DISASTER DIALOGUES
representations of catastrophe in word and image
Cover 31/3, Design: Debra Livingston – University of the Sunshine Coast.

For this issue cover concept, ‘Disaster Dialogues: Representations of catastrophe in word and image’, the idea is to present a cover concept that eludes any literal representation. By presenting a photographic visual interpretation of this issue content is to challenge the viewer to explore the emotional aspects of the cover through form and movement. By avoiding symbolic representation is to create an interpretation by rejecting the notion that something identifiable must be depicted in a photograph. The photograph focuses purely on interpretive abstraction that ‘removes literal, descriptive clutter and hones an image down to its essence, encouraging imaginative responses’, where the taxonomy of both the visual and text join forces. Abstraction possesses incongruity, and ‘presents elements that seem to be at odds with their context, creating contrasts and juxtapositions that stimulate both the emotions and the imagination’ (Douglis 2010: 30). Further abstract photography is about capturing shape colour, line and texture from something that is real and making that reality unrecognisable where the colours and shapes become emotion, while form and movement become attitude. Here, the visual language of the image is supported by the issue theme title and forms a symbiosis between image and text to unveil in the viewer an apprehensive feeling. The desired outcome of the design is to predict an impending event. A dark visual dialogue is evident, composed by the designer’s ability to capture, select, frame, guide the eye and inject mood and atmosphere into the photograph. Abstract photography has a long history and some of the most revered works are illustrated in nineteenth century artists such as, Piet Mondrian, Saul Leiter, Paul Strange and Alfred Stieglitz.

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My motivation for the topic of this issue was instigated by the succession of natural disasters witnessed in early 2011, and my personal perplexity in coming to terms with (that is, naming, signifying) the visual display of the suffering of others. It began with the January floods in South East Queensland, followed by the February earthquake in Christchurch, and concluded with the 11 March Japanese tsunami resultant from the 8.9 magnitude quake which struck off the east coast of Sendai, and which continues to be newsworthy based on the consequential Fukushima nuclear catastrophe. As spectator to trauma—exacerbated by the television media’s choice to continuously loop the scenes of devastation—bearing witness to these events engendered a peculiar form of private trauma in itself. Even the phrase ‘to bear witness’ implies transference in the act of witnessing, that not only is the visual ‘held’ by the eye for the duration of the image, the subject of that witnessing is in some way ‘carried’ by the witness. There is an associative load. But the spectator’s position is, of course, a privileged one. I am not the subject in agony captured on camera. I am not the body in the water. I am not this calamity. However, in my memory recall of these events I have imposed (transposed?) myself into the foreground of the viewing frame, witnessing myself in the third person, as the subject sitting forward on the lounge or pacing as he witnesses the broadcast images. He hears no words. There is no sound. He is thinking only of punctuation: an ellipsis; a question mark. The questions do eventually arise. What narratives do we construct in response to catastrophe? What are the relative ethical considerations and the political outcomes? How do we navigate the tensions between public instances of catastrophe and personal expressions of the trauma associated? How are words and images used to express/contain disaster of such scale?

While the media is usually the arbiter determining the initial form of an event’s representation, it is the various formations of narrative which thereafter become central to representing disaster in a manner which engenders meaning. This issue of Social Alternatives aims to explore those narratives and the tensions they express. The scholarly papers and short prose collected here under the theme of ‘Disaster Dialogues’ demonstrate the diversity of narratives—both private and public—we create in response to catastrophe.

Responding to ‘Lost and Found’, an exhibition of personal photographs salvaged from debris following the March 2011 Japanese earthquake and consequent tsunami, Anne Collett discusses the tensions and differences between viewing iconic photographs of public disaster and private photographs taken pre-disaster; photographs which capture memory, community, and that which has become irrevocably ‘lost’.

In my own paper, I explore the use of photography and comic illustration in two illustrated books which seek to represent personal trauma experienced during and after the World Trade Centre attacks of 11 September 2001. In analysing their combinations of word and image, this paper argues that Jonathan Safran Foer (Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close) and Art Spiegelman (In the Shadow of No Towers) create narrative ‘spaces’ which provide a mediated authentication of such trauma.

Continuing the focus on 9/11, Kate Wilson explores poetic elegy and ‘mediatised’ experiences of mass death in relation to Simon Armitage’s Out of the Blue, a written elegy which originated from a television documentary of the same title broadcast on the fifth anniversary of 9/11. Wilson discusses Armitage’s poem as an exemplar of how contemporary elegy emphasises our ‘mediatised’ experience of public catastrophe, while using this experience as a means to engender meaning.

Lesley Hawkes reflects on literary tourism and how it has been used to ‘re-imagine’ the Somerset region in the United Kingdom following the 2001 foot and mouth epidemic; a catastrophe which saw the widespread destruction of livestock and communities, and the creation of a negative perception of the area. Hawkes walks in the steps of Romantic poetry along the Coleridge Way Walk and considers the apparent transformation of the region’s image.

Turning to the 2011 Queensland floods, Rose Williamson considers the rhetorical dimensions of the then Premier...
Anna Bligh’s ‘North of the Border’ speech in which Bligh appealed to Queensland residents by way of a ‘narrative of resilience’ and heroism, a common rhetorical practice employed by political leaders post-disaster. Williamson observes this commonality and interrogates Bligh’s application of the ‘Queenslander’ archetype.

Returning to images of the 2011 Japanese earthquake and the resultant Fukushima Daiichi nuclear catastrophe, Upendra Choudhury provides an overview of India’s nuclear programme, the formation of anti-nuclear groups, and the impact of the Fukushima Daiichi disaster in reinforcing anti-nuclear sentiment.

Madeleine Rowland discusses community division and the influence of media discourse in attributing blame for the 2003 Canberra firestorm and the 2011 Mitchell chemical explosion. Concerned about the role the media plays in society’s understanding and perceptions of disaster, Rowland argues that the emotionally driven blame attributed to the emergency services negates more constructive discussion regarding disaster cause and prevention.

These scholarly papers are interleaved with short prose by Deborah de Groot (‘Letters, and the addition or subtraction thereof’), Amy Mackelden and Laura Tansley (‘Black Out’), and Sandra Arnold (‘Moments of Magnitude’). These stories seek to express the voices of disaster; disaster as past, present, and as potential event. Overall, this issue of Social Alternatives aims to blend the personal with the public, the poetic with the political, and to form a dialogue between its readers regarding the representation of catastrophe in word and image.

DAD

my grandma used to be a doctor
she believes in a healthful equilibrium:
oranges are cool and mandarins are hot
too much of one will throw out your body's balance
this doesn't matter because both are boring
but if you ever eat a persimmon, you can forget about other fruit
persimmons are cold. but lychees are warm, so it's okay
because I love both, though not together.

Dad used to be a doctor, too. now he moves furniture.
it's not fair but it still surprises me how a loss of status
draws more sympathy than lack.
Dad operated on burns. and he is cold, like I learned to be hard
and loved him best when he left me alone.
The closest we’ve been is riding in the same car
speaking only through changing the stereo.

the first time Dad helped me with words was unintentional:
at age two I started performing spoken word,
because international phone calls were too expensive
so I recited nursery rhymes on tape to send with Mum's letters

Mum used to be a teacher. sometimes she still is.
she taught me to ride a bike by holding the back for weeks
Dad just threw me in a pool so i’m still scared of any water
that isn't frozen. when he dropped me into a new language
I fared a little better. but necessity is different to fear
and I’m learned at hating what I'm no good at.

I used to be good at maths. I liked to be correct
but then I found I liked ambivalence more.
Stories have a resonance that accuracy
can’t match. I used to believe in God.
Now I believe all stories are true.

Dad believes in science, but especially in essence.
For example: that Chinese people are not creative
but good at maths. That this is, regardless of
what their fathers value. I believe people are determined
but rarely deliberately. But then my Dad is learned
in the worth of things, like how a degree is depreciated
by migration. Being correct is some protection
from matters of taste, from the connoisseur's
discriminating eye.

He loves me like salt loves the wound
like fire loves steel
and I’m mostly proud of the weapon he's made.
I love him by fighting
anyone else so wrong I wouldn't bother.
Otherwise we speak through my mother.

The best thing he ever did is the same as Australia:
made possible the sister who reset the meaning of things.
We both love her, without agent or instrument.
as if it's a verb and not a situation.

KORALY DIMITRIADIS,
EAST BRUNSWICK, VICTORIA

Juliana Qian,
Footscray, Victoria
‘Lost and Found’: The memory salvage project of 3/11 (Tōhoku, Japan)

ANNE COLLETT

Taking ‘The Memory Salvage Project’ and associated exhibition of photographs, ‘Lost and Found’, as its focus, this essay explores the purpose and meaning of personal photographs salvaged from the debris of the Tōhoku (or Great East Japan) earthquake and tsunami of March 2011. The essay discusses the photos’ relationship to memory and to community. It also compares their capacity to affect the viewer with ‘the usual’ disaster photos that are replicated from one disaster to the next in a variety of news media. The essay considers how these very different photos (of people and places pre- rather than post- disaster) elicit a different response from the viewer.

‘We have lost our memories’

When individuals are asked what it is they would choose to save from a home threatened by fire or flood, the response has become a commonplace—‘my photos’ or ‘the photo album/s’—not a wallet, jewellery, passport, work of art, childhood teddy bear or other item of sentimental value, but photos. Photographs are of course items of sentimental value, but they are also much more than that. What is it exactly that would be lost if the personal photographic record of an individual’s life were lost at a point in that life’s trajectory? Would the past up to that point, and the individual’s relationship to that past, disappear? Would the individual lose something of themselves that is unrecoverable? And if so, what exactly would they lose? Reflecting on the loss of family photographs, a survivor of the March 2011 Tōhoku (or Great East Japan) earthquake and tsunami observed, ‘we have lost our memories’.

The essay that follows is in part a consideration of what these words might mean in the context of a catastrophe in which many thousands of lives were lost, and much of the photographic record of those lives, was also lost. Much has been written and theorised on the nature and meaning of photography—its relationship to history, memory, modernity and identity. But in this essay I want to think about the meaning of an extraordinary photographic project (‘The Memory Salvage Project’) and exhibition (‘Lost and Found’) associated with the disaster of March 2011; and as part of that inquiry, I want to consider personal photographs in relation to the idea and practice of community. I would like in fact to ask a different, although related, set of questions about that loss of an individual’s photographs: what is lost to others, and in particular, to those who have relationship, real or imagined, to that individual? And how does this loss, the knowledge of the loss and the actuality of the loss, impact on the individual and on their community (in the present and the future)?

The Memory Salvage Project

The day after I was offered a 10-month academic post at the University of Tokyo, I watched a black wave roll across my TV screen and into my living room. At least it felt like that. I watched footage of the devastating tsunami of 11 March 2011 with a peculiarly personal horror, given I had already begun to imagine myself in Japan, and indeed, living not far from the disaster-struck area. The wave surged over the sea wall, up the beach and through the town taking boats, cars, trucks, houses, people with it, effortlessly. Its power was awe-inspiring (in the original sense of striking terror). I saw tiny figures pulled onto rooftops and struggling up hills. Could I see people’s faces behind car windows? No, I don’t think so. But I certainly imagined them.

Later when something like the full effect of the quake, tsunami and associated nuclear catastrophe was made apparent, I was asked by friends if I still intended to take up the position. Perhaps oddly, I had not considered not going; and on reflection, I think this was because the opportunity to be in Japan at a time of crisis seemed just that, an opportunity—to better understand people who would need to summon all in their power, as individuals, as communities and as a nation, to cope with the catastrophe. My attitude may seem callous, but on the other hand it might be viewed as one that offered support to the Japanese people, even if in a very minor way, by not backing out of a contract made in better times. This may prove to have been a piece of prideful foolishness, given the likelihood of radiation contamination in water, food and air despite government assurances to the contrary, but I can live with it (I hope not die from it).
All experiences of a radically different nature from the norm change your trajectory, your perspective, your sense of who you are and what the world is. For me, the experience of living and working in Japan has been a positive one; but for those most immediately affected by the catastrophic events of 11 March, it is hard, if not impossible, to search and find the positive. And yet, people do. Where families and communities are broken, even lost entirely, new connections are made and work towards rebuilding begins almost immediately, as exemplified by communities in the Tōhoku region.

Early media reports on the day of the disaster had no sense of its magnitude. Martin Fackler of The New York Times writes of thousands of homes destroyed, roads impassable, public transport at a standstill, power and cell-phones down, three trains missing; and a death toll ‘in the hundreds’, with Japanese news media quoting government officials as saying that ‘it would almost certainly rise to more than 1,000’ (NYT 11 March 2011, online). We now know that the magnitude nine earthquake was the most powerful known earthquake to hit Japan (and the fifth most powerful in the world since recording began in 1900). It triggered tsunami waves that reached 40.5 metres in Miyako (Tōhoku) and travelled 10 kilometres inland in the Sendai area. The tsunami caused level 7 meltdowns in three reactors of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, necessitating the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of residents. The ‘triple disaster’ resulted in more than 15,000 deaths, 27,000 people were injured and over 3,000 people are still missing. As many as 100,000 children were uprooted from their homes, and 1,580 lost either one or both parents. One million buildings collapsed, partially collapsed or were badly damaged. Of those, many were people’s homes, homes to which return will be a long time coming, and in areas affected by nuclear fallout, there may be no return. The full extent of nuclear contamination is still unclear; and the aftershocks—geological but also economic, social, political and psychological—have continued well into this year, and will continue for an unspecified period of time into the future. 3/11 as it has come to be known, was and still is, a disaster of massive proportion, and one of which then Prime Minister Naota Kan said, ‘In the 65 years after the end of World War II, this is the toughest and the most difficult crisis for Japan’.

Almost immediately upon receipt of news of the disaster, rescue teams and experts on disaster management came to Japan’s assistance from all over the world. Evacuation, temporary housing and food for survivors was organised, to Japan’s assistance from all over the world. Evacuation, rescue teams and experts on disaster management came almost immediately, as exampled by communities in the Tōhoku region.

My use of the phrase ‘the usual image’ is not intended to be glib about or disrespectful of those pictured in the photographs, but rather it indicates the degree to which photos of disasters tend to replicate previous disaster photos and themselves, thereby creating a tiredness in the intended observer, and a replication of a requisite emotion that feels emptied out or false (that is from the point of view of the observer who sits outside the tragedy). Faced with the ‘disaster photo’ yet again, I become not unlike a disaster tourist of Jon Mitchell’s poem, ‘tourists’:

the father bullies into
place his sleepy wife
and daughter before
balancing his camera
atop a top-turned taxi
and racing the flash
for a family photograph
among the ruins of somebody else’s life
the tourists have arrived in tsunami country.

(March and After 2011)

I’m not actually taking the disaster photo, but my act of looking at the photo participates in the original act of taking the photo; and it may be a ‘well intentioned’ photograph taken for news reportage rather than a gratuitous act of ‘tourism’, but nevertheless I feel uncomfortable with this kind of voyeurism. I am in effect the eye behind the camera that watches the weeping woman amongst the debris, which makes me complicit in the action of taking the photograph and exhibiting her distress for all to see and consume, without permission of the woman herself. The weeping woman? Who is she?

On the anniversary of the Tōhoku disaster, the cutline for David McNeil’s piece in The Independent reads: ‘First the earthquake, then the tsunami, and a nuclear crisis. But as David McNeil found, millions of people are still struggling with the hardest part of all: picking up the pieces’ (10 March 2012). The article is accompanied by a photograph of a
woman who ‘sits and weeps in the remains of the city of Natori …’. Her life and the city of Natori (as demonstrated in the photograph) are ‘in pieces’. I don’t know who the weeping woman is; and I don’t want to discuss the ethics of photographic voyeurism any further in this article. What I want to do at this point is talk about a curious thing that happened in the wreckage of cities and towns like Natori, where a different kind of ‘picking up the pieces’ occurred and to which a different kind of photo from the usual was attached. Tomoki Matsumoto, manager of the Akaaka gallery where these different photos were displayed, is reported as saying, ‘Many photographers took many photos of debris and other things in the tsunami-ravaged areas, but our photos show another side of the truth about the disaster’ (Matsutani 2012).

At the exhibition of these photos posters were displayed (back and front) on one of the walls. One side of each poster reproduced a number of photos from the exhibition, and on the other side large black text (in Japanese and English translation) explained the project, its genesis, development and hoped-for outcomes. The posters were on sale for JY1,000 (AUD10) each, and buyers were informed that 70% of the proceeds would go toward assisting people in temporary housing. The text of one of those posters reads:

As the search for survivors ended and attention turned to the clean up mission, Self-Defense forces, firemen, and policemen who were in Tohoku to help survivors began to pick up photos they found in the mud, and to store them in an elementary school gymnasium. They were not asked to do it, nor did they have a clear sense of their objective. Perhaps they were just desperate to find something in the rubble that could be saved [see figure 1].

I don't know if the retrieval and storage of photographs on this kind of scale is unprecedented in the history of disasters, but it was a curious phenomenon. Unpremeditated and lacking an organised structure, it might have been inspired by the survivors who searched the rubble to find anything of their former lives. Certainly it suggests a shared recognition of the sentimental value attached to personal photographs. The unnamed author of the poster text informs viewers that:

The images varied in condition, from relatively clean to damaged beyond recognition. Some of the photographs you see here were so badly eroded by bacteria that they could not be cleaned, and therefore could not be returned. But each of these images, kept in drawers or cabinet, was someone’s treasured memory until that fateful day.

Two months after the earthquake, a group calling itself ‘The Memory Salvage Project’ was formed to sort, clean, digitise and assist with identification and return of the photos to their owners. Photographer, Munemasa Takahashi, assisted by a team of more than 500 volunteers, offered to head the operation in the city of Yamamoto (Miyagi Prefecture). Of 30,000 photos, 19,200 were returned and 1,500 of those remaining were selected by Takahashi for the exhibition. The text on one of the posters details statistics of Yamato town’s loss: 50% of the town was flooded by the tsunami which swept away the harbour, houses, cars, trains and people; 614 people died out of the town’s population of 16,700. Of these statistics, the unnamed author remarks: ‘I’ve come to realize that just telling the facts in words are not enough. Numbers do not tell what it is like to lose their loved ones all of a sudden, and not being able to see them again to tell a joke or even to apologize or just to say thank you anymore’. This says something more than the old adage that ‘a picture says a thousand words’; rather it suggests that the exhibition of ‘Family Photos Swept by 3/11 East Japan Tsunami’ is an attempt to express loss and love through the bringing together of the photographs themselves, and through the caring act of rescue and restitution. The cleaning and presentation of the photographs is also, for me, reminiscent of the washing, dressing and display of the dead body, and attendant funeral rites.

The exhibition of photographs and the actions involved in every step of its creation and its reception is a tribute, a memorial and an attempt to repair a severely damaged community. I would like now to discuss the exhibition: the photos themselves—individually and collectively, what they might be understood to represent, the meanings that might be attached to them, and their impact or affective capacity.

The Exhibition: ‘Lost and Found’

On Thursday 26 January 2012, the front page of The Japan Times featured a piece titled, ‘Photos found in tsunami aftermath displayed’, accompanied by a photograph of a woman peering very closely at a wall
of rectangular objects, set in close juxtaposition to each other [see figure 2]. The newspaper photograph is printed in colour, but the colours of this image are mainly white, shades of grey with the occasional splash of yellow and a faded red. It is an image that would be very hard to decipher, if it weren't for the title and attached caption that identifies the rectangular shapes as photographs. A brief outline of the project that lay behind the exhibition followed, and I was sufficiently intrigued to search out the gallery (no easy task in Tokyo).

