, a solid professional and a believer in the work he does. He tells Orosa that as a member of the Organisation he is not political. Cullen bluntly asks Orosa if he is CIA, which Orosa denies plausibly, without ever losing interest in Cullen as a possible source in the future.

The principal setting of *A Cry in the Jungle Bar* is a hotel bar in Manila decorated by assorted animal heads (including a pangolin) which give the place, at night, the appearance of a jungle. By day, it looks more like a run-down museum (182). The human animals who inhabit the jungle bar include an international array of diplomats, journalists, secretaries and spies. In this setting, Richard Cullen is an Australian innocent in a jungle of intrigue. Basically apolitical, he is nevertheless a blunt critic of violence and injustice. When Ted Orosa, still keen to pump Cullen for intelligence, asks him about the situation in the 'boondocks' of the southern Philippines, Cullen replies provocatively (and perhaps recklessly): 'Oh, states of emergency everywhere ... martial law, constitutional authoritarianism, the usual thing' (153). Not one to give up easily, Orosa emphasises to Cullen the threats of terror and instability, the need to strengthen Marcos's presidency from 'the infiltration of subversives' and the threat of revolution. Cullen responds laconically: 'Not much chance of that is there? The President has things pretty well sewn up' (158).

The truth of Cullen's observation about President Marcos's iron grip through his security forces is reinforced when the journalist Ted Orosa, despite his connections, is sacked for criticising the president's nephew; and further when one of Cullen's colleagues at the Organisation, ZM Ali, disappears. Rumours range from the view that ZM was a spy against the government to the one that he is 'a sacrificial lamb to keep foreign critics in line (179)'. The strongest suspicion is that Marcos's men have decided that ZM was mixed up with the MLNF in Mindanao. ZM Ali's papers include reports on buffalo diseases in Mindanao that seem to link him with Cullen. Will the Australian himself be a target of the President's secret police?

The deeply ironic concluding section of *A Cry in the Jungle Bar* presents Cullen and his Australian colleague Gallash in Mindanao where they have been sent by the Organisation to report further on the material for which ZM Ali has apparently been expelled. The novel's denouement occurs in the strife-torn southern Philippines. While the events that surround Cullen's likely death—the novel leaves him facing three Moro soldiers who mistake him for an American and have their guns trained on him—can be seen more as the result of a 'cock-up' than a conspiracy. Having followed a *barrio* prostitute to her primitive dwelling, Cullen leaves without having sex with her when he sees her small child and miserable circumstances. Under martial law curfew, he is confronted by a pimp, who stabs him and he staggers on to be confronted by

the jeep and three young men dressed in MNLF commando uniforms. Drewe's sardonic conclusion to this novel shows his iconic Australian again out of his depth in Asia, pleading for his life.

7. Conclusion

This paper suggests the need for closer attention to clandestine intelligence activities in the fortunes of individuals, nations and international relations in the Asia-Pacific through a combination of literary, historical and political studies.

The persistence of spying through history has been indicated by evidence of 'cartographic spies' among European maritime explorers in the regions and searchers for a 'Great South Land'. The practice of spying, both within nations and internationally, has persisted through war and peace and is currently in a new growth spurt in response to an American-designated 'war on terror'. Through history—and especially in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries—literary authors have contributed enormously to the profession of spying and its representation in literature.

While much intelligence work is closely linked to military organisations and the attitudes, habits and values that flow from engagement with the military, I contend that a more flexible, critical and imaginative mindset is required in 'the second oldest profession'.

The career of George Steward, Australia's first spymaster in the early twentieth century, shows Australia still closely allied with British institutions and interests but establishing some areas of difference. The Special Branch in Singapore demonstrates an extension of this influence in British Malaya and Singapore from 1916 to the Second World War. In both Australia and Singapore, however, moves towards independence were fostered by local needs and conditions. British influence declined dramatically after the Japanese invasion and occupation of Malaya and Singapore.

The ubiquity of secret agents and spying in wartime is exemplified in journals and diaries from the Second World War which show even the allies spying on each other. For example, we have seen Gerald Wilkinson, a British agent in General Douglas MacArthur's office in Australia. He was spying on the American General for British Prime Minister Winston Churchill (who himself was an intelligence junkie). This is an example of 'close to the source' intelligence involving the fortunes of Britain, America, Australia and the

Philippines, and it reveals a significant literary dimension in the portrayal of people and events. More broadly, the Pacific War brought Australia and the Philippines into each other's intelligence orbits.

A small sampling of novels since the 1970s in Australia and the Philippines reveals some illuminating literary dimensions of spying. From the historical enigmas of Nicholas Hasluck to F. Sionil Jose's novel *Mass* and Jose Y. Dalisay Jr's *Killing Time in a Warm Place*, we witness an oscillation between theory and practice: spying exercises both these perspectives. *Mass* and *Killing Time* reveal moral and psychological dilemmas behind the facades of the Marcos years in the Philippines. Robert Drewe's *A Cry in the Jungle Bar* explores the Marcos period from an Australian and international perspective. In all of these novels, spies, lies and intelligence contribute to a world of distorted perspectives and power relations, lightened from time to time by a corrective irony and humour which reveals another perhaps superior kind of intelligence at work.

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