What did I find in this exhibition of ‘the lost?’ The newspaper photograph did not prepare me for what I would see, or rather, not see. Part of me, rather bizarrely given I had read the newspaper article, still expected to see ‘disaster photos’. What I saw on entering the gallery space was a full wall, from ceiling to floor, of personal family photographs [see figure 3]: photographs pre-disaster; photographs that were, in one sense, of no interest to me, given the people photographed had no connection with me. I knew nothing of them or their lives. As you would expect these were photographs of weddings [see figure 4] and family festivities; children at school, at play, at home; family groups; work mates and the work place; places visited, scenes encountered etc.

What was unexpected was the degree to which I could not actually see anything much. I, along with everyone else, had to peer very closely at the photos in an attempt to make out ‘something’—and by ‘peer very closely’ I mean literally put my nose to within a millimetre of the wall. Some photographs revealed bits of people and things with clarity; but many were so badly damaged they reminded me of the blotting paper pictures we created as children by placing the paper on the surface of water on which oil had been dropped.

‘What are we supposed to feel and think when we look at these pictures?’ asks the author of the poster text:

Should we be happy that they were found at all, or sad that they will never be returned to their owners?

Or should we simply mourn for the dead? The more I struggle to find answers, the more missing pieces I seem to find. But without looking at these pictures, I don’t think we’ll see anything at all.

‘Without looking at these pictures, I don’t think we’ll see anything at all’: an interesting statement, particularly given the proliferation of disaster photos that surely attempt to show us something. It would seem that the author of the poster is claiming that we require some kind of aid that will allow us to see, but that the aid offered by disaster photography, or by the proliferation of words, is no aid at all. What is it that we see when we look at this collection of damaged personal photos? What I saw was a collective portrait of the lives lost to a community, before the disaster itself and the hype of media reportage rendered those lives somehow unreal—outside the range of ordinary day-to-day experience. The photographs bring those people back into the realm of the living and the everyday. Perhaps this is ‘the other side of the truth’ that the photographs show: disasters like 3/11 take us into the realm of the
unimaginable and the surreal, but ultimately that unreal world is and must be understood and incorporated back into the real and ordinary. The distance created between victim and survivor, survivor and onlooker, needs to be bridged. Interestingly, the act of having to peer so closely at the photographs brings with it a physical intimacy, perhaps a bridging of distance and difference; although this may be taking the idea too far.

How did I feel as I viewed the exhibition, or as I reflected upon it afterwards? What I did not feel was any sense of discomfort, and I’m not entirely sure why, perhaps I should have. But I didn’t feel I had been positioned as a voyeur, but rather as a sympathetic onlooker. I was in fact brought to tears, a marked difference to a tendency to either apathy or anger when faced with the usual disaster photos; perhaps because the strange was thereby made familiar. The people struck by disaster were people ‘like me’, people whose lives were recorded in the everyday and the special event of ‘family photos’, just as mine was. These damaged photographs however, could be understood as ‘disaster photos’ of a different kind—not only in the sense that they had undergone disaster themselves, but in the image thereby produced: the damaged photos appear to be photographic images of tsunami, fire, earthquake—they reflect both the damage done (to people, landscape and buildings) and the actual force of the damage. It is a curious effect [see figures 5 and 6]. ‘Unlike any other visual image’, explains John Berger in concert with Susan Sontag5, ‘a photograph is not a rendering, an imitation or an interpretation of its subject, but actually a trace of it’ (1980: 50). What would Berger make of the extraordinary phenomenon of these photographs? ‘Some people say’, comments the gallery manager, Matsumoto, ‘these photos are beautiful’; they are beautiful, strange and revelatory.

It was as I was leaving the exhibition space, that I heard the words ‘we have lost our memories’, and saw a woman’s image briefly as I glanced at the video screen set up in a corner of the gallery. It is to her words that I wish to return in my closing discussion.

‘We have lost our memories’

The phrase ‘we have lost our memories’ might not only allude to the loss of photographs as records of events, people, places, things, that either become memories or act as mnemonic devices, or photographs as the means by which the past and our place within it can be reconstructed, again and again. In other words, it might not only allude to the loss of the material object and its associated purpose or function; it might also allude to the loss of the people themselves of whom the photos were taken, or who took the photos, or those, most importantly, who could make sense of the photos—those who could read and tell the story of the images, that is, make the link between people, place and time. This is not just a question of ‘making sense’ but one of maintaining community across generations and through time. It is easy to forget that photographs will always tell a story, but it may not be a story that has any basis in lived ‘truth’.

I was made aware of this recently when a set of photos, collected in a biscuit tin now rusted with age, were retrieved from my great-aunt’s effects and given to me. But I did not recognise any of the people in the photos and had no immediate way of making sense of what I was seeing. The photos meant nothing to me, except as items of sentimental value (being valued by my great-aunt and my great-aunt being of value to me), because I had no means of de-coding them. How could I place the people I saw in the photos in relation to my own life or my great-aunt’s life without a code? Occasionally a name and date scribbled on the back of a photo might be deciphered—‘Joan, Easter’ or ‘Bob, 1928’. The scribble might provide me with a starting point from which to ask questions, but
what I really needed was an interpreter—a family member or a family friend from an earlier generation, who knew or knew of the people, their relationships, their stories, their lives.

Not only were many members of Tōhoku communities ‘lost’, many of those lost were elderly, taking with them the memories of those communities. ‘We have lost our memories’ is a phrase that although at first might have seemed obvious or banal, on consideration takes on a depth and significance that is devastating. Despite the efforts of ‘The Memory Salvage Project’ to find that which has been lost, there may be no recovery, of memory or of original communities. This is grim, perhaps too grim, for as recently pointed out to me, those survivors (both young and old) who visit the exhibition will surely be reminded of ‘life before’ and carry that memory with them into the future of newly constituted communities. A photographic exhibition, because it is a public exhibition, and one in this case that attracted many survivors in search of a record of lives lost, is so much more than my great aunt’s rusty tin of photos.

References


Notes
1. Recent scholarly work that addresses these relationships include Lisa Saltzman and Eric Rosenberg, Trauma & Visuality in Modernity (EBSCOhost, Interfaces Series, 02/2006); Sandra Phillips and Simon Baker, Exposed: Voyeurism, Surveillance, and the Camera Since 1870 (Yale UP and The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2010) and Peggy Phelan, Jennifer Blessing and Nat Trotman, Haunted: Contemporary Photography, Video and Performance (Guggenheim Museum, 2010).

Life Cycle

and millions of our kin starve an exit out of an existence we no longer truly see

we fatten beasts of burden for our dinner plate but the chill and goosebumps of conspiracy brands a burning legacy on any human skin

a variant of concrete cancer has colonised the solitary headstone of mankind’s mass grave

our last degustation supper from a while ago still undigested

Kathryn Yuen, Hurstville Grove, NSW
Disaster Dialogues: Word, image and the effective/ethical spaces of illustrated books

ROSS WATKINS

Subsequent to the events of 11 September 2001 both Jonathan Safran Foer’s illustrated fiction novel Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close (2005) and Art Spiegelman’s graphic novel In the Shadow of No Towers (2004) attracted substantial criticism for their use of images to represent private responses to public catastrophe—particularly their use of images depicting falling bodies. With reference to Foer and Spiegelman’s texts as exemplars, this paper investigates the illustrated book as a narrative form able to articulate the experience or witnessing of disaster via the creation of spaces (effective, ethical) between words and images. Such spaces are not only fundamental to the functionality of illustrated books, the ‘closure’ required by the reader in the act of interpreting these spaces is central to representing the ‘unrepresentable’ resultant from public instances of disaster.

Subsequent to the events of 11 September 2001 both Jonathan Safran Foer’s fiction novel Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close (2005) and Art Spiegelman’s graphic novel In the Shadow of No Towers (2004) attracted substantial criticism for their use of images to represent private responses to public catastrophe—particularly their use of images depicting falling bodies. While this paper does not intend to engage with the criticism levelled at each, such criticism invites an investigation into how Foer’s combination of words and photographic imagery, and Spiegelman’s combination of words and his renowned comic style construct textual dialogues which seek to make meaning from the events. As Stock and Stott suggest in Representing the Unimaginable: Narratives of Disaster: ‘finding words and images to represent the unrepresentable, to communicate the unimaginable, is both a psychological necessity and a moral duty’ (2007: 10). In light of the evident paradox, this paper explores the illustrated book as a narrative form able to articulate the experience or witnessing of disaster via the creation of spaces (effective, ethical) between words and images. Such spaces are not only fundamental to the functionality of illustrated books, the ‘closure’ required by the reader in the act of interpreting these spaces is central to representing the ‘unrepresentable’.

Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close and the effective/ethical spaces of illustrated books

When nine-year-old Oskar in Jonathan Safran Foer’s Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close pulls his journal (Stuff That Happened to Me) from ‘the space between the bed and the wall’ and flips through its pages, the reader is forced to flip through a series of images assumed to be consistent with Oskar’s journal. These include (in sequence): a peg-board of uncut keys, Stephen Hawking’s face on a camcorder screen, Lawrence Olivier as Hamlet holding aloft poor Yorick, a paper airplane blueprint, copulating turtles, a tin of semi-precious stones, an object falling beside a skyscraper, Central Park cut from an aerial view of Manhattan, a blurry close-up of that falling object, the word ‘Purple’ written in green texta, Lleyton Hewitt in victory pose, Oskar’s fingerprints on Police record, Neanderthal man and woman walking in embrace, and journalists crowding Jean-Pierre Haigneré in his astro suit (2005: 52-67). ‘After forever’, Oskar’s narration continues, ‘I got out of bed and went to the closet where I kept the phone. I hadn’t taken it out since the worst day. It just wasn’t possible’ (2005: 68).

How does a reader construct meaning from Foer’s combination of words and images? And in what way have those images ‘happened’ to Oskar? Although the textual dialogues between each of the images and the adjoining words may be tenuous at first glance, Foer’s selection and sequencing of word and image purposefully creates a space in which readers are invited to construct their own interpretive meaning; meaning made with respect to both the narrative context and the context which the narrative has been written out of and into: New York on 11 September 2001 (Oskar’s ‘worst day’). These images ‘happened’ to Oskar in the way that any photograph has the potential to ‘confirm’ reality and experience (Sontag 1989: 24), just as an event witnessed by the eye has the potential to become ‘framed’ in its remembering, even if not always accurately. As is commonly argued in relation to the ubiquity of images of catastrophe available across
multiple media platforms, such imagery—especially imagery which becomes iconic to the event—has the potential to annihilate the real event and come to replace it (Sontag 1989: 24; Foote 2007: 133; Jameson 2002: 299).

If we are to comprehend Foer’s sequencing of word and image the language of comics is appropriately transferable, as the concepts relative to comics are seminal to an understanding of illustrated books in general. In relation to the sequence of images in Oskar’s journal the reader becomes an immediate collaborator in forming connections between those images and in those connections meaning is accrued. As Lefevre points out, when ‘various pictures are grouped together in a series or sequence, the viewer or reader is prompted to look for relations among them’, and ‘interpreters will almost automatically look for some minimal coherence or narrative’ (2011: 26). The coherence or narrative interpreted, he argues, is dependent on the reader’s application of ‘external schemata’ to the narrative, in combination with an ‘internal schemata’ (the parameters of story logic) established within the narrative (Lefevre 2000: np). For example, in the case of Oskar’s journal and the context of ‘the worst day’, I form multiple thematic intertextual correlations between the image of Lawrence Olivier as Hamlet regarding Yorick’s skull as a memento mori, the airplane blueprint ambiguously evocative of both a child’s craft and the craft involved in executing the twin towers attack, and the iconography of a body falling from a World Trade Centre tower—the identification of which is wholly dependent on my own knowledge and memory of viewing the event on television and in print.

Whitlock also discusses the mechanics of comics and explores the effect of those mechanics and the themes engendered, emphasising ‘the potential in comics for distinctive mediations of trauma and cultural difference and for innovations that open up some new ways of thinking about the ethics of life narrative as it moves across cultures’ (2006: 969). Whitlock attributes this mediation to the ‘universality’ achieved in comics through vocabulary and grammar, but most importantly to illustrative style: as McCloud theorises, cartoon styles are more iconic due to their simplified forms and are therefore ‘universal’, as opposed to representational styles which narrow the reader’s ability to identify with characters due to the exclusive detail of representational illustration (McCloud 2000: 31, 46, 49). This is a pertinent point when considering comics such as Art Spiegelman’s In the Shadow of No Towers (2004), which unites a cartoon style with iconic images of traumatic violence—more on this later. In addition to style, however, I propose that the effective space generated from word and image combinations contains the most significant potential for illustrated books to mediate trauma and difference in any guise. This theoretical approach broadens the concept to all combinations of word and image, and to the multitude of styles, layouts and formats an author/illustrator may devise. In this way, the conditions of this effective and arguably ethical space may be applied to any illustrated book for any readership, from picture books to graphic novels.

Similar to what McCloud calls ‘closure’ in reference to sequentiality in comics—what is required of the reader in the act of interpreting that which occurs in the (usually) white space between sequenced illustrations, the ‘gutter’ between comics panels (McCloud 2000: 66)—the space or narrative gap opened between reader and text, writer and text, and word and image, becomes an active site of meaning-making dependent on context and subjectivities (Watkins 2009: 7). As Whitlock points out, interpretation—closing the space—involves ‘observing the parts but perceiving the whole’ (2006: 969), where the reader becomes an essential collaborator in making the text ‘work’; that is, the text is understood according to the reader’s negotiation of tensions and harmonies between visual and verbal signifiers. This is precisely where and how a reader of illustrated books which attempt to represent the ‘unrepresentable’ become complicit in ethical considerations of ‘looking’, understanding, and responding to the visual suffering of others. Furthermore, the nature of the reader’s complicity is dependent on the author/illustrator’s intentions and ability to engage ‘perception’, in addition to the ethical thinking applied by the reader: how I ethically regard my aforementioned thematic correlations within Foer’s sequence is a matter of subjectivity. These ethics of perception facilitate the potential for illustrated books to take on broader social, cultural, political or ecological significance, depending on the construction of themes the text addresses.

In the Shadow of No Towers and images of falling bodies

The power and impact of images of falling have become the focus of much academic discussion, none more so than Richard Drew’s iconic ‘Falling Man’—an image that, according to Fitzpatrick, ‘epitomises the tragedy and horror of the September 11 catastrophe in Western cultural memory’ (2007: 85). With respect to Judith Butler’s Precarious Life, Fitzpatrick exemplifies and furthers Butler’s ideas on mourning in relation to September 11 by discussing the ‘ethics of mutual vulnerability’ raised by Drew’s photograph, identifying the ‘aesthetic qualities’ which determine and ‘alter the perception of the falling subject’s potential mortality and make it impossible to perceive the vulnerability of the subject in the image’, thereby contributing to what she refers to as an ‘ethical paradigm’ dependent on the nonfiction actuality of the image (2007: 85-87). Such ‘mutual vulnerability’ inherent in images of falling are also central to Jonathan Safran Foer’s Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close (2005) and Art Spiegelman’s In the Shadow of No Towers (2004).
To understand the point of catastrophe within Drew's 'Falling Man', Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida* (1982) is useful. In this text, Barthes discusses the catastrophe inherent in photography in relation to Alexander Gardner’s 1865 portrait of Lewis Payne prior to his hanging. ‘By giving me the absolute past of the pose (aorist), the photograph tells me death in the future’, Barthes writes, before adding: ‘Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe’ (1982: 96). The aorist element of photography is the seat of its catastrophe, located within the discrepancy between at least three readings of the image: regarding the past event duplicated in its happening, the known/unknown future outcome of the event depicted, and the negotiation of the reader’s past and present contextual knowledge and experience generated in response to the image. In the case of Drew's photograph, the subject's catastrophe is located in the discrepancy between acknowledging the image's authenticity (this did happen, he did fall), the logical—gravitational—outcome of the fall, and the comprehension of these readings in relation to the viewer’s thought, experience and memory of the photograph's context or otherwise which the image invokes. As Fitzpatrick states in relation to the same comparison: ‘The men in these photographs are thus doubly condemned: first to the actual deaths to which these photographs are preludes; second to “live” for eternity in the photographic emulsion’ (2007: 90). Both Foer and Spiegelman make use of this catastrophe and the potential for vulnerability it engenders in their readers.

As aforementioned, simplified cartoon-style comic illustrations create an iconic or ‘universal’ form of identification, a concept Spiegelman’s *In the Shadow of No Towers* unites with the iconography of falling. The result is a kind of double iconography which, Versluys suggests, critics have found narcissistic (2006: 981-982) in both content and in the apparent parody inherent in his style which, considering the highly precarious subject matter, could be readily interpreted as insincere. Rejecting the claim that the text is not about September 11 but about Spiegelman himself, Versluys argues that the text ‘zooms in on the mental processes of the autobiographical narrator-protagonist’ as ‘the record of a psychologically wounded survivor, trying to make sense of an event that overwhelmed and destroyed all his normal psychic defenses [sic]’. This, Versluys points out, is precisely what associates the text—about the trauma and memory—with the event (2006: 982). In this highly self-reflexive text, Spiegelman makes evident the inadequacy of words and images to express trauma, which is typically characterised by silence—‘no language, no discursive practice can ever be adequate in rendering it’—constructing what Versluys calls a ‘mediated authentication’ of trauma (2006: 988, original emphasis). By drawing attention to the artificial surface of the text, Spiegelman is effectively drawing his reader into thinking critically about the limits of text to convey his themes, thereby engaging the reader’s own memory, experience and knowledge to re-construct, to remember. In this regard, he is making use of notions of ‘collective memory’, which Sontag describes as a fiction which iconographically encapsulates what should be thought of public instances of catastrophe—‘What is called collective memory is not a remembering but a stipulating: that this is important, and this is the story about how it happened, with the pictures that lock the story in our minds’ (2004: 76-77).

Spiegelman’s intentions are most evident in two comic strips: in ‘Comic 2’, where Spiegelman’s autobiographical avatar laments the ‘albatross’ around his neck and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in four panels, the panels progressively turn on their axes to become three-dimensional boxes, the last resembling a smoking tower. As Chute points out: ‘This strip shows how the medium of comics uses the space of the page to narrativize’ (2007: 236), with panels equalling boxes and boxes equaling the towers; the comic itself becomes a totem of Spiegelman’s trauma and melancholy. The second example is ‘Comic 6’, which features Spiegelman tumbling through five movements as the falling man against the backdrop of a burning tower. The captions read: ‘He keeps falling through the holes in his head’, and, ‘He is haunted now by the images he didn’t witness … images of people tumbling to the streets below …’ Spiegelman’s visual and verbal objectification of himself, coupled with the text’s intertextual allusions to seminal comic serials (such as Katzenjammer Kids, The Yellow Kid, and Krazy Kat—these and others are illustrated in falling poses on the front cover) generates a highly complex self-reflexive space between word and image which demands of the reader equal complexity in interpreting such sequences of signifiers. By forcing the reader to shift across, out of and back into the narrative’s textual surfaces, Spiegelman is constructing spaces which are intensely ethical due to the nature of the narrative’s content and the responses it intends to engender in its readership via ‘closure’.

In Foer’s *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, young Oskar seeks closure regarding the death of his father in the twin towers collapse, and in the closing words of the novel he again reaches for his journal (Stuff That Happened to Me), now entirely full, rips the sequenced pictures of a body falling from one of the towers out of the journal and reverses their order, ‘so the last one was first, and the first was last’ (2005: 325). What follows is a flipbook series of the falling body ascending, a sequence which the reader is forced to interpret in relation to words and images, while considering the catastrophe of its subject. For Oskar, the reversal of the falling body serves to emphasise ‘not only the radical inaccessibility of the past, but also the impossibility of closure’ (Codde 2007: np).
Closure

Myths, Stock and Stott state, ‘or, less grandiloquently, texts that have a wide and pervasive cultural influence... account for what most of us think we know about disasters’ (2007: 10). As I have argued elsewhere (Watkins 2009, 2012), the illustrated book is a narrative form offering rich and complex literacies that are often polemic in content—and poignantly so, due to its largely underestimated and unassuming medium which certainly has the ability to achieve ‘pervasive cultural influence’. The ethics of the effective spaces created by sophisticated combinations of visual and verbal texts are central to this influence, requiring the reader to negotiate textual harmonies and tensions that engage personal knowledge, experience and memory in relation to public instances of disaster. Myth, narrative or story telling: regardless of the nomenclature it is these formations of expression—illustrated books in particular—which not only account for what we know about disasters, such representations also allow us the potential to reveal something meaningful from catastrophe. As disasters continue to impact humanity, and as images of such trauma continue to be witnessed, illustrated books will continue to provide a mediated authentication of such experience and memory.

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You understand their language; understand that ‘traum’ is the German word for ‘dream’.

You value your dream holiday, a ‘traum’ in time and place. You gain rosary understanding of cathedrals and culture.

What you don’t understand is Dachau.

Dachau. Where your ‘traum’ distorts to ‘trauma’ and your rosy dream warps to purple…

‘I am really purple’, you state with drunken authority to your portrait in the mirror. You know this because the towel on the floor is purple and your feet, merging in its folds, are the same colour. But it is night and, really, everything is grey. The towel, your feet; the grey of granular night. ‘In the daytime that towel is purple. So must my feet be. So must I be,’ you keep on, ‘it’s only logical.’

You grin stupidly at yourself, looking foreign in the mirror. Looking purple, and not only because it’s dark. The mirror is just a twelve-inch tile, stuck randomly to the wall of your confessional bathroom. And you are blurry and shrouded.

‘Christ,’ you say.

‘No such thing,’ your reflection smirks.

You steady yourself with a left-hand thud against the wall, studying your right hand as it grasps a green bottle by the neck and swigs it towards your mouth. You focus on the face watching you from the mirror. Too much guilt. Too much sickening stink of dust and powder; of holy frankincense and myrrh; of taste of ash and grape on your tongue.

‘Fuck.’ No profanity can do justice.

‘F…U…C…fucking K!’ you spell.

‘I heard that.’ Your image is catholically judgemental.

‘They’re only letters, just a herd of letters’, you retort.

Like cows, or human contusions; purple disciples of nothing, decaying under darkening skies.

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9/11 and the Mediatisation of Modern Elegy: Simon Armitage’s *Out of the Blue*

Kate Wilson

In this essay I will discuss how the prevalence of instances of mass death in the media has begun to influence poetic elegies, in terms of language, theme, and form. Through a close reading of Simon Armitage’s broadcast poem on 9/11, ‘Out of the Blue’, I will demonstrate that the media coverage of the event had a recognizable influence on his modes of expression. Furthermore, by emphasising the recent work of Stig Hjarvard, in which he outlines a comprehensive theory of ‘mediatisation’, I will suggest that this theory can also be applied usefully to the study of modern elegy. Using the work of contemporary literary scholars such as W.D. Shaw and David Kennedy, I will argue that Armitage’s poem utilises recognisable techniques from an elegiac legacy, but subverts and adapts these to reflect his ‘mediatised’ experience of loss. I will bring together the study of contemporary poetry and new media in order to form a new theory of modern elegies as ‘multimedia’ texts.

When there are so many we shall have to mourn, when grief has been made so public, and exposed to the critique of a whole epoch the frailty of our conscience and anguish, of whom shall we speak? (W.H. Auden 1940)

There has been a great deal of study devoted to poetic elegy by scholars focusing on its historical development, from its origins in seventh century Greece, where it engaged with themes as wide ranging as war, love and friendship (Kennedy 2007: 11), to the elegies of loss and mourning which we identify as characteristic of the genre today. However, there has been relatively little study centred on elegies of ‘mass death’ (Watkin 2004: 1). To clarify, when I use the term mass death, I am not merely writing about events where many die, but events—wars, natural disasters, terrorist attacks—that become globally significant due to media distribution.

The events of 11 September 2001 provide one of the most poignant examples of this kind of mediated event of mass death. Indeed, Baudrillard famously described it as ‘the absolute, irrevocable event’ (2002: 17), and there is little doubt that 9/11 acted as an important turning point for how contemporary writers represent loss, because of its significance as a media event unlike any other. Luger notes that ‘the events of 9/11, and their mediation, changed what it means to witness trauma and to write witness poetry’ (2010: 117). While elegists of 9/11 were undeniably influenced by their own mediated experiences of the tragedy, the relationship between the media and modern elegy seems even more deep-rooted than that. Hjarvard’s definition of ‘indirect mediatisation’ is particularly useful for the study of elegy: ‘Indirect mediatisation is when a given activity is increasingly influenced with respect to form, content, or organization by media agents, symbols or mechanisms’ (2008: 114). Through a close reading of Armitage’s poem *Out of the Blue* (2008), I wish to demonstrate that contemporary elegy has begun to undergo this process of mediatisation.

We have become more and more accustomed to real time reporting and multimedia news that is accessible long after the event due to mobile technologies and internet archives. This type of news dissemination is ‘relentless in its immediacy’ (Hoskins and O’Loughlin 2010: 23) and has changed the narrative structures we’re accustomed to working within. Critics have written extensively on elegy which works through ‘a narrative journey to grief and back’ (Kennedy 2007: 16), but I will argue that the prevalence of mass media creates a ‘chaotic’ (Hoskins and O’Loughlin 2010: 2) sense of time that prevents us from reading elegies of mass death in this way. Szymborska’s haunting poem *Photograph from September 11th*, in which the speaker describes their reaction to a photograph of people jumping from the burning towers demonstrates this when the poet speaker decides not to ‘add a last line’ (2005: 69) in order to prevent the victims from hitting the ground. This reveals the nature of our experience of these events; they are images which we can pause, rewind and replay at will, allowing us to relive, and even alter the moment of loss, or as Kennedy puts it: ‘news footage of 9/11 and 7/7’ negates any sense of sequential narrative linking past, present and future’ (2007: 33).
Additionally, the relationship between the poet and the dead is often different when examining elegies of mass death. Rather than the intimate portrait presented in iconic elegies such as Milton’s Lycidas, poets like Szymborska and Armitage maintain a sense of distance from the dead. It seems that intimacy is harder to convey when writing about loss on such a huge scale. This is evident when it comes to a key trope of elegy and mourning: naming of the lost. Derrida states that ‘a “true mourning” (if such there be) is the essence of the proper name’ (1982: 48). To elaborate, ‘the proper name remains’, though ‘the bearer of the name ... will never again answer to it’ (48). The proper name is merely the imprint, the last trace of the dead person. Following events of mass death, this process of naming becomes far more difficult due to the scale of the loss, and there seems to be an increasing inability to make sense of media narratives, as my reading of Armitage’s poem will indicate.

Out of the Blue (2006) follows the story of a British businessman trapped in the buildings, from his arrival at work in the morning to the aftermath of the disaster. The poem did not begin as a written elegy, rather it was a television documentary (2006) commissioned by Channel Five to be broadcast on the fifth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. As such, it is unadvisable to divorce the visual importance of this poem from its place as an elegy; it began as a media text, and this in itself is indicative of a shift in the forms modern elegies can take. As a piece of television, it incorporates live footage from the day, along with staged scenes inside a high rise building. This combination of fiction and reality reveals a desire to form an equally interesting contrast, with white walls and blank space acting as the backdrop for Sewell in the shots inside the building, the very antithesis of the visual importance of this poem from its place as an elegy; it began as a media text, and this in itself is indicative of a shift in the forms modern elegies can take. As a piece of television, it incorporates live footage from the day, along with staged scenes inside a high rise building. This combination of fiction and reality reveals a desire to form an equally interesting contrast, with white walls and blank space acting as the backdrop for Sewell in the shots inside the building, the very antithesis of the spectacular nature of events is played down in this minimalist choice for the set, serving both to represent the absence left after the event, and to highlight the distracting nature of dramatic news reporting. Even when Sewell is reciting section six—the section in which he refers to his colleagues by name—the office remains empty. Their absence becomes an effective means of visually articulating the losses of 9/11.

Indeed, Randall argues that the film has a ‘more marked elegiac tone and emphasises the complex temporality of the poem’ (2011: 85) more successfully than the version on the page, because the viewer can clearly see that the character is speaking posthumously. He goes on to claim that the film reveals the central theme of the poem, in a way the published poem cannot; ‘What becomes much clearer in the film is that the poem ... is commenting more on the footage of the WTC attacks themselves than, as seems more the case in the printed text, actively attempting to “go inside” the towers’ (2011: 85). However, Randall fails to consider the manner in which Armitage utilises language and motifs from the media throughout the text of his poem. The poem no longer merely represents a mediated experience of 9/11, but builds upon recognised media footage, language and structures, to create a mediatised text, something which will become clearer with a close reading of the published text.

From the outset of the poem, Armitage establishes a clear distance between the speaker and the reader: ‘Here I stand, a compass needle,/ a sundial spindle/ right at the pinnacle’ (2008: 12). These images connote solitude; the speaker becomes a distant marker of passing time. He is never physically close to the reader. Even when other people are referred to, it is at a distance, like the echoing voice of his child asking, ‘If I stand on my toes can you see me wave?’ (2008: 13). Luger argues convincingly that ‘distance is a condition of the 9/11 witness and is a subject that the witness addresses in poetry’ (2010: 159), and this is certainly the case in Armitage’s poem.

Out of the Blue (2008) draws on the widely circulated footage of a man waving a white shirt, as though a flag of surrender, out of a window in the North Tower, and the use of this media image is indicative of the ‘intertextual discourse between media and other institutions in society’ which is characterised as another form of mediatisation (Hjarvard 2008: 115). Armitage writes: ‘You have picked me out. / Through a distant shot of a building burning/ you have noticed me now/ that a white cotton shirt is twirling, turning’ (2008: 29). In this section, the speaker is aware of the spectators to this event. The imperative ‘you picked me’ endows the witnesses with authority, and even responsibility. The scene is described...
as a ‘shot’, with the implied camera lens implicating the reader or viewers of this poem in the disaster. Indeed, the alliterative language and half rhyme on the ‘twirling, turning’ shirt, suggests that there is something aesthetically appealing about the destruction; people cannot look away from the spectacle.

The speaker is angry with this: ‘Do you think you are watching, watching/ a man shaking crumbs/ or pegging out washing?’ (29). This sarcasm emphasises the distance between the victim and the witness. Turning the gaze back on the cameras is an important technique because it establishes the reader’s place in the narrative, thereby acknowledging the difficulty of our experiencing this event. Randall rashly asserts that the published text version of the poem cannot fully convey the ‘dilemma of representation’ (2011: 86) as the film can, though in clearly acknowledging the distance between witness and subject, Armitage does address this dilemma. Furthermore, by forcing the reader to consider their perspective on this event of mass death, Armitage follows a recognised history of the elegy. Shaw notes that ‘When the impact of an objective, clinical view of death is substituted for the tremor of “the view from here”, which always touches a phenomenological nerve, it often produces a shock effect’ (1994: 212). He elaborates on the importance of this shift in perspective, arguing that it is in opposition to the consolatory view of nature and the physical world, as stability against the constant loss of human life, which was traditional in many of the Greek elegies. He cites poets such as Wordsworth and Tennyson who subvert this, creating an objective view of death through changes in perspective. In Out of the Blue (2008), the reminder of the media presence serves a similarly shocking purpose. Rather than working to convey a perspective on death, this reminder of the alternative point of view actually distances the reader from the experience of death. We are suddenly all too aware that this is an imagined speaker looking out at us. While he is ‘sagging ... flagging’ (29), we can only watch. Both the speaker and the reader are helpless.

Out of the Blue (2008) also demonstrates the shift in structure of elegies of mass death, which is further indicative of the process of mediatisation, and a move away from Kennedy’s ‘narrative journey to grief and back’ (2007: 16). The technique of this elegy is narrative, but rather than introducing the reader to a speaker whose grief is internalised or speculative, the poem is driven by events. Armitage produces an outpouring of information about events that echoes the ‘real-time temporality’ (Hoskins and O’Loughlin 2010: 23) of media reporting. For example, section seven is written as a prose poem, as the realisation of the disaster dawns and people begin to panic. A short section of this is included below: ‘Go up go down. Sit tight for now. Or move. Don’t move. It’s all in/ hand. Make a call on the phone. Stay calm. Then shout. Stay calm./ Then SHOUT. Come back’ (19). While not wishing to imply that prose poetry is always akin to contemporary media expressions, in this section there is an urgency and immediacy conveyed by Armitage’s choice of style. With short, abrupt sentences, staccato vocabulary, and full rhymes, the language is solid and forceful. There are no speech marks, but the words evoke frightened voices and confusion; repeated phrases such as ‘Stay calm. Then SHOUT’ (19-20) reinforce this.

Additionally, the short phrases appear in disordered ways later in the narrative so the sense is increasingly lost. One example of this occurs with the phrase: ‘Rescue services now on their way. What with? With what—a magic carpet?’ (19), which appears again later, as the following: ‘Rescue services now on their way. Use a skirt, use a shirt’ (19). The speaker recognises the futility of talking of rescue services in such a unique situation, and by ordering and reordering the phrases Armitage illustrates the nonsensical nature of the disaster, and the collapse of meaning. This technique can also be interpreted as indicative of our mediatised experience of events, and the way in which ‘instant recording, archiving and distribution of images and stories add a chaotic element to any action’ (Hoskins and O’Loughlin 2010: 2).

Media technologies emphasise this collapse of meaning elsewhere in the poem, as the speaker realises he cannot escape the tower. Section 10 begins with the transient image of ‘a web’ of ‘delicate threads ... subtle and slight’ (25) to describe both the attempts at contacting loved ones, but also the fragility of these human relationships themselves, and the impossibility of really being able to say anything meaningful in the last moments of life.

Armitage continues: ‘put the phone to your ear./ Let me say./ Let me hear’ (26). These lines recall the plethora of recordings of last phone calls that came to light via the internet and television subsequent to the disaster, again demonstrating the process of mediatisation through ‘intertextual discourse’ (Hjarvard 2008: 115). Like those inside the towers, we are left with an unsatisfactory lack of words, and Armitage struggles with ‘the paradox of the unspeakable’: ‘Since death is not an experience inside life, but an event that takes place on its boundary, every elegy sooner or later reaches the limits of language’ (Shaw 1994: 5).

As a feature of the elegy, this paradox of the unspeakable occurs again and again. For instance, Motion’s Lines, written in 2001 for the memorial service for British victims of 9/11, implies a similar problem for the elegist; ‘but words are nervous when we need them most/ and shatter, stop, or dully slide away’ (3-4). For Armitage, this
paradox is made all the worse because of the age of communication in which we live; these ‘wireless wires/too faint’ (25) are the fallible technologies that man has created, technologies which offer little which is concrete and safe, little that can provide comfort at the time of death. Wark describes it as ‘telethesia’ or ‘perception at a distance’ caused by ‘the telecommunications network crisscrossing the globe’ (1994: vii), and this certainly fits the description of the speaker who feels entirely separate from the world he knew, despite these methods of communication. Armitage deliberately disrupts the trochaic rhythm in this section: ‘with wireless wires/too faint by far/ for the naked eye/untraceably thin, imperceptibly fine’ (26). The reader no longer has the certainty of a steady rhythm with stresses at the end of each line, and the end words become less tangible. We encounter ‘wires’, ‘far’ and ‘eye’, compared to earlier falling cadences: ‘web’, ‘net’ and ‘slight’ (25). The effect of this altered rhythm is to mimic the weightlessness of the words of the speaker and his trapped acquaintances, as they make their last phone calls to loved ones; communicative technologies offer no comfort. As readers, we too feel powerless as we listen to the final words of this section: ‘Not one can save us/or bear our weight’ (26). This last line reiterates the distance between reader and victims. In this way, the poet expresses the unknowability of death; there is no ascension to heaven and no speculation on an afterlife. Armitage acknowledges that there are some things beyond our imagination and our knowledge, and like other modern elegists, he is unable to settle on ‘a single dominant authority such as revealed religion ... with which to reconcile’ himself (Vickery 2006: 48).

If the reality of death presents Armitage with representational problems, the magnitude of the disaster seems just as difficult to articulate. The majority of the poem is written from the point of view of the speaker, and when Armitage does address the other victims, it is fleeting. The most prominent attempt at conveying the scale of the loss occurs in section six of the poem where the speaker lists the names of other victims and their reaction to the unfolding disaster. Armitage’s poem bears resemblance to a chant, sounding somewhat like a child’s nursery rhyme: ‘Millicent wants an answer now./ Anthony talks through a megaphone./ Mitch says it looks like one of those days./ Abdoul calls his mother at home’ (17). His quatrain poem opens with an ABCB rhyme scheme that then proceeds to adamantly refuse the resolution of further rhymes. As a result, the characters mentioned in the poem seem oddly disconnected, both to the speaker and to each other. Hoskins and O’Loughlin describe the way in which constant media connectivity ‘enables a world of “effects without causes”’ (2010: 2), altering our perception of events. This section of the poem mimics that lack of coherent narrative. There is no physical interaction between characters and the short sentences are not developed beyond one action, which comes to define that particular character. Furthermore, Derrida (1982) suggests invoking the proper name in elegy traditionally adds a deeply personal aspect because it carries with it the weight of the meaning of the dead person to the elegist. However, in Armitage’s poem, the opposite is true. The names carry none of the intimate connotations of friendship or love; they are merely more people who died. In this way, Armitage addresses the incomprehensibility of the disaster.

Distance is at the heart of Armitage’s elegy; readers and viewers alike are doomed to remember the events of 9/11 as mediated events, yet the poet goes further than this, and there are structural features that suggest an even greater media influence. Marshall argues that the main difference between new media and old media is the tendency towards multimedia (2004). For instance, the internet combines visual, sound and print media. Additionally, one of the conclusions that can be drawn from a poetic project such as Out of the Blue (2006) is a growing trend towards what I will term multimedia texts. These texts embody more than mere textual representation. Out of the Blue (2006) combines textual, visual and sound elements, and Armitage is not the only poet to produce a text like this when writing of mass death. Indeed, projects for Hurricane Katrina such as When the Water Came: Evacuees of Katrina (Hogue and Ross 2010), a book of interview-poems, created from interviews with evacuees, and photographs, work on a visual and a textual level. This project is of particular interest because it relates to Marshall’s argument that ‘users of new media are becoming the content of the form’ (2004: 23). The evacuees of Katrina became the poetry, with their words literally forming the elegy. With future plans for the 9/11 memorial in New York to include a massive multimedia archive where visitors will be able to access text, photographs, and audio commentary about each victim (9/11 Memorial 2009), it seems that people are continuing to turn to multimedia as a way of creating elegies and memorials. Elegy in the twenty-first century remains a ‘form without frontiers’ (Kay 1990: 7).

References

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Out of the Blue 2006 (film) Ned Williams (dir), Silver River Productions, UK.


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Stopping all Stations to Southern Cross

He could be one of Tolstoy’s beloved peasants: long-haired, bearded, young yet old. But this man shoulders no scythe, he carries a plastic cup. Any change?

Anybody? Eyes are fixed on papers.

A lad in overalls, work boots, eats out of a box, strings of mozzarella stretch from fork to mouth. Watching,

the man says Looks tasty, yes? Mate?

Silence. He speaks again, a little louder.

As I look for change he’s working his way up the carriage. That’s okay mate

I understand. Or, Thank you very much.

The lad has had enough, stows the noodle box well under the seat, rubs his palms together as if getting them clean.

LORRAINE MCGUIGAN
BALLARAT, VICTORIA
Walking the Coleridge Way: Using Cultural Tourism to change perceptions of Somerset after the Foot and Mouth Epidemic of 2001

LESLEY HAWKES

This paper explores one of the ways in which the Somerset region in the United Kingdom, devastated by the foot and mouth epidemic in 2001, is trying to free itself from recurring negative representations and create more positive images of the area. After the epidemic projects were sought that would promote a more positive image and draw tourists back to the area. One of these projects drew on literary tourism to reinvigorate the site. A Walking and Bridle trail called the ‘Coleridge Way Walk’ has been implemented to take the images of the area from disease and dirtiness to Romantic longing. The Coleridge Way Walk uses past imaginings to re-energise the area. This energy, in part, comes from ‘re-imagining’ the site through past imaginings. The Coleridge Way Walk uses the past to create future direction for the once tainted area.

In 2008 a colleague and I walked the then new Coleridge Way Walk in the Somerset region of the United Kingdom. This walk runs from the Quantock Hills to Exmoor and follows in the footsteps of the Romantic poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The trail officially begins in Nether Stowey and finishes 36 miles away in Porlock. One of the reasons the walk was designed was to encourage visitors to a region still suffering from the after effects of the foot and mouth epidemic. In 2001 over six million sheep, pigs and cattle were destroyed in the UK because of this disease. The Somerset region suffered with farmers leaving the area, shops, pubs and post offices closing because of lack of business and three quarters of Devon being declared an infected zone (BBC 2011: 1). Rob Walrond, a farmer from Pitney, says ‘my main memory was the fear among farmers of the disease coming onto their farm and also the helplessness and sense of isolation’ (BBC 2011: 1). It was not only the destruction of the live-stock of the time but the foot and mouth disease epidemic clouded people’s lasting perception of the Somerset region. In most people’s minds it was a tainted area and one to avoid: ‘at the height of the disease it was thought that revenue losses for the tourism industry were variously estimated to be running at 125 million pounds a week’ (Baxter and Bowen 2004: 268).

Of course, the Somerset region is not the only place that has suffered because of association with devastation. Images of the recent floods in Queensland, Australia have spread around the world and the earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand has left lasting impressions on people. The tourist industry has, indeed, suffered because of the associations with disaster. However, the Somerset region suffered in another way. Floods and earthquakes are perceived as natural occurrences and seen as out of the control of humans. Once these disasters have left humans band together to put the area back the way it was before the natural occurrence. Somerset was associated with disease, and even though this disease was also beyond the control of humans it still has long lasting associations with dirtiness and pollution. Once an area becomes associated with being dirty and spoilt people avoid it in the fear of themselves becoming tainted. A prime example of this is the devastating after effects of the BP/Gulf of Mexico oil disaster in 2010 and the lingering smear that this disaster is having on people’s present and future perception of the area. Communities all along the coasts have lost their source of income due to people staying away and viewing the area as polluted and damaged beyond repair.

The question arises how to shift representations of these devastating images from ones of lasting negativity to ones that offer promise. This is not to suggest that the disasters and how they came about should be forgotten but rather if these landscapes are always seen in a negative light they, and the people and animals that inhabit them, become lost in the negativity and the areas are no longer visited or valued. This paper explores how cultural tourism can be used to alter perceptions of places and reconnect people in a positive and re-energised way with the local landscapes. Before the epidemic, the Somerset region had been associated with picturesque landscapes and natural beauty. After the epidemic, the Somerset region
was no longer associated with images of Nature, peaceful settings and rugged beauty and tourists steered clear of holidaying there. People also rejected produce from the region as it was seen as tainted or unclean. Projects were sought that would re-energise the area in the minds of visitors and consumers and would stop locals having to leave. One such project put forward was the creation of the Coleridge Way Walk. This project fitted in to what is known as literary tourism which while well developed in areas such as The Lake District that draws on its association with William Wordsworth as a tourist drawcard was still under-utilised in the Somerset Region. William Wordsworth had lived for a time in the Somerset region but it was Samuel Taylor Coleridge who was chosen to base a walk upon. Coleridge lived in Nether Stowey for three years and is also known as a most prolific walker. The web page dedicated to the walk describes the walk as 'The Coleridge Way: In the Footsteps of the Romantic Poet'. It goes on to say 'walk 36 miles through the stunning Somerset countryside of the Quantock Hills, the Brendon Hills and Exmoor, a landscape that inspired Coleridge to produce some of his best known work' (Coleridge Way online). This description takes the reader back to the Romantic period and away from the recent negative connotations of disease. The web page also points out that the walk links up with other walks. This directs the tourist to the fact that this area is no longer isolated but is connected to other regions.

Information about the walk stresses the association with a by-gone era: 'during his three years in Somerset, Coleridge walked for miles nearly every day, drawing inspiration for some of his best known works from the beautiful landscape around him' (Coleridge Way online). This link with the past is made even stronger by the following of the feathered quill as the recognisable marker to follow throughout the walk. Of course short term responses are needed after such devastations, such as media coverage that emphasises the fact that the disease is well and truly finished, but longer-term solutions are also needed. Initiatives such as the Coleridge Way Walk represent these longer-term solutions. The walk guides people through the countryside and promotes positive images. It is the blending of past positive images with the future that make this Walk valuable in changing perception of the area.

Literary walking trails are examples of literary tourism and they can be used to create a stronger connection between tourist, local and the environment. A literary walk may appear a trivial way to address an important issue such as an epidemic but Mike Robinson and H.C. Anderson define literary tourism as the 'tripartite relationship between authors, their writings and the concept of place and landscapes, which can over time transform the space and how it is perceived by visitors' (2002: 3). The aim of the walk was to transform the space and its perception in the wider community. In this instance the walk was very carefully developed and involved a number of stakeholders. The implementation of this walkway occurred because of the co-operation of the local authorities, local landowners, and National Parks and Wildlife organisations. Through the combined efforts of these groups there is now the Coleridge Way Walk as well as the horse bridle trail that follows alongside.

The walk works on a number of levels but the key one is the manner in which the walk can shift the images from devastation to the literary heritage of the area. The branding of the Walk with Coleridge's name places the area back into the Romantic era and away from any connotations of contemporary diseases—it creates new memories and perceptions coming from previous memories. The environment has, in a sense, been re-imagined by drawing on past imaginings. The Walk, whether consciously or subconsciously, promotes a strong connection with the environment—both the literary and physical environment—and provides a space for re-imagining for locals and visitors. Tourists can place previously fictional representation into a 'real' space and locals and people who already know the environment can re-imagine it away from contemporary negative images and back into another, more positive space.

A walking trail can bring about a shift in ways of looking at the environment enabling the visiting walkers and those who live in the area to see the 'metaphors' of landscape in a new re-imagined, yet practical manner. Dorothy Eagle and Hilary Carnell suggest 'there is a fascination about places associated with writers that has often prompted readers to become pilgrims ... to see with fresh eyes places that inspired poems or books' (1977: V). The landscape becomes part of the pilgrimage and is able to be viewed in new and different ways. These fresh eyes refresh the perception of the environment that is being viewed and give it a sense of value and worth. A renewal process begins to take place and even though the images are being drawn from the past they mingle with the present and future. The literary imagination blending with the active and practical task of walking shifts the perception of the landscape because the landscape becomes known and feels closer to the walker; and just as a reading of written work can create a feeling of closeness with the narrative so too can the walking of the landscape. A narrative of landscape combines with the narrative of the story, creating a new narrative that is removed from the negativity of disease and epidemics. Coleridge wrote about the differences between human and natural geography, and how human associations form our landscapes and boundaries far more than just Nature itself: ‘at certain times, uncalled and sudden, subject to no bidding of my own or others, these Thoughts would come
upon me, like a Storm, and fill the Place with something more than Nature’ (Holmes: 7). It is difficult to know what exactly the ‘something’ more than Nature was that Coleridge had in mind but perhaps it was the process of renewal, of new memories and new stories being formed through the active process of reflection and walking. Coleridge’s statement clearly identifies the emphasis he places on the active participation in the landscape. The land cannot be known unless humans experience it first hand and this is what the walk enables: an experience of landscape.

A walking trail also adds to the idea of an experience of landscape in another way. Walking can be seen as connected to health and wellbeing. The web page has images of people happily walking over the landscape and there is a strong sense of physicality and strength. These images reinforce notions of good health and connections with disease fade into the background. The region, by association with this physical activity, becomes connected to health. People who experience this region will be re-energised by nature. The web page says ‘walk the quiet and unspoil northern fringes of the Quantock Hills through the villages of Holford, West Quantoxhead and Bicknoller’ (Coleridge Way online).

Not all literary trails are the same in design. Research by David Herbert (2001) suggests that there a number of designs for literary trails. The first type is probably the best known and most used and can be seen as ‘Writer’s Trails’. These trails work on the premise that people want to visit places that have connections with specific writers. In these trails people go on the walk because a particular writer lived there, wrote there or has some connection to the landscape. The Lake District is a prime example of this kind of trail. People want to visit Wordsworth’s Dove Cottage and see the daffodils first hand. The second type of literary trail is a ‘setting trail’. People are drawn to areas that are well known as the setting for particular stories. An example of this kind of trail would be Bath and its association with Jane Austen. Connected to this type of trail is one that concentrates specifically on a particular book and a clear example of this is The Da Vinci Code trail. This walking trail follows the events in the book: however, the trouble with a trail based on a popular book is the fact that it has a limited life span. As the book loses its popularity, so, too, does the trail. There is also a more complex trail and this is what is known as the ‘memory trail’. People are drawn to places where they can blend their own memories from the story and from their own narratives into the memories they are experiencing and creating in the literary space. This is the trail that appears to have the most long term and sustained success with tourists.

The Coleridge Way trail can be seen to be a combination of the first, second and third type of trail. Coleridge’s name and connection to the environment may draw the tourist into the site but it is more than that—it is the added opportunity that this trail allows for reimagining and memory. It is this type of trail that offers the most promise for the process of reimagining. Of course, ‘Literary trails’ are socially constructed and, as such, there is no guarantee that the trail will be interpreted in only the intended manner of the designers. Any presentation of landscape, whether popular or scholarly, ‘is best thought of as a representation that is, a construction that is contingent, partial and unfinished… a fabrication that depends in part on the position of the interpreter’ (Duncan and Ley 1993: 329). And this as mentioned earlier is what allows the environment to always be capable of being perceived in new and fresh ways. One story cannot contain or restrain it.

Literary tourism can be seen as closely related to environmental tourism as it also engages with the idea that ‘tourists are not external to the economy or ecosystem they visit, but part of it, engaged in an activity likely to transform it’ (Kerridge 2000: 267). Literary walks can be seen as environmental tourism as the walker participates in connective activities such as looking for markers and imagining scenes, and they are more likely to feel a part of the environment. The walking through the landscape stirs memories of that landscape, perhaps fictionalised memories but still strong memories, and these memories mix with the memories being carried by the tourist. It is this mixing of memories that brings renewal to the landscape. The experience gives agency to the walker and their perception is no longer framed by only negative representations. Richard Kerridge says there is the ‘possibility of sustainable forms of development that will not estrange communities from their natural environments. They seek to build alliances between the tourist and the native, hoping for an eventual society in which everyone will be both of these things’ (2000: 267). The tourist no longer feels an outsider and the local feels the wonderment of the tourist and it is this blending that allows the site to be renewed and constantly refreshed.

There is no doubt that there will be some lingering effects of the foot and mouth epidemic on the lives and the land of the Somerset region. Perceptions of the region need not remain ones of negativity and disease. The design and planning of this walk involved a close working relationship between the locals, landowners, authorities and the National Parks and Wildlife organisations. These groups realised the need to work together to rid the region of its association with disease and promote a new healthy image. In order to achieve this aim these groups turned to past writings and the region’s past connections with the Romantic poets, specifically Samuel Taylor Coleridge: ‘On the green sheep-track, up the heathy hill, Homeward I wind my way; and lo!’ (Coleridge Way online). The
Coleridge Way walk shows how literature can be used in a practical way to reinvigorate local lives and the local environment.

References

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In Cyprus, if you’re married and don’t have someone on the side, something’s wrong with you

Koraly Dimitriadis,
East Brunswick, Victoria

Fault Line

Somewhere here
I hold a lifetime’s myriad provisional truths.
They flicker,
little illuminations spread out
like a field of candles in the night.
Where they intersect with your truths
light brightens,
shadows retreat.
Where your truths diverge
the ground is bloodied.
It is here that wars are fought,
that the dark gathers
implacable,
impenetrable.

David Ades
Squirrel Hill, Pittsburgh, USA
'Here it is, the end of the world'.

The taxi driver pulls a wry, weak smile and turns on a light so we laugh and pay this Nostradamus in a Peugeot. We step out of his car with our bags, slipping on moss combed soft by the rain that has been falling endlessly. The keys to the front door of the chalet are dangling in the lock, one strong gust would make them drop and disappear through a crack in the decking. This makes me nervous; it's tenuous. The taxi driver waits, lets us use his headlights as a guide till we get the door open and then he is gone. It is so dark inside. Thick like oil, it slows us down, pulls at our feet as we walk through it. I think I see a comet through one of the windows, a white ball moving fast like the light trail of a sparkler, but Jack flicks a switch and it's gone.

Eighteen hours later the rain hasn't slowed and we can hear the water pouring off the hills, collecting on the road by the stone bridge where a sign tells the story of how, legend has it, the devil used to live under its arch and make deals with travellers and impressionable women.

After breakfast we go out for a walk. The low clouds keep the rain close to us, wrap us up and make us feel swaddled. The hotel on the main road is closed, the shop further up the road is closed, a sign in the pub window tells us it's gone bust and the twice-a-day-train leaves no passengers. Windows of houses are dark, cars drive fast as they pass; I can't even hear any birds above the sound of the rain, although there's supposed to be Larks around here.

'I wanted to see some birds, any birds, anything other than a pigeon', I say, 'I wanted to eat some mussels'.

Jack rolls his eyes.

'What'?'

'Shellfish', he says, as if this explains everything. Or he might have said selffish. He has an aversion to anything with a shell.

Back at the chalet we turn on every radiator, heat up some wine, check our phones but we still don't have any signal. We put our soaked clothes on the heated towel rail and watch them steam. By 3.43pm it's so dark we need lights on to see what we're doing when we make tea. As the kettle clicks its self off the boil there's a flicker, sparks of electricity bounce in the bulbs, and then it's gone.

* 

Every trip I think will be romantic never is and it's only the surprises, the times you don't expect to be with someone, staying with them, that's what you remember, alongside the disasters—the rained out camping trips, or the hotel with the sheet covered in pubic hair.

Jack's still sure that he's wrong about the world ending, that the taxi driver didn't know a thing, the one whose name I never took down, even though I got taught don't get in unmarked cabs, always ask someone's name in case. But knowing what someone's name is doesn't help. You can't reason with a person better because you know what their parents named them, despite what films say.

'It's going to stop raining', Jack says, 'it looks like it's slowed'.

But I'm most suspicious when something's petering, when a relationship's dwindling or the petrol gauge says empty but the car's running, because that's when you know there's more to it, and you don't have all the information. That's when things really heat up.

* 

Across the lake, along the road in both directions, it's dark; this is wide-spread.

We'll keep the fridge door shut, we won't use the torch on our phones unless we absolutely have to, we'll try and find a match, conserve body heat, sleep. But we'll drink for a while, even though we know it's a vasodilator.

I say to him, 'I don't know how to make fire or what berries to pick. We have no books to show us and no expert to ask', I need sulphur, sandpaper, oil and gas. 'We'd need antibiotics, extra pairs of shoes, a wind-up radio for the news. Wouldn't we need a gun? Something to wield?' I've held an axe before and it's heavy, too personal.

'I can tie knots, I went to Scouts, I can run for 10 minutes before I'm beat'.

Jack knows where his strengths are, but he's jumped ahead four moves.

'What are you running from?' I ask.
He doesn't hesitate.

‘Insurgents, guerrillas, game-hunters, poachers, prospectors, fanatics and maybe fire, flood or famine’.

Even when he's listing natural disasters I know it's people he's running away from.

When I read The Road I knew we were done for, because someone saw the end clearer than anyone else—no explanation, cleansing fire, or preachers on streets proud their predictions were right even though truth's relative, a construct, like language, reliant entirely on who's telling it, and who's interpreting.

And when the world ran, ended, out, they tried the best they knew—filled baths, kept cans in the basement, not cupboards, because people were wise to that, and they kept the lights out, off as much as possible, conserved the energy we had and rationed what they ate, like wartime I guess but hopeless in that at least when it's war you know it'll end eventually, probably, when somebody backs down or dies.

But there's nothing, no text telling you what happens next and no-one you could trust, because until you've survived something, what do you know about it anyway?

And the film was worse, no room for imagining extras like half-eaten Mars bars stashed under a mattress or clean clothes with tags on or satellite signal or batteries.

Jack says, ‘In our lifetime we won't see it. But maybe our kids will. Maybe we'll train them, prepare them, buy them bug-out bags or something, get them baptised so they're, y'know, safe’.

When he says, ‘our kids’, the words string out in my head, slow down to the speed of a Walkman running out of power.

‘We're having kids?’ I ask, meaning, we are.

And Jack says, ‘You're right. Why'd we bring them into that, or this, when it's over and ending. Why'd we wish that on anybody?’

When we finally go to bed, drunk and dry from too much red wine, I lie awake thinking about how once, in an airport queue, we spotted a rucksack that had no owner. An airport official was called over to look at the bag, look around at the queue. He circled it but never touched it, then stepped away to use his radio. A space formed around this sagging, aged backpack. Strangers glanced at each other, looking for clues but trying to convey a shared sense of appearing cool, harbouring anxiety like a pocket full of sand. And I was ashamed afterwards because I stepped away, sought out places to run, put Jack between me and the bag, knew I would use anything and anyone as a shield. I was so angry with the weeping teenage girl in front of us when she finally noticed she hadn't moved her bag along with her as the queue moved. It's her fault I have no honour. And that I know I'll never be brave.

In the morning we can't make tea, coffee, toast; there are no matches left—we only found four in a soggy box by the front door. We can see our breath and his toes are purplish green at their tips although he tells me they always look this way. So we go out to find someone, something to buy, somewhere to walk to keep ourselves warm. But our shoes trap the cold, and the water on the road is forming lakes. Under the stone bridge the river is rising to meet them.

Just as it starts to get dark again we see a policeman in a small van. We flag him down and we're frantic like there's danger, but he's calm, like he knows something we don't. He's a young guy, short, neat hair, pristine from top to bottom in uniform and Wellingtons. He drives us to the station, which is also his house, which is also a community centre, behind the dark-looking hotel. Two black Labradors bound at him as he opens the door. He speaks sharply, 'Get!' and they run away down the candle-lit hallway to the room they came from.

‘Why are you here?’ he asks.

‘On holiday’, I say.

‘To get away’, Jack adds.

The policeman smiles. ‘End of the world, this.’

It must be some kind of in-joke with the locals.

‘How wide-spread is it?’ Jack asks, ‘is it to do with the weather?’

‘Not sure’, he says, ‘I heard on my radio that a lorry driver reported seeing red and blue sparks, massive like a firework exploding, as he drove by the east side of the loch’. ‘Lectric company will see to it, I'm sure. But I wouldn't hold your breath, most people round here have their own generators. Most people round here leave for the winter and don't come back till spring’.

He gives us a gas lamp, a box of matches, a torch, a blanket, a stove and a lift back to the chalet.

When we get home we boil some pasta, heat up some sauce, cup our hands for as long as we can stand it near the flames of the stove.

‘Red and blue sparks’, Jack says, ‘and an explosion? Aliens?’

‘Americans?’ I offer, but he's already headed down a path and I'm not invited to follow.

‘Something covert, terrorists maybe, cutting the power like that ... defenceless aren't we? A man could
just walk right up to this chalet and we'd be done for. We can't even shut the door properly'.

It's true, the wood of the frame has warped from the damp and we can't lock the door from the inside. I almost get up to push an armchair in front of it but I think, rationally, if I give credence to the idea, it's more likely to happen.

'I'm just saying, you reap what you sow'.

Beer slops out of the side of the bottle as he waves a hand across an imaginary harvest, an unreal wreckage. He drinks the rest at a three-hundred-degree angle, puts the empty on the counter and takes another beer from outside where we left them to keep them cold. He wipes the slush of melted snow from its neck down to its base and shakes it off his hand out into the decking where white has almost covered the wood. It started snowing at around 1am. We moved the chair at 12.

He's been talking about aggression, foreign policy, sovereignty, imperialism for twenty minutes. I can't break this flow, not even with a comment about the rebel alliance. I've been watching shadows and light, the depth of night made somehow thicker by white snow.

On our last night Jack says, 'I wish I held my religion closer, kept it safer, like I did my Xbox, my movie collection, that I could quote something more meaningful than Adam Sandler. There's no solace in Jack and Jill and there's none in Chuck and Larry'.

'Well there wasn't any solace in them the first time', I tell him, 'but given the chance I think I'd find it now'.

We list what else we'd rectify, if the chance comes, if our wishes to unknowns and prayers to gods we've not believed in pay off; if there's such thing as redemption and you can check it in at any time, like Clubcard points.

'I kissed your sister', Jack tells me at 4.

'I know', I tell him, even though I didn't, because there's no point now. Our bags aren't packed and we're opening wine like it's milk and the fridge is broken and we should finish it before it sours. The fridge is off and the milk is sour.

I eat the last of the cereal at 5, a regular chore, a normal morning activity, and Jack eats a pork pie, a piece of cheese. He pulls the curtains away from the window for a moment then lets them fall back, like I'm not ready for it. I've never liked the in-between light, when you know the day's turning but there's not sign of it, you can just feel it.

'I wish I believed in reincarnation,' I say after scraping my bowl. 'I should've done more yoga, listened to Eat, Pray, Love'.

'Why?' Jack asks me. 'What did it tell you?'

'No, I should've listened to it, I've got the audio book', I tell him.

He checks the window again, won't make eye contact after, because of outside or Jessica, I can't tell. I look for clues in my stuttering memory, which blacks out at opportune moments. I can't remember us meeting or moving in together, but I see Jack with my sister like it's an in-flight movie I have to watch now, even though I'm making it up.

'Why did we come on holiday?' I ask him.

Jack replies, 'We hadn't been in two years. Recessions, the cost of Mars bars, something. It seemed like a good idea?'

I get up to pack my case before I ask any more questions.

At 8 Jack's in the doorway as I zip my bag up, then his, and I ask what time the taxi's coming, if it's time to open the curtains and Jack says, 'Not yet'.

I ask if the radio's working, sure I'd heard voices while folding my clothes, and he nods, 'Sort of'.

I follow him through to the kitchen and we sit at the table and the candle's close to its wick now, close to the metal of the candelabra we were surprised to find here.

'We should switch that soon,' I tell him, 'replace it'.

'That's the last one', Jack says, as he makes his way through the static.

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Blame or no-blame? Themes in media discourse about recent emergencies in Canberra

MADELEINE ROWLAND

Media discourse plays a key role in transmitting information about risks and disasters to the wider community and, accordingly, contributes to constructing a community’s knowledge and understanding of disasters and other emergencies. A common theme found in media coverage about emergencies is the apportionment of blame for the incident. This is exemplified by media coverage of two significant incidents which occurred in Canberra in the last decade—the 2003 Canberra firestorm and the 2011 Mitchell chemical explosion. This article explores how the concept of blame is discussed in the media discourse surrounding these events, primarily from the local newspaper ‘The Canberra Times’. Initially following the firestorm a no-blame approach was predominant in the media. The no-blame approach is used in well-respected disaster analysis, by institutions such as the Australian Transport and Safety Bureau (ATSB), because it promotes a response which has a good chance of preventing similar incidents. However, a major theme in more recent discourse about the firestorm and the chemical explosion has emphasised placing blame on people involved in the emergency response. The blame approach found in media representations of these emergencies is consistent with Bad Apple Theory, which is commonly criticised in scholarly literature on accident analysis for being too narrow and emotionally driven to adequately explain the causes of accidents. This article argues that a media discourse which focuses on blaming individuals for emergencies leads the community away from gaining a more useful holistic understanding of the causes of the incidents and therefore cannot help to prevent future accidents.

Introduction

Media representations play an influential role in shaping the way communities perceive disasters and emergencies. These media representations often emphasise certain aspects of incidents while downplaying others. A common theme that occurs in local media following an emergency is whether or not blame ought to be apportioned. Different approaches to blame can be found in local newspaper articles on two emergencies in Canberra in the last decade: the 2003 Canberra firestorm and the 2011 Mitchell chemical explosion. Despite major differences between these emergencies, similarities in the media discourse surrounding the two events can be identified. Although a no-blame theme was predominant immediately following the firestorm, a shift to a blame approach occurred around the time the report from the coronial inquest into the firestorm was released in 2006. This blame approach, which is consistent with Bad Apple Theory, remains evident in the discourse surrounding the chemical explosion. This article argues that the predominant theme of blame in media representations of these two emergencies is inconsistent with ideas used in useful scholarly literature on accident analysis, such as those employed by the Australian Transport and Safety Bureau (ATSB), and does not help promote a discourse which is useful for preventing future disasters.

Media Construction of Disasters

Mass media is the key means by which the general public learn about disasters: it provides the narrative of unfolding events, the experiences of those affected and the aftermath. This role in transmitting information is important; even in a world of social networks and numerous communication devices, the media, in all its forms, continues to be the ‘authoritative spokesperson for society’ (Zeilzer 1992: 2). In this sense, journalists write history, the representations they provide form the basis of the collective memory of disasters for the society in general (Eyd 2006: 71). The media do not merely depict a disaster and the ensuing public reaction; they also play a role in shaping the public response by emphasising certain aspects of the event. In this sense media play a major role in constructing disasters for society. Media representations are influenced by conceptions of the society’s values and beliefs. Reports are designed to focus on aspects which are considered to be interesting
or relevant to target audiences. By emphasising certain aspects and downplaying others, the media shapes the frame of reference in which disasters are understood (Street 2011: 21). Consequently, individuals and the community in general will start to focus on the aspects and angles which are highlighted in the media.

The way a disaster is constructed or portrayed in media is entwined with capitalist motives, the drive to sell newspapers and gain viewers by catching people’s attention. It is no secret that bad news is in effect ‘good news’ for media companies. Many events may have various layers and explanations, but often media opt to focus on negative aspects to strike an emotional chord with potential readers, listeners and viewers. For example, in Australia bushfires are natural ecological events. However, in instances when bushfires threaten life and property, this is often downplayed while links to inadequate warnings or unsuccessful responses from fire crews are given greater emphasis. The capitalist motive in the media may prompt an overemphasis on emotional aspects and a de-emphasis of rational explanations; in the wake of an emergency often this means focusing on apportioning blame. In practical terms, the key themes that emerge in the public discourse following a disaster can influence a community’s ability to heal and, importantly, to learn from the experience.

Blame or no-blame?

Although blaming is a common private reaction to tragedy, scholarly literature on accident analysis holds that a broader examination of the causes is more useful in learning real lessons to prevent future occurrences. The ATSB uses an accident analysis model based on a no-blame philosophy (ATSB 2008). The model is well respected and founded on principles from scholarly literature (eg Hopkins 2005; Reason 1997). In short, the ATSB model encourages looking at safety measures at various points throughout a system, rather than focusing on individual actions. This is beneficial because it promotes action in a number of areas to help prevent future occurrences (Reason 1997: 9-17; Hollnagel 2004). No-blame principles have been applied in various situations beyond transport accidents, such as coronial inquests into fires and disasters (Freckelton and Ranson 2006: 643). Furthermore, it is similar to the shared responsibility approach to disaster resilience recently adopted by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG 2011).

In opposition to the ATSB model is the Bad Apple Theory, which holds that all problems in systems are caused by unreliable or incompetent people (Dekker 2006: 1-14). Bad Apple Theory is commonly criticised because it fails to accept that humans are fallible, but generally not malicious (Dekker 2006: 12; Marx 2009: 6). Many disaster theorists reject the Bad Apple Theory or the blame approach because human actions are constrained by systems; errors are always influenced by situational and organisational factors. In a well-meaning workforce it is more beneficial to alter a situation than to expect no mistakes by individuals (Reason 1997: 128). In hindsight, a decision might look incorrect, but generally will be justifiable based on what the decision-maker knew at the time. Evidence of these opposing approaches to blame is exemplified by local newspaper coverage of two recent emergencies in Canberra.

The 2003 Canberra Firestorm

In 2003 Canberra suffered a large firestorm, which led to extensive media coverage both during and following the event. The firestorm occurred in an extremely hot and dry summer, when bushfires ignited by lightning strikes in the vicinity of Canberra became out of control and entered suburbia. The firestorm claimed four lives and destroyed close to 500 homes (McLeod 2003: iii). Many horrifying images appeared in the media at the time of the event including congested roads full of evacuees, the sky above Parliament House turning deep red from the embers and black from the soot, flames engulfing homes and aerial photos of burnt-out suburbs. Public discourse on the event describes the firestorm as ‘the worst disaster in Canberra’s history’, and it is remembered as such to this day (Doogan 2006a: 3; Doherty 2006: B1).

A No-Blame Discourse

A major theme in the media discourse following the Canberra firestorm was concern about the management of the event. Since the firestorm occurred, the public has been outraged regarding the lack of warnings given to the public in the days leading up to the firestorm and discontent about the emergency response (Rowland 2008: 40, 71). Immediately following the firestorm, in line with the ATSB philosophy the predominant view in media reports had been that a blame game would not be useful for learning from the disaster. One particular article noted the unhelpfulness of blaming the individuals who displayed courage in facing the fires and the need to examine structural issues such as forestry and town planning (Bartos 2003: 10). Others gave attention to issues such as community preparation and shared responsibility, rather than focusing on the response from fire crews (McLennan 2003: 9).

The no-blame approach prevailed for some months following the fire and was influenced by the then Chief Minister, Jon Stanhope, who sought to ‘find answers’ about how the firestorm occurred, rather than apportion blame (Doherty 2003: 4). The initial inquiry into the firestorm (McLeod 2003) was described in the media as having no blame apportioning role (Doherty 2003: 4). From the outset, McLeod made it clear that ‘the inquiry
found no lack of commitment or endeavour on the part of the hundreds of people who, in an official, volunteer or private capacity, contributed to fighting the fires' (2003: iii). Instead the report looked at broader structural and cultural aspects of the emergency services' operational response and public communication strategy (McLeod 2003: 69-72). This view was reported in the local newspaper, and should be seen as positive for the community as it was promoting a rational examination of the response to the firestorm (Doherty 2003: 11).

A Shift Towards Blame

By the time the coronial inquest into the firestorm was released in 2006, the no-blame theme had become less predominant in the media (Doogan 2006a; Doogan 2006b). The coronial inquest departed from the holistic ATSB type model in favour of an approach consistent with Bad Apple Theory as it spent considerable time blaming the outcomes of the fire on individuals involved in warning the public and responding to the fires (Rowland 2008; Rowland and Hopkins 2009). By this time, while some objection to this approach appeared in the media, blaming emergency personnel had become an accepted view, which is in stark contrast to the no-blame theme evident in 2003 (Doherty 2006: B1).

Factors which could have significantly reduced the severity of the firestorm were de-emphasised in the inquest and accompanying media articles; instead articles which attributed blame to fire crews were prominent. The bushfires which led to the firestorm were ignited by lightning and were fed by a large accumulation of forest fuel; in addition, they occurred in high summer temperatures and an extended period of drought (Rowland 2008: 2). Although it is contested whether crews could have done more to stop the fires, one thing is certain: they did not cause the fires (McLeod 2003: 16; Doogan 2006a: 107). Despite this, in response to the findings of the inquest, the media began to focus on naming and blaming individuals involved in the response to the fires (Doherty 2007: 8). This eclipsed more useful discussions of measures that can be taken to prevent bushfires prior to the fire season, which had been evident in the media in 2003. This meant that all public attention was being given to an unfairly critical view of the response to the firestorm, which is in complete contrast to a holistic and rational examination of many relevant factors.

In line with Bad Apple Theory, the discourse at this time focused on individual actions rather than the organisational context in which they occur. The inquest and accompanying media reports regarded the personnel involved in the fire response as incompetent and unreliable, or as bad apples (Dekker 2006: 1-14). This approach holds that removing these people resolves all problems. However, to avoid mistakes, changes need to be made at a systemic level. Individuals from the emergency services became the target of public anger because they were closely associated with the fires and their actions could easily be construed as blameworthy. However, the focus on this issue led the discourse away from a more useful understanding of the limitations of the emergency services' power against the fire and the organisational constraints in which decisions were made. An analysis of the emergency services decisions showed that the actions taken during the firestorm were rational based what was known at the time (Rowland 2008). Furthermore, those involved in making the decisions were not incompetent and others in the same position could have easily made the same choices. Although focusing on the actions of individuals involved in the response is not useful for making effective changes in a system, this approach was validated as the appropriate public response to emergencies through the media coverage of the outcome of the coronial inquest into the firestorm.

The 2011 Mitchell Chemical Explosion

A similar focus on the emergency response in a discourse consistent with Bad Apple Theory emerged in Canberra's next major emergency, the 2011 Mitchell chemical explosion. This emergency occurred when a fire broke out in the middle of the night at a chemical factory causing several loud explosions and a large smoke plume. The fire burned for around 30 hours, but was able to be contained by fire crews. No injuries from the fire or illnesses from the smoke cloud were reported. The following day The Canberra Times produced the 'Northside Chemical Explosion—Special Edition' with the headline 'Toxic Inferno', headlines on the following pages included words like 'cancer concerns', 'pandemonium and 'shutdown will cost millions' (17 September 2011). The headlines were accompanied by dramatic images of the blaze and a large grey smoke plume drifting across the city. While the photos were accurate representations of the explosion, their quantity in conjunction with emotive headlines certainly played a role in exacerbating the public outcry that followed.

Following the incident, a primary theme which emerged in the media involved criticism of the emergency warning signal, which was disseminated to nearby home phones and mobiles. The issue arose because there was a spelling mistake in the text message sent to mobiles in the area, leading residents to believe it was a hoax, and because 80 per cent of calls which should have been made to home phones were never made (Knaus 17 September 2011: 3; Towell 20 January 2012: 1). The media also reported on the history of safety concerns about the chemical factory where the fire occurred (Beeby 2012; Kretowicz 2011: 3).
However, the aspect of the incident which became most controversial was the shortcomings of the emergency warning system rather than the actual emergency. Certain politicians blamed the emergency services for misusing the system (The Canberra Times 2011: 18) while others pointed to difficulties in the alert system (Towell 2011: 1). This discussion was polarised, making it appear that there was either a problem with the system or a problem with those involved in implementation. In reality, it is likely that adjustments need to be made to both the system and the training programs for implementation. It is interesting that the warning system became a central part of the dialogue following this incident, although it did not cause the fire, the explosion or the smoke cloud. Despite its faults, the warning system helped spread the word about the incident faster than door-knocking and media broadcasts—which were the primary means of communication during previous emergencies, such as the Canberra firestorm.

A Normalised Blame Discourse

The focus on the emergency services and apportioning blame was normalised in the Canberra media reports surrounding the inquest into the firestorm; this is likely to have been influential in the discourse on the chemical explosion. Immediately following the chemical explosion The Canberra Times began to centre on problems with the emergency warning signals and that the emergency services were to blame. Conversely, there was public concern about the warnings regarding the firestorm but no-one was blamed until several years later. This is interesting, because there were severe problems with the emergency warnings for the firestorm; these warnings were of greater consequence than the warnings about the chemical explosion because the losses caused by the firestorm were significantly greater. Yet, the approach to blame surrounding each of the events differed. Since the chemical explosion occurred while the Bad Apple discourse from the inquest into the firestorm was still potent, it is likely that this reaction became the focus in the public forum because it was a familiar and therefore accepted approach to take. Had the ATSB philosophy prevailed in media representations of the firestorm, perhaps there would have been less emphasis on the culpability of emergency services personnel. Instead there may have been a more in depth discussion of how safety can be improved in chemical industries through better regulation and by positioning dangerous chemicals further from residential areas. This sort of discussion is more useful for preventing future accidents than focusing primarily on the warning aspect of the emergency response.

Conclusion

The media has a strong influence over how a society thinks about a disaster and what particular themes should be given greater consideration. There is a general feeling in communities after a disaster that they want to prevent disasters from re-occurring and adopting an ATSB philosophy in media discourse is a useful way of helping to achieve this goal. However, media discourse into recent emergencies in Canberra has not been promoting future prevention. The media has given greater emphasis to emergency responses in Canberra than to the causes of the emergencies themselves. The shift from an ATSB type ideology evident in the media in 2003 has been replaced by articles consistent with the emotional and limited Bad Apple Theory. Ultimately, media is a business and it emphasises emotional issues, such as laying blame, in order to make a profit. However, the overemphasis on blame may have detrimental effects for the Canberra community, because it is inconsistent with approaches taken in quality accident analysis and prevention. It is likely that similar issues have occurred in media discourse in other areas and this could be a topic for further investigation. What can be drawn from this examination is that while the Canberra community receives greater exposure to the blame approach than to the ATSB philosophy, there will be continued public pressure for emergency services to be blamed rather than learning real lessons. If media discourse in Canberra were able to return to a no-blame approach to accidents, and therefore expose the public to this viewpoint, there would be a greater chance of making meaningful progress in preventing future disasters.

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Madeleine Rowland graduated from the Australian National University (ANU) in 2010 with a Bachelor of Arts with first class honours in Sociology and a Bachelor of Law. Her honours thesis entitled ‘Blame and Cause’ was supervised by Emeritus Professor Andrew Hopkins and examines the controversial coronial inquest into the 2003 Canberra firestorm. The thesis received high acclaim and in 2009 it was the only honours level project to be published in the book *Learning from High Reliability Organisations*, edited by Professor Andrew Hopkins. In 2011 she was approached by the ANU School of Sociology to take up a position as Research Associate with Dr Jan Hayes and Professor Stewart Lockie to prepare a series of reports for the Energy Pipelines CRC regarding public safety of carbon dioxide pipelines. While preparing these reports Madeleine has also tutored an undergraduate course entitled Hazards, Risks and Disasters.

**Silver Puree**

In the ebb of a tidal broth  
mangroves console to resort  
against a dying  
soon in  
the bleating silver of a drunken river,  
lap lazy waters break into incandescent silence.  
In winter’s flicker, lagoons buffoon  
trees bend to neck in a meadow,  
water swept and fenced  
windows mutter as  
soft rain is the misting wind of clouds  
while the road traffics a muddied flooding  
grazing a wide-river throats, still  
as limpid as a gorging snake. Eyes and holds’; a bridge returns our stare.

Noel Jeffs, Alexandra, Sydney, NSW
Breeding Them Tough North of the Border: Resilience and heroism as rhetorical responses to the 2011 Queensland floods

ROSEMARY WILLIAMSON

Dominating the Australian media early in 2011 were reports of widespread and disastrous flooding in the state of Queensland. On 13 January, then Premier Anna Bligh gave a press conference in which she made a brief and emotional speech that was broadcast repeatedly. In it, Bligh entreated her fellow Queenslanders ‘to remember who we are … the people that they breed tough north of the border’.

Bligh’s reference to strength and character ‘north of the border’, with its implicit appeal to communal resilience and cohesiveness, represents a rhetorical response common among leaders in times of natural disaster. It also alludes to long-standing demarcation and rivalries between the residents of Queensland and those of southern states of Australia, and in this sense, Bligh was adopting a distinctively inflected rhetorical strategy to which the notion of ‘Queenslander’ was central. This strategy continued into the recovery period. Long after the floodwaters had receded, the Queensland government invited local communities to nominate people who had performed extraordinary feats of bravery and selflessness during the flooding. These so-called Queensland Disaster Heroes featured in Queensland Week celebrations mid-year.

This paper considers the rhetorical dimensions of Bligh’s speech and the Queensland Disaster Heroes scheme. In particular, it considers the nature of appeals made to resilience and heroism, and situates those appeals within both established rhetorical practice and rhetorical theory related to community formation.

Introduction

A central and abiding concern of rhetorical criticism from the mid twentieth century has been the way in which language is used to engender collective views of self. A shift in rhetorical theory came with the work of Kenneth Burke (1950, 1969), which conceptualised identification, along with persuasion, as a defining principle of rhetoric. Since Burke, critics and theorists such as Charland (1987), Miller (1993), Hart (1998) and Hogan (1998) have investigated the ways in which communities are formed, sustained and strengthened rhetorically, with a recent iteration of this interest being studies (Bean, Keränen and Durfy 2011; Griffin-Padgett and Allison 2010) on the use of language by leaders who seek to unite people in times of catastrophe. This paper fits within, and contributes an Australian perspective to, this field of enquiry. It does so by investigating two distinct yet related responses to natural disasters in Queensland in 2011. The first, then Premier Anna Bligh’s iconic ‘North of the Border’ address to Queenslanders, is a speech and as such fits within the ‘constantly expanding’ (Gray-Rosendale and Gruber 2001: 1) canon of contemporary rhetorical criticism.

Resilience and its Neighbours

Dominating the Australian media early in 2011 were reports of widespread and disastrous flooding in the state of Queensland. By February, three-quarters of the state was affected by floodwaters, thirty-five people had died and nine were missing. In a motion of condolence to the House of Representatives, Prime Minister Julia Gillard described the floods as ‘unprecedented’ and of ‘unexpected severity’ (2011: para 16). The motion of condolence ‘record[ed] the nation’s admiration’ for courageous Australians, including Queensland Premier Anna Bligh, ‘who hour after hour informed, reassured and provided the leadership the people of Queensland needed’ (Gillard 2011: para 51).

The public face of Bligh’s leadership was the televised press conference, which periodically provided information on floodwaters as well as advice and solace to
Queenslanders affected by them. In one notably long press conference, on 13 January, Bligh delivered a 2138 word address, most of which reported on the condition of rivers and levy banks, the recovery of another body from floodwaters, the number of people still missing, the efforts of search and rescue operations, and the state of utilities and communications, and which gave practical advice to those either affected by flooding or seeking to help others. Bligh also paid tribute to the people for their common sense and resourcefulness. While pathos inflected her address, in phrases such as ‘completely and utterly devastated’ and ‘unbearable agony’ (2011b: para 1), the majority of the address was essentially informative and pragmatic.

Towards the end of her address, however, the dominant tone changed. An emotional Bligh said this:

... As we weep for what we have lost, and as we grieve for family and friends, and we confront the challenge that is before us, I want us to remember who we are. We are Queenslanders; we’re the people that they breed tough north of the border. We’re the ones that they knock down and we get up again. I said earlier this week that this weather may break our hearts and it is doing that but it will not break our will and in the coming weeks and in the coming months we are going to prove that beyond any doubt. Together, we can pull through this and that’s what I’m determined to do and with your help, we can achieve that. Thank you (2011b: para 6).

This excerpt, which from here is referred to as the ‘North of the Border’ speech, was broadcast repeatedly and made available online by news outlets. As a consequence, it could be perceived as a discrete and iconic speech, or rhetorical act.

The implicit objectives of Bligh’s press conference in its extant form are information and inspiration. In this sense, the press conference represents a public response expected from leaders of communities that face exceptional peril, whether that peril is caused by natural phenomena or human design. Such a response ‘combines strategic communication that helps to alleviate risk and restore public safety with a deeper, more humanistic communication’ (Griffin-Padgett and Allison 2010: 377). The ‘North of the Border’ speech, considered as a rhetorical act in itself, represents ‘the deeper, more humanistic communication’ that supplements the ‘strategic communication’ that must address changing circumstances quickly and pragmatically. This ‘humanistic communication’ is distinctive in its articulation of the nature of the community under threat, especially the fundamental characteristics that will enable the community to endure.

As such, ‘North of the Border’ shares similarities with other public statements that respond to disaster, both natural and other. One is the speaker’s deliberate and explicit identification with the community addressed. Following the earthquake that struck Christchurch, New Zealand on 22 February 2011, Prime Minister John Key made a speech that ended with ‘I am a proud son of Christchurch’ and elaborated on his connections to the city, which proved his knowledge of ‘what a wonderful place it is’ (‘Prime Minister John Key: Full Speech’ 2011: para 16). In an analysis of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani’s response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on New York City, Griffin-Padgett and Allison (2010: 383) note Giuliani’s frequent references to ‘we’ as a means of expressing solidarity with New Yorkers. They also note Giuliani’s ‘message of hope’, in which he states that the disaster threatened but did not ‘break our spirit’ and refers to New Yorkers as ‘strong and resilient’ and ‘unified’ (2010: 383-384). ‘We’, ‘we are’, ‘our’ and ‘us’ represent around one-seventh of the 124 words of ‘North of the Border’. Like Giuliani, Bligh will not allow the disaster to ‘break our will’, names her community and identifies its qualities, and also looks forward with optimism (‘ Together, we can pull through this...’) (2011b: para 6).

Typical also of such responses to disaster may be the notion of resilience. It underpins Bligh’s press conference in its extant form, and the ‘North of the Border’ speech, even if the word itself is not used. ‘Resilience’ is a term prominent in both responses to disasters and commentary on them, but from two perspectives. First, resilience is used to indicate the capacity to anticipate and manage the effects of catastrophic events, including through infrastructure and services. In this sense, resilience is manifest tangibly, including through the provision of infrastructure and services, a point well illustrated by Colten, Kates and Laska’s analysis (2008) of New Orleans’ response to Hurricane Katrina in August 2005 and afterwards. Second, resilience is used rhetorically, to incite a sense of communal cohesion and tenacity.

Used rhetorically, resilience is well established in public discourse, as is its close relative stoicism, both of which can be fundamental to appeals to communal cohesion. Some examples are instructive. Furedi identifies resilience as the quality that defined the collective reaction of Britons to severe flooding in the early 1950s, a quality that he associates with the ‘Blitz spirit’ (2007: 238) for which Britons were known during World War II bombings. Furedi suggests that in Britain, at least, the rhetoric of resilience, which pervaded commentary on the 1950s floods, has been overshadowed by the rhetoric of vulnerability, a conclusion reached through his comparison of representations of flooding in the 1950s and 2000s respectively. Others see resilience and vulnerability as ‘dialectically linked’ (Bean, Keränen and Durfy 2011: 434),
and Furedi (2007: 238) does acknowledge the persistence of resilience in public discourse around disaster, with specific mention of the aftermath of the 7 July 2005 bombings of London, a point well confirmed by Bean, Keränen and Durfy, who demonstrate that “The theme of ‘resilience’ reverberated across official and unofficial accounts of the attacks as commentators asserted that the British people had responded to events with exceptional stoicism and toughness” (2011: 428). Single public statements by prominent leaders distil the theme. Following the London bombings, then UK Prime Minister Tony Blair paid ‘tribute to the stoicism and resilience of the people of London who have responded in a way typical of them’ (Bean, Keränen and Durfy 2011: 428). After the 2011 Christchurch earthquake, Prime Minister John Key referred to ‘each and every Cantabrian who has stoically endured six months of aftershocks, only to be hit by the biggest shock of all’ (‘Prime Minister John Key: Full Speech’ 2011: para, 14).

Not all responses to disasters employ the rhetoric of resilience or stoicism. It is missing, for example, from initial reports on Hurricane Katrina and the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, which suggests that contextual matters determine whether it is appropriate to appeal to the resilience of a people (Bean, Keränen and Durfy 2011: 451). Bligh’s appeal to the resilience of Queenslanders, therefore, can be seen as both part of a rhetorical tradition and a deliberate strategy.

As a rhetorical strategy, it is a predictable one, whether from vernacular or theoretical perspectives. For Australians, defining the collective self as resilient, or similar, occurs through the cliché of ‘the Aussie battler’ who persists doggedly against the odds. This is a culturally familiar trope, but it is an essentially mundane one associated with the ‘ordinary Australian’ and often used politically, as by One Nation leader Pauline Hanson in the 1990s. However, extraordinary circumstances, including those caused by natural disasters, demand that a people be called forth in ways suited to those circumstances. Drawing on Charland’s theory of constitutive rhetoric (1987), Bean, Keränen and Durfy (2011: 435-36) comment that ‘national audiences are not persuaded to follow a certain course of action in the aftermath of disaster; rather, they are, in Althusserian fashion, interpellated—discursively called into being—in ways that require a more or less scripted, narrative performance’. When leaders call forth the resilience of those in crisis, that resilience is already part of the collective sense of self, but it is activated and situated. It is unsurprising, then, that Furedi (2007) observes that the rhetoric of resilience during the 1950s floods in Britain drew on 1940s wartime experiences, nor is it surprising that Bean, Keränen and Durfy (2011: 442) observe that the rhetoric of resilience following the 2005 London bombings drew on World War II bombings and later IRA terrorist acts.

‘North of the Border’ calls into being a people—Queenslanders—both nominally and narratively, but in a potentially divisive way. Unlike Gillard’s motion of condolence, which acknowledges state circumstances yet overall praises the Australian spirit, Bligh’s speech (2011b: para 6) excises Queenslanders from their national compatriots, both eugeniically and geographically: ‘We are Queenslanders; we’re the people that they breed tough north of the border’. What follows is a narrative involving attacker and victim, assault and recovery: ‘We’re the ones that they knock down and we get up again’. Unlike other attacker-victim narratives around disasters, the ‘they’ who have done harm is not necessarily related to the disaster itself; rather, ‘they’ is a malevolent and unnamed entity responsible over time for forming the quintessential Queensland resilience. What’s more, that resilience (‘our will’) is something to be proven ‘beyond any doubt’, suggesting that Queenslanders have faced, or are facing, judgment.

Bligh alludes here to long-standing demarcation and rivalries between residents of Queensland and those of southern states of Australia, and in so doing she adopts a distinctively inflected rhetorical strategy to which the notion of ‘Queenslander’ is central. Fitzgerald (2011) situates ‘North of the Border’ within political and populist traditions of the setting of Queensland apart from other states, as well as a tradition of competitive sport that pitches Queensland against neighbouring state New South Wales. Bligh invokes the myth of ‘Queenslanders as brave and bold frontiersmen and women fighting against the odds’ and draws on ‘deeply held folk memories of other Queensland floods’ (Fitzgerald 2011: 24). While acknowledging that Queensland in some respects does differ from other states, including geographically and demographically, Fitzgerald (2011) also draws attention to significant migration of southerners to Queensland in recent years, and other contradictions of Queensland uniqueness.

To acknowledge such diversity and integration would, however, potentially threaten the consistent and coherent portrayal of a people that is fundamental to constitutive rhetoric, and that founds ‘North of the Border’. In effect, the speech defines a community positively but in opposition to another, a type of ‘community by negation’, to apply Hart’s terminology (1998: xxv). Hart suggests that antipathy is essential to community formation and the emboldening of a people (1998: xxv). While Hart offers by way of illustration war and other rhetoric far removed from responses to natural disaster, his argument is nevertheless relevant to Bligh’s calling forth of a people
in part through a metaphor of violence (‘We’re the ones that they knock down...’).

**Beyond Resilience to Heroism**

Following the ‘North of the Border’ speech at the press conference on 13 January, Bligh took questions. A journalist asked whether bravery awards would be considered, to recognise extraordinary contributions to the rescue effort. Bligh answered:

We’ve got local heroes all across Queensland who have... The stories that have been coming out of regional towns and cities, of people who put their own lives at risk to rescue others, we have now seen that across the South East as well ... . So we’ll certainly be looking to recognise local heroes out of this event in the little towns, big towns and cities when the time comes but we’re certainly very very proud of the people who have been out there, as I said, being the heroes of this event (2011b: para 12).

Recognition of the ‘local heroes’ came in the form of the Queensland Disaster Heroes scheme. After the floodwaters had receded, the Queensland government invited local communities to nominate people who had performed extraordinary feats of bravery and selflessness during the flooding. Submitted were over 3500 nominations from 10 regions of the state. These so-called Queensland Disaster Heroes featured in Queensland Week celebrations held between 4 and 13 June 2011 (‘Queensland Disaster Heroes' 2011).

The names of the heroes were published on the Queensland Government website, as lists of recipients in each of the 10 regions along with media releases for each region. The media releases were similarly structured, with each stating early on that ‘from the devastation stories of bravery and courage have emerged’ (Bligh 2011a: para 3), followed by illustrative stories and examples, and then an expression of gratitude along these lines:

Today is the day we get to say thank you on behalf of all Queenslanders for your acts of bravery, selflessness and sense of compassion—and above all, your undying Queensland spirit.

Our challenge moving forward is to recover and build a stronger Queensland and your selfless work will serve as an inspiration in that task. (Bligh 2011a: paras 13-14)

The heroes and their stories constitute the evidence, promised in the ‘North of the Border’ speech, that Queenslanders would ‘prove ... beyond any doubt’ their exceptional strength.

Bligh’s recognition of the capacity of people to perform exceptional deeds in the face of disaster is predictable. That people act heroically or ‘rise to the occasion' when natural disasters strike is well known. Research by the 1960s had demonstrated that people ‘behave proactively and prosocially to assist one another’, and that communities strengthen, with members performing such tasks as search and rescue (Tierney, Bevc and Kuligowski 2006: 58). A study of actions after Hurricane Katrina (Rodríguez, Trainor and Quarantelli 2006) reports that people behaved in extraordinary ways to cope with the disaster, and overall prosocially, despite depictions of social anarchy by the media. For the leader as orator, such behaviours can be used constitutively, and narratively, to call into being a people, as occurs through the Queensland Disaster Heroes scheme and associated media releases. To again draw a parallel with floods in 1950s Britain, then Prime Minister Clement Attlee similarly and publicly acknowledged ‘many moving stories of heroism’ (cited in Furedi 2007: 239).

Taken together, Bligh’s press conference of 13 January 2011, with the ‘North of the Border’ speech embedded within it, and the Queensland Disaster Heroes scheme prove that Queenslanders are a people ‘stoic and heroic’, words borrowed from a 1953 report on a tour made by Queen Elizabeth II to flood-ravaged West Norfolk, Britain. The ‘young Queen’ was ‘left ... with a lasting impression of the courage and fortitude which typified the giant rescue and clear-up operation along the coast ... . She was impressed by the stoic and heroic manner of the people who had obviously been through a bad and trying time’ (cited by Furedi 2007: 239). Over five decades later and in similar circumstances, a similar assessment was made of the people of Queensland.

**Concluding Comments**

A tenet of rhetorical criticism from the mid twentieth century is that certain situations call for certain types of rhetorical responses, which then have shared characteristics (Devitt 2004: 6-19). This paper has demonstrated that leaders, as orators, articulate the behavioural and attitudinal norms that are expected when disaster strikes, and that these norms may be expressed through an archetype—Quelander, New Yorker, Cantabrian—around which are narratives of resilience, stoicism or heroism. In responding to disaster in this way, leaders produce what Griffin-Padgett and Allison (2010) call ‘restorative rhetoric’. As they demonstrate, restorative rhetoric occurs after natural disasters as well as terrorist acts, both of which, despite their obvious differences, demand responses essentially directed towards help and support. Restorative rhetoric is apparent in responses to two disasters in the US: Hurricane Katrina, and the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre. In such situations, ‘the rhetor is not directly in “defense” of himself/herself; but instead serves as a
facilitator and sense-maker, whose task is not only to manage the crisis, but also to manage the healing process from disaster to restoration’ (Griffin-Padgett and Allison 2010: 378). Restorative rhetoric has four purposes, ‘to: restore faith in a system by reconnecting with a core set of values and beliefs; facilitate healing of those directly affected by the crisis and wider audiences who serve as witnesses to the destruction; create a sense of security during the resolution of the crisis; and establish a vision for the future’ (2010: 380). These purposes can be discerned in the ‘North of the Border’ speech, and the Queensland Disaster Heroes scheme can be seen as a tangible extension of the sentiments expressed in that speech about quintessential Queensland strength.

Theoretically situated in this way, Bligh’s oratory, and by extension the Queensland Disaster Heroes scheme, align with identified rhetorical practices and so are predictable and comparable to other responses to disaster. Yet behind Bligh’s oratory are a people distinguished by a singular resilience developed by necessity in the face of hostility from their compatriots, which potentially functions communally at state level but divisively at national level. It is a regressive notion that sits uneasily alongside efforts in recent years to promote Queensland and its capital Brisbane as places notable for their progressiveness, and it is a distinctive feature of the rhetoric around the floods in 2011. Whether this singular resilience inflects other ‘flood rhetoric’ in Queensland, particularly that around cataclysmic flooding in 1893 and 1974, is beyond the scope of this paper and is the subject of ongoing research by the author.

Also beyond the scope of this paper is the effect of the 2011 flood rhetoric on audiences, including Queenslanders. What can be made, however, is a comment on its effect on Bligh herself. As with other leaders called into action at times of disaster, Bligh can be seen as ‘a rhetorical hero’ (Griffin-Padgett and Allison 2010: 389), somebody whose prominence and standing as a leader rose remarkably as a result of her public response to disaster. Prime Minister Gillard’s praise of Bligh’s leadership, in her motion of condolence to the House of Representatives (2011), affirms the standing of that leadership. Other affirmation followed. High circulation magazine The Australian Women’s Weekly ran a feature article on Bligh in March 2011, with a full-page photograph of her captioned ‘Premier Anna Bligh impressed the entire nation with her strength and leadership throughout the Queensland floods and Cyclone Yasi’ (Baker 2011: 35). Quoted in the article is ‘one woman’ in an evacuation centre: ‘She was just a different person during the floods …. Before, she was a politician. Now she is a woman and a human. People are leaning on her. She just seems to be in touch with what we’re feeling’ (Baker 2011: 36). Bligh is above criticism: ‘her handling of the weather disasters has given her a halo’ (Baker 2011: 41). Yet also emerging from the article is a post-flood narrative that in spite of her exalted status, Bligh might lose the 2012 state election. She did. But for those who remained fixed upon media reports of the unfolding disaster in early 2011, Bligh can perhaps be remembered as the greatest Queensland Disaster Hero of them all.

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Untitled

sydney morning herald
11th of march, 2011
page 7

“the father of a perth rigger killed at work has slammed australian workplace safety standards after a court fined those guilty over his son’s death”.

“luke aaron murrie, 22, suffered a fatal head injury when he was struck by a 375kg section of a crane mast.”

“outside court, mark murrie told reporters he was dumbfounded by the number of workplace accidents that continue to happen”.

“it’s all crap. he was going to work, not going to war” his father said

luke murrie did not have a fly-over or 21 gun salute at his funeral

luke murrie was not hailed a construction industry hero by his bosses

he did not receive medals for bravery in the line of duty

building workers’ union members were not given the afternoon off to attend the funeral

the minister for health and safety did not outline his distinguished career in the construction industry in an impassioned speech to parliament, nor did he express deep sorrow at yet another loss, nor reassure us of his worthiness as a worker, nor of the importance to the nation of the work that he was doing

his friends said he was a good mate and liked a joke, and would do anything for his mates

the prime minister, the opposition leader and the premier were not present at his funeral, nor did they hold press conferences to express their grief and gratitude and to emphasize the importance of their commitment to australian construction

his fiancee was not on the front page of the herald/sun, tear-filled eyes mourning the loss of their future happiness

the media did not focus on his death at all, did not mention it in headlines, did not televise his funeral, did not have in depth interviews with friends and family, nor run it as a hot story for a week

but for luke murrie and 43 other construction workers that died in that year

death was not a part of their job description

Komninos Zervos,
South Carlton, Victoria
The Impact of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Crisis on Anti-Nuclear Movements in India

UPENDRA CHOUDHURY

India was the first country in Asia to start a nuclear programme in 1948 yet organised protest against nuclear plants in the country emerged only in mid-1980s mainly due to the loss of livelihood and inadequate compensation during appropriation of land for nuclear projects. The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear crisis in Japan following the tsunami on 11 March 2011 has, however, had a major galvanising effect on anti-nuclear movements in India. For the first time, nuclear protests assumed a mass character and brought the issue of nuclear risk and radiation to the public consciousness. The intensity of nuclear protests led the Indian Government to halt construction at the plant site and start consultation with the local people to ‘allay their fears’, and come out with better nuclear safety and regulation. It also forced some state governments like West Bengal to reject New Delhi’s nuclear plant proposal. Notwithstanding this, there is yet to emerge a comprehensive anti-nuclear movement in India as was seen in Europe or America in the 1970s and 1980s. In order to be more effective, anti-nuclear movements in India should focus more on educating the people about nuclear catastrophe and suggest socio-economically viable courses of action that require less energy.

If the application of nuclear technology as a source of energy has always been controversial, the March 2011 tsunami-induced Fukushima Daiichi nuclear crisis in Japan has made it more controversial. The online and television images of the deadly radioactive explosion have not only caused fear and grief all over the world but also inspired opposition to nuclear energy in Europe, North America and Asia. In a major policy reversal, for instance, Germany has decided to shut all nuclear reactors by 2022 (BBC News 30 May 2011), while Italy has opted to shelve its future nuclear plans in a national referendum (BBC News 14 June 2011). The Swiss government aims to decommission all of its plants by 2034 (Lou 2011), and the UK nuclear plans are on hold (Guardian 5 April 2011). The United States, the world’s largest nuclear power producer, has been forced to whittle down to just four new reactors than its earlier plan for about 30 additional nuclear plants (Cooke 2011). Several reports suggest that public sentiment toward nuclear power has changed in many countries in Asia (Mongolia, to South Korea to Taiwan and even—in modest ways—to China) that are experiencing rapid economic growth and pressing need for low-carbon energy (Bird 2012).

This paper investigates the impact of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear crisis on India, more particularly on the ongoing anti-nuclear movements in the country. It first explains the role of nuclear energy in the overall development paradigm of India. The second part analyses the chronology, activities and basis of anti-nuclear movements in India. The third part examines the impact of Fukushima Daiichi nuclear crisis on anti-nuclear protests in the world’s largest democratic country and critically looks at their performance.

Role of Nuclear Energy in India’s Development

India was the first country in Asia to start a nuclear programme. India’s first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, recognised quite early that nuclear technology offered tremendous potential for economic development, especially for a developing country like India which suffered long years of colonial exploitation. With Nehru’s support, Homi Jehangir Bhabha—known as the founder of India’s nuclear energy programme—laid the foundations of the Indian atomic programme. The Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) was established in 1948 and the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) was set up six years later. The objective of the programme was to ‘develop atomic energy for peaceful purposes’ and to ‘attain self-reliance and technological independence’ (Choudhury 2006). Initially the AEC and DAE received international cooperation, and by 1963 India had two research reactors and four nuclear power reactors (Chaturvedi 2000). In spite of the humiliating defeat in the border war by China in 1962 and China’s nuclear testing in 1964, India continued to adhere to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. On 18 May 1974 however, India performed a 15 kt Peaceful Nuclear Explosion (PNE). The Western...
powers considered it as nuclear weapons proliferation and cut off all financial and technical help, even for the production of nuclear power. Notwithstanding this, India used existing infrastructure to build nuclear power reactors. The precipitation of the international oil crisis in mid 1970s further reinforced the Indian commitment to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes (Thomas 1982).

In recent years, due to globalisation, economic liberalisation and the information technology revolution, India has emerged as the second fastest growing economy in the world after China with an average annual growth rate of 8%. Such high growth naturally requires more energy for consumption. The country is therefore exploring all energy options including nuclear energy to sustain its soaring economic growth rate. Constant increase in oil prices, climate change concerns, dwindling coal resources, difficulties in constructing large dams for hydro-electricity and the need to provide electricity to an astonishing 412 million Indians who still live in darkness are some other reasons that have pushed the Indian state to consider the nuclear energy option seriously. Moreover, the decision of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) to exempt India from its own rules in 2008 has opened the door for New Delhi to import nuclear reactors and fuel from other countries. Consequently, India has concluded nuclear agreements with the United States, Russia and France among others and is planning to set up some 30 nuclear reactors (in addition to 20 operating nuclear plants and 7 under construction) and get a quarter of its electricity from nuclear energy by 2050 (World Nuclear Association 2012).

The Genesis of Anti-Nuclear Movements in India

India’s decision to use nuclear energy in a big way has not gone unchallenged. Many anti-nuclear groups have come to the fore to oppose the country's nuclear power policy. It may however be noted that in the early days of the nation’s nuclear programme, most people looked to it with pride and believed that technological development would enhance the social wellbeing of the country. A few people had however opposed the nuclear programme because its performance was poor or the plants were ‘dirty’ by international standards.

Organised protest against nuclear energy in India emerged only in mid-1980s. Several major events in the country contributed to this. The first was the ‘Chipko’ movement (literally meant to hug trees to prevent them from felling) which began in 1973 and spearheaded by the Dasholi Gram Swarajya Mandal against the policy of the Uttar Pradesh Government to auction forests. The second was the ‘Silent Valley’ movement in Kerala which started in the early 1980s. This was the first major campaign against a dam in India that successfully saved a genetically rich and one of the last remaining rainforests in Kerala from being submerged. The third event was the Bhopal gas tragedy of 1984 which raised doubts about industrial safety and hazards. By the late 1980s, the Narmada Bachao Andolan (the Save Narmada Movement) had also made its presence felt by questioning the construction of dams, displacement of people and related environmental costs (Srikant 2009). This in turn influenced other grass-root movements in the country.

Kerala, a south Indian state with the highest literacy rate in the country, was the first to take the lead in opposing a nuclear reactor in its territory when the Government of India made a proposal to locate a nuclear plant at Bhoothathankettu in Kothamangalam Taluk in central Kerala. The protest was led by the Organisation for the Protection from Nuclear Radiation. The people won the battle when Indira Gandhi, the then Indian Prime Minister, unequivocally declared that the establishment of a Nuclear Plant in Kerala was not under consideration. The plan for another nuclear power plant at Peringome, Kannur was also scrapped due to public protest in the state. Here a Marxist government was strongly in favour of building the plant but gave up the idea when it saw that this would lead to a strong erosion in its popularity that would affect the party’s electoral chances.

In 1985, a group of Gandhian activists and intellectuals questioned the wisdom of establishing the Kakrapar Atomic power station or CAPE near Surat in Gujarat. Two demonstrations took place at Kakrapar and Surat in May and August that year. The agitation attracted wide spread public support as the Sampoorna Kranti Vidyalaya and Anu Urja Jagruti were able to organise a massive rally near the plant site in spite of the government’s efforts to prevent it.

The proposal to site a reactor at Kaiga on the banks of Kali River in the midst of Western Ghats in Karnataka also mobilised a number of farmers, betel nut growers, fisher folk, journalists and writers to launch an agitation against it. A great moment of this agitation occurred in 1988 when hundreds of women jumped into the foundations of the reactor which was being built. The local district council and the village councils in Uttara Kannada district passed unanimous resolutions against the plant. The protesters also challenged the placement of the reactor on environmental grounds in the Supreme Court of India which directed the government to take the points raised by the agitation into consideration. The project continued but with considerable improvements, made to allay the fears of local people.

In August 1986, the anti-nuclear groups came together at a seminar on ‘Atom in India’ in Bombay now Mumbai. Here it was decided that the movement should continue on the local level with various independent groups conducting their own forms of protest, but attempts
should be made to help each other and that there should be more communication amongst the various groups. A bimonthly journal called Anumukti (Atomic Liberation) started publication from Surat, Gujarat in August 1987 and is still regularly published.

The decision by the Indian Government to order two Soviet built VVER–1000 reactors for the extreme south of the country at Koodankulam in Tamil Nadu also led to protest. People from three nearby districts—Tirunelveli, Kanyakumari and Tuticorin—organised several rallies to oppose the project on the basis of feared displacement and nuclear radiation. In May 1989, around ten thousand people assembled to protest against the plant under the banner of the National Fish Workers’ Union (NFWU). However, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the assassination of the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and American objections that the project violated international agreements kept the project in limbo for the next several years (Ravi and Sheoran 2012). In 1997, Prime Minister Deve Gowda went to Moscow and signed an agreement with Russia to build these plants. The protest started almost immediately after the agreement was signed and has been maintained continuously to date.

Impact of Fukushima Nuclear Disaster

The tsunami-induced Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster in March 2011 in Japan is one of the worst nuclear accidents in the history of mankind after the catastrophes in Three Mile Island, Pennsylvania in 1979 and Chernobyl in 1986. This nuclear disaster caused by a monster earthquake and a vast tsunami saw radiation spewed across a wide part of north-eastern Japan, forcing the evacuation of some one million people who lived near the plant and raising fears of contamination in everything from fruit and vegetables to fish and water (Foster 2011). The online and television images of the deadly radioactive explosion caused fear and grief all over the world including India. A survey of nearly ten thousand Indians just after the Fukushima meltdown suggested that 77% of people had concerns about atomic safety while 69% believed the Indian authorities could not handle a nuclear disaster on the scale of that in Japan (AFP News 2011).

The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear crisis has also had a major galvanising effect on anti-nuclear movements in India. On 25 March the Anti-Nuclear Struggles Solidarity Forum consisting of civil society organisations, environmental groups, peace activists, journalists and intellectuals from different parts of the country staged a rally in New Delhi that demanded a moratorium on new nuclear projects and an independent review of existing plants in India (AP News 2011).

Opposition to nuclear power plants has also spread to other major towns and cities and even to remote villages and backward regions of the country (Save Tamils Movement 2012). Eighty villages, for instance, have been protesting under the banner of the Kishan Sangharsh Samiti and Paramanu Sayantra Virodh Manch against the planned nuclear plant at Fatehbad district in Haryana and two farmers have died during the protests (Shiva 2011). Similarly, 44 villages have been resisting the planned nuclear reactor in Chutkahl, Madhya Pradesh (Ibid). Farmers of the Bhavnagar district of Gujarat, under the auspices Gram Swaraj Samiti, have been carrying out protests against the proposed 6,000 mega watt nuclear plant at the Mithivirdi village in the area (Yusuf 2011). The people of Kovada (Andhra Pradesh) have also been demanding the scrapping of a plant in their locality which they think could endanger their safety and livelihoods. The people of Haripur, a rural coastal village in West Bengal comprised of peasants and fisher folk, have organised themselves under the Paschim Banga Khet Majoor Samity (PBKMS) to resist a plant in their village (Bhadra 2012). Bowing to local sentiment, the new West Bengal Government has, however, cancelled the project and declared West Bengal a nuclear-free state.

Other important anti-nuclear movements in India that have caught international attention recently for their organised nature and militant character are the Jaitapur anti-nuclear movement in Maharashtra and the Koodankulam anti-nuclear Movement in Tamil Nadu.

The stir in Jaitapur began with a public interest litigation filed by Janhit Seva Samiti in 2006, but picked up momentum after the public hearing of the project in 2010 and the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear crisis a year later (Sharma 2012). The controversial power plant to be built at the cost of $40 billion—comprising six nuclear power plants—will be one of the world’s largest nuclear power complexes. It is being developed jointly by two state-owned energy majors—France’s Areva and Nuclear Power Corporation Ltd of India. The protestors are not only worried about this untested reactor but also the choice of site saying that Jaitapur is next to the sea coast and it is vulnerable to both tsunamis and earthquakes. Villagers of the region have formed Konkan Bachao Sangharsh Samiti and Janahit Seva Samiti and have even refused to accept cheques for the forced land acquisition. Ten village panchayats have resigned to protest the violation of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment which provides constitutional sanctity to local governance in India. On 18 April 2011 one person died and eight others were seriously injured when police fired at the protestors who were demonstrating against the proposed nuclear plant (Shiva 2011).

Similarly, although the local fishing communities have been protesting against the Koodankulam nuclear plant in Tamil Nadu for over two decades, the current protest at
the reactor site picked up momentum when the proposal for four more reactors was announced in February 2008 (Sergeev 2008). The impending commissioning of the reactors in light of the devastating and uncontrollable nuclear meltdown in Fukushima, Japan, has triggered a wave of concern in the area (Jayaraman and Rajan 2012). The People’s Movement Against Nuclear Energy (PMANE), a grassroots organisation based in the fishing villages of Koodankulam and Idinthakarai, is spearheading the protest under the leadership of S.P Udaykumar. To express solidarity and to register their protest against the establishment of nuclear plants in the country, a national level march was organised from Madurai to Idinthakarai/Koodankulam in November 2011 (Balaji 2011). The march was organised by the National Alliance of Anti-Nuclear Movements, a forum of various anti-nuclear organisations from all across India. As protests by locals and activists intensified, the state Chief Minister urged the Prime Minister to order the halting of the project until concerns and fears about the plant’s safety be addressed. The Prime Minister quickly sent a Minister to meet the protesters and assure them that the government gives priority to people’s safety over nuclear power generation. Meanwhile, to resolve the issue, the Tamil Nadu Government set up an expert committee which submitted a go-ahead report to the government after inspecting the safety features of the plant. Consequently, the state government gave a green light to the project but demanded the allocation of all power to be generated from the KNPP to the state (Zee News 2012). The first unit of the Koodankulam nuclear power project is expected to start generating electricity by August 2012 (Energy Alternatives India 2012).

However, four important points need to be mentioned in this context. First, while there have been anti-nuclear protests in India since the mid 1980s, the Fukushima disaster in March 2011 undoubtedly acted as a catalyst and the protests snowballed not just at the project sites but also throughout the country. Second, unlike the countries in the West, the anti-nuclear movement in India is not confined to environmental groups and professional organisations in urban areas. Indian farmers, fishermen and the grassroots activists living in villages and remote areas play an equal part for a wider variety of reasons, ranging from ingrained distrust of the government due to corruption and lack of accountability, to tangible local concerns such as losing land rights and economic livelihoods (Bhadra 2012). Third, people of all shades of political opinion, from communist trade unionists to right wing nationalists, from Gandhian social activists to ordinary farmers and fishermen, are all learning to work together on issues of common concern. Fourth, anti-nuclear struggles in India have been consistently non-violent despite brutally repressive methods used by the Indian state such as false cases of ‘sedition’ and ‘war against the state’, illegal arrests, tapping of phones and other communication networks, surveillance by intelligence officers, confiscating the protesters’ passports and ration cards, preventing essential supplies—including tankers of water and milk—from reaching at the protest sites and harassing individuals known to be pro anti-nuclear on various pretexts.

The Success and Failures

Anti-nuclear movements in India, like any other country, have had success and failures. But for the first time, they have assumed a mass character as is evident in case of Koodankulam and, to some extent in Jaitapur. Strong resistance against the proposed nuclear power plants in some states has either forced the state governments to reject the central government proposal altogether, as was done by Kerala and West Bengal, or compelled the Government of India to halt construction at the plant sites and start consulting with the local people to ‘allay their fears’, as is the case with Koodankulam. The intensity of public protest has also led the Government to plan for better nuclear safety and more effective regulation and oversight. For instance, the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh ordered the country’s Department of Atomic Energy to organise a full safety audit of India’s 20 operating nuclear reactors. His government has also introduced the Nuclear Safety Regulatory Authority Bill 2011 in Parliament (Lok Sabha), with the objective of setting up an autonomous and independent regulatory authority that will subsume the current Atomic Energy Regulatory Board.

However, despite these successes there is yet to emerge a comprehensive anti-nuclear movement in India as was seen in Europe or America in the 1970s and 1980s. The movement against nuclear power, nuclear weapons, or both in the West came out of environmental movements in the second half of the 1970s that were further catalysed by the Three Mile Island accident in the USA (1979) and the Chernobyl disaster in the USSR (1986). Following the Fukushima nuclear meltdown in Japan in March 2011, there were also massive demonstrations against nuclear power projects in Europe and America. These anti-nuclear protests have delayed construction or halted commitments to build some new nuclear plants (Giugni 2004) and have pressured the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to enforce and strengthen the safety regulations for nuclear power plants (Brown and Brutoco 1997).

The continuing protest against nuclear power in India has certainly put the Government in a tight spot yet the movement has not been successful in shaking the resolve of the government to build nuclear power plants in the country. Anti-nuclear groups lack organisational strength and large resources, so they cannot compete against the powerful state and nuclear corporate lobbies that ‘impose ideologies of economic growth, images of
nuclear safety, and positive views of novel technologies by means of the continuous and intensive distribution of biased information' (Chen 2011). Moreover, the notion of 'development' plays a great role in creating a pro-nuclear populace. This is especially true for India's middle class that does not live in the immediate vicinity of the plant. It appears to support the government's assessment that nuclear power is necessary for India's 'rapid economic development' and emergence as a 'major world power'. Furthermore, there is a definite lack of understanding about the disastrous aspects of nuclear power. Some people tend to view nuclear power with pride and even as a symbol of modernity. Others believe nuclear safety to be as simple as gas cylinder safety. Some of the most educated people don't understand that safe nuclear energy is a utopia (Sarkar S 2011); villagers are mostly unaware of the risk and have no fear of nuclear radiation. Their anger is primarily directed against possible eviction from their lands or loss of their livelihood. It is my belief that anti-nuclear movements in India should focus more on educating the people about nuclear catastrophe and suggesting alternative socio-economically viable courses that require less energy.

Conclusion

A comprehensive anti-nuclear movement is yet to emerge in India, but as the Government envisages a monumental growth in the country's nuclear energy production, it is only natural that anti-nuclear protests in the country will intensify further, given the public concern about nuclear safety and forceful land acquisition policy of the Government. This would put the Indian state on a collision course with the people resisting the construction of nuclear power plants in their backyards. It has become evident that there is a clear gap between the Government's ambitious nuclear power program and public perceptions about nuclear energy. To bridge this gap, the Indian state and its nuclear establishment should ensure transparency and demonstrate responsibility towards the wider public by tackling the 'power' issue with an open mind rather than a cloistered 'nuclear-power-only' mindset. Moreover, the concerns that Indian citizens have about nuclear energy cannot be addressed solely through the adjustment of a nuclear energy policy. A myriad of other policies and accompanying institutions must also be involved in the process. Policies that rely on renewable energy resources like solar, wind and bio-fuels and help in the adoption of energy conservation and energy efficiency measures in the country should be given priority by the government. The anti-nuclear groups have also a critical role to play in this regard especially in suggesting and popularising socio-economically viable courses of action that require less energy. Last but not the least, there are a number of institutions like the legislature, political parties, civil society, media etc. that mediate between the government and citizens in a democratic country. They should play a more pro-active role in bridging the gulf between the government and the citizenry on the issue of nuclear energy.

All this would benefit India's energy development strategy as a whole and help to avoid unnecessary showdown between the Government and the citizens in future.

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**Duty**
It was your upbringing.
Your mother drilled it into you. Do unto others. Help out.
Stay late and finish the work that others have left,
your red shoes forcing you to dance and dance, long
after the music has stopped
and everybody else has gone home and you alone in that
empty building
with the slickly polished floor, with stripes and circles
painted on it
spinning and spinning like an out of control toy top.

**Laura Solomon Nelson, New Zealand**
Reconciled to the Belief: Investigating the need for hope

Rhon Teruelle

The main intention of this paper is to examine the need for hope. Specifically, this work explores how various manifestations of utopian visions, radical imaginings and hope have become implicated in the conceptualization of meaningful social change. Current investigations into the emergent field of social change range in breadth and scope; from studies that outline a number of specific movements, to activist use of new and social media, to interrogating possible reasons for participation. But despite the number of recent articles that explore various aspects of social change, very little academic analyses focus on the idea of hope. This paper argues that the concept of hope is crucial to imagining meaningful political change, yet, appears to be diluted (or worse, minimized) in postmodernist literature. By participating in the ongoing discussion, this work makes a strong case for the need for discourses of hope in considering positive political change within a dominant capitalist system.

According to Giroux (2005, 2), the idea of hope, nowadays, typifies conventional discourse, and ‘seems, at best, a nostalgic remnant of the 1960s’. In other words, the tradition of utopian impulses and radical imaginings appear to be in decline in today’s society, with some of the blame directed at people’s apathy and lack of motivation. One could argue that meaningful social change, although remaining on the minds of many, has become somewhat difficult to conceive. Jameson (1994, xii) poignantly suggests that we find it easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. Further, escaping what Cazdyn (2006) simply refers to as ‘the system’ appears to have been made impossible. These types of statements illuminate the increased difficulty in conceptualizing an alternative to the existing state of things.

Complicating Utopian Tendencies and Radical Imaginings

Anderson (2004, 67) argues that utopian ideals flourish ‘not in times of upheaval as such….but in the calm before the storm, when institutional arrangements appear unchangeable, but minds have been set free by some still unseen tectonic shifts to reinvent the world’. But are we in the midst of the calm before the storm? Or are we, instead, at the stage of a revolutionary upheaval? In working through Anderson’s paradigm, it becomes apparent that an altogether different (third) option possibly exists – one that includes apathy, hopelessness, indifference and the complete lack or impossibility of a utopian vision – similar to what Giroux refers to.

Aronowitz (2005) laments the seemingly ‘defeatist attitude’ that is now espoused by a number of cultural critics who, for him, have essentially given up on changing the world. Aronowitz (2005) lists Sheldon Wolin, Benjamin Barber, Michael Walzer and, indeed, a veritable legion of former Marxist intellectuals such as Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau and Zygmunt Bauman who have all embraced a ‘stripped down’ version of democracy and social justice. According to Aronowitz (2005, 31), the individuals listed above have taken the postmodern turn by abjuring “grand narratives” (anti-totality), and utopian visions’ and abandoning ‘the search for a new or significantly altered paradigm of social transformation’. As well, Aronowitz (2005, 31) posits the following: ‘Although most call themselves “radical” democrats, they advocate the ‘realistic’ politics of what Cornel West and Roberto Unger have settled for: pragmatic tinkering with the institutions of liberal democracy’.

This differs significantly from Anderson’s (2004, 68) own vision of what a utopian political program today might look like:

In the spirit of Adorno’s suggestion that emancipation be negatively defined as that state where no-one went without food (meaning that this is not enough of a change) – a contemporary answer might be: that condition where no-one, anywhere in the world, went without work; a demand capable in its modesty of overthrowing every social, economic and moral institution we know.

In a world fraught with poverty, imagining a place where everyone was employed is a utopian ideal that is in direct...
opposition to the current social order. Demanding that no one went without work would be akin to a requirement that no one went hungry; an impossibility within today's dominant capitalist structure and neoliberal ideologies.

As it stands, the capitalist system has been designed (or perhaps metamorphosed) to distantiﬁe the rich from the poor and can only function through the maintenance of this separation. In short, the rich can only stay rich at another's expense, and thus, the system can only be maintained when countless individuals remain impoverished. 'So many are dying', as Cazdyn (2006, 17) rightly suggests, 'not because capitalism is failing, but because it is succeeding, because it is fulﬁlling its logic – a fact that seems more and more visible today than at any other time in recent history'. Without the division between the rich and the poor, not only would poverty be a thing of the past, but those in power would also face diminishing wealth. One could conclude that the abolishment of this division between rich and poor would lead to the capitalist system's collapse. After all, capitalism is ultimately based on class (Marx 1977).

Challenges to Radical Imaginnings and Utopian Tendencies

Although there are a plethora of theories that attempt to explain the end of utopia, inevitably, most critics gesture towards neoliberalization and the corresponding powerful neoliberal discourse (Giroux 2005, Hardt 2008) as some of the main reasons for today's conditions; one where hope is an afterthought. The old adage, 'Money is the root of all evil' seems like such a simplistic remark, yet, quite apropos as money functions as a synecdoche of capital, and capital and neoliberalism continue to be inherently intertwined. The furthering and prominence of neoliberal ideologies has, as Cazdyn (2006, 9) underscores, 'employed ever-ingenious ways to short-circuit our resistance'. Thus, we are 'bought off on the level of conscience, since it is impossible within commodity culture to be clean' (Cazdyn 2006, 9). Cazdyn (2006) notes that this has been accomplished through 'being bought off by desire'. In short, since we all live within the existing system, we have little choice but to be complicit and invested in said system. The creation of perceived needs and desires only further complicates matters. It has become increasingly diﬃcult to challenge the system and all its flaws, while simultaneously being desirous of what it can provide. For instance, the growing demand for owning the latest advancement in technological products is (perhaps, indirectly) an opposition to the idea of an alternative system. Because of this, it then becomes almost impossible to be critical of a system that provides countless material goods that are promoted to essentially 'make life better and easier'.

Similarly, Giroux (2005, 1) blames the 'right wing frontal assault against all remnants of the democratic state and its welfare provisions' for the dissension and the semblance of disarray 'left progressives' ﬁnd themselves confronted with. In Giroux's (2005, 1) words, 'Theoretical and political impoverishment feed off each other as hope of a revolutionary project capable of challenging the existing forces of domination appears remote'. Giroux (2005, 13) continues his critique with the following:

What becomes clear in the new information age, or what Zygmunt Bauman calls liquid modernity, is that the power of the dominant order is not just economic, but ideological – rooted in the ability to mobilize consent, deﬁne a particular notion of agency, impose narrow visions of the future, and decouple politics from both social radical notions of agency and democratic visions of freedom and social justice.

Effectively, Giroux credits neoliberalism as having been able to reduce individual freedoms and diminish social justice through its conﬂated hegemonic power. This complex power is immersed in both the economic and the ideological. A prime example of this is the violent treatment and response to peaceful protesters by authority ﬁgures globally. Moreover, the Occupy Movement and the G20 summit in Toronto witnessed several members of the media describing protesters as 'violent', 'anarchists', and 'criminals'. Even dissent is becoming criminalised, as evidenced by the defamation charges ﬁled against a Kitchener activist for comments that he made on a local university-based website (Wood 2011). As well, Giroux (2005, 2) claims that 'democratic political projects appear remote and give rise to either cynicism, solipsism, or reductionistic ideologies on the part of many progressives within and outside of the academy'. In short, neoliberalism has had such a profound effect on most that thinking through an alternative social order, not to mention utopias, has become increasingly challenging. Instead, hopelessness and cynicism are more readily available.

Hope

Yet, it must be possible to resist the modern-day world order. And utopia and hope are keys to a better future. Moynan (1986, 21) warns us that 'present time is provincial and empty. If humanity becomes too much taken with the present, we lose the possibility of imagining a radically other future. We lose the ability to hope'. The internalization of consumerism, individuality, and 'living in the now', with little to no regard for the future, is a goal set forth by capitalism and neoliberalism. Are these, then, objectives designed to respond to possible utopian impulses and a way to negate hope?
The impossibility of living outside of capitalism and commodity culture is seemingly apparent. But, as evidenced by movements and organizations such as the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, the Retort group based in San Francisco, the Landless Peasants Movement in Brazil, Anti-Capitalist Convergences, the Occupy Movement and the legion of left-wing academics committed to social change, resistance and critical positions seeking alternatives to our present-day conditions can also be constructed within the capitalistic system. ‘We need to think,’ Hardt and Negri (2003, 118) proclaim, ‘of resistance, insurrection and constituent power as one indivisible process, the three forged together into a full counterpower and ultimately a new alternative social formation’. Thus, because of the constant assault from the right, it has now become even more imperative to hold on to hope in addition to unleashing a full counterpower in order to achieve meaningful social change.

A similar sentiment is held by many others. In a series of interviews with a number of academics, Zournazi (2002) raises the necessity of maintaining hope in spite of, or rather, as a response to the advance of the neoliberal form of capitalism. As interviewed by Zournazi (2002, 101) Australian writer Christos Tsiolkas asserts that ‘giving’ imagination to the people is crucial; for without the ability to imagine, ‘you end up locked in a very narrow range of roles and expectations, and that’s really destructive’.

Without imagination, not only is one ‘locked up in a very narrow range of roles and expectations’, but thinking through and knowing and desiring radical improvements becomes improbable, and for Tsiolkas, destructive to the self (Zournazi 2002, 102).

Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau echo these sentiments. Mouffe clearly infers the need for hope, especially in response to neoliberalism:

In the field of the political it is very important that people think that their present condition could be better, and this is something which has been lost today. In the past there was the idea of a socialist future for many people… People are told there is no alternative to the neo-liberal hegemony, and that it is here to stay (Zournazi 2002, 123).

Comparatively, Laclau speaks to the desire for hope:

Now I think there is in some sense an end of hope, if by hope we understand something which is transcending all possible human conditions – in terms of the fulfillment of a perfect state of liberation, emancipation, etc. But on the other hand there is a proliferation of new hopes, new demands, and these demands can be put together to create some kind of more feasible social imaginary (Zournazi 2002, 123-124).

Mouffe and Laclau were mentioned by Aronowitz (2005) as leftists who have embraced a stripped down version of democracy and social justice. This is evident throughout their interview. In fact, Laclau suggests ‘socialism is simply a component of a radical democratic project – it is not something which is beyond it’ (Zournazi 2002, 132). Although they espouse hope, the two professors are more in line with Wallerstein in accepting the current system and the broad narrative of the impossibility of change offered by capitalism itself:

We have to accept that we are not going to dream of a completely different system, but that there are certainly many different forms of regulation of capitalization which are possible, and certain forms which are more compatible with the struggle for equality, and so on (Zournazi 2002, 136).

By linking socialism with democracy, Mouffe and Laclau are able to rationalize the regulation of capital, for one, as a means to a better existence. The type of hope that Mouffe and Laclau privilege is a ‘tweaking’ of the capitalistic system that will simply not assuage the many who still believe in an alternative form of utopian society.

Another one of Zournazi’s interviews was with retired Penn State University Philosophy professor Alphonso Lingis. To begin, Lingis differentiates expectation and hope, as expectation ‘is based on the pattern you see in the past’, while hope is ‘always against the evidence … there is kind of discontinuity in time, there is a break, and something starts out of nowhere’ (Zournazi 2002, 23). This rationale mirrors Anderson’s conception of when utopian ideals flourish; the proverbial calm before the storm. Additionally, Lingis believes that hope ‘is a kind of birth’ wherein it is born ‘in spite of what went before’ (Zournazi, 2002, 24) and that political hope is ‘always somehow utopian; it is a hope that we will set up a better world and set it up to endure. That must be true of every kind of political hope: that the situation could be different for good’ (Zournazi, 2002, 38). What Lingis proposes is quite relevant and pragmatic given today’s realities. Whereas capital and neoliberalism only reward a select few, our political aspirations has to be utopian if we are to eventually actualize an altogether different egalitarian social project.

It stands to reason that individuals who choose to actively participate in a social movement are hopeful. At the
very least, they are hopeful of bettering their respective situations through radical change. And the recent uprisings appear to support this assertion. The people of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen were hopeful for a change in their countries’ leadership and are demanding more freedom and democracy. Citizens of Italy, Greece and Spain are hoping for an improved political and economic system. The students in Quebec are hoping that their provincial government reconsiders increasing tuition fees and implementing a ‘for profit’ education system. Members of the Occupy Movement worldwide are hopeful of a more equitable distribution of wealth and resources. Quite simply, the point is this: hope is an integral component in making positive political changes. And although it may not be explicit, all these varying types of hope are similar in that they do exist despite the evidence.

Summary and Implications
As indicated by the above, the complexities involving the struggle for meaningful social change are surfeit. And as evidenced by the recent political uprisings in Europe and the current Occupy Movement, countless individuals have joined in the action. While mainstream media may or may not be correct in portraying these activists as being unable to articulate their desire for change, the point is that they are demanding change. Their concerns are many: the growing divide between the rich and the poor; the increasing power wielded by the State, the market and multi-billion dollar corporations; ecological concerns; diminishing individual freedoms. It only stands to reason that if they are taking action against the current state, then their demands are for something unlike the status quo. And in conjunction with this want, there is a hope: a hope for something different; a hope for change. The current uprisings problematize Giroux’s assertion regarding people’s lack of hope. However, what is apparent is that there also remains a desperate need to understand what people are hopeful of. While some may echo Mouffe and Laclau’s ‘change within the system’ sentiments, others could instead privilege Anderson’s ideals. As such, research into social change will remain incomplete if the issue of hope is left unexplored and underrepresented.

References

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Moments of Magnitude

SANDRA ARNOLD

February 21, 2011. First day of term at CPIT after the long summer break. I meet my husband Chris at the Dux de Lux after work. He’s sitting in the garden with two glasses of wine. We order dinner and I say how I love this place and how much I’m looking forward to the film in The Cloisters in the Arts Centre. After the film we walk over to Le Cafe and sit in the courtyard with our coffee watching the restaurant tram rumble by, its fairy lights twinkling. The air is warm and soft. I say I wouldn’t like to be upstairs in Le Cafe when an aftershock strikes. Chris says well they’re decreasing in frequency and things are getting back to normal. We talk about the Mueck exhibition we saw a few weeks ago at the Art Gallery and the film we’ve just seen and tell each other last September’s earthquake was a reminder of how precarious life is and how precious. We say how lucky we are in Christchurch that good earthquake strengthening codes ensured buildings didn’t collapse and therefore no one was killed. We remember expressing that relief at our friends’ Let’s Celebrate Not Getting Squashed party last year. Yes, September’s 7.1 shake was terrifying, but the terror is fading. The experts are saying it was caused by a previously unknown fault line under the Canterbury Plains that last ruptured 16,000 years ago. So, perhaps another 16,000 before the next one?

Next day I collect a pile of papers from the printery after lunch and head for my office. They’re so heavy that I change my resolve since September not to use the lifts. As I take what I need from my desk for today’s class, a giant hammer rams the building into the ground. I grab onto my desk. The lights go out. The earth roars through the floors and walls. The building shakes to within an inch of its life. Above the clamour, students scream in the corridors. Files fly off shelves. Thank God I got the bookcase bolted to the wall after September. When the shaking stops I scramble around in the dark windowless room for my bag and glasses, but can’t find my keys. The evacuation siren shrieks and I join the exodus of shocked people down the stairs. Water is pouring from the ceiling. In the car park motorbikes lie tossed on the ground. The floors and walls. The building shakes to within an inch of its life. Above the clamour, students scream in the corridors. Files fly off shelves. Thank God I got the bookcase bolted to the wall after September. When the shaking stops I scramble around in the dark windowless room for my bag and glasses, but can’t find my keys. The evacuation siren shrieks and I join the exodus of shocked people down the stairs. Water is pouring from the ceiling. In the car park motorbikes lie tossed on the ground. The tarmac rolls beneath my feet and I grab onto someone’s arm. It’s hard to stay upright. Police cars and ambulances, sirens wailing, tear down Madras Street. A white-faced colleague tells me she’s just seen part of the Catholic Cathedral fall. Another says her husband is in the CBD and she’s worried about his building. I fret about my car keys. A security guard tells me I can’t go back for them.


I try to ring Chris on my cell phone, but can’t get through. I set off walking with a colleague to her house. We walk up Allen Street, holding on to each other as we pick our way around grey sludge oozing up from the ground, past buildings like dolls’ houses with no fronts. The fronts lie scattered over the pavements. Cars jam the roads as people try to exit the city and head for home. I hear my name called and turn to see Marie, the only other person at CPIT who lives in Greendale, waving at me from the passenger seat of a car. The driver offers me a lift. We inch slowly along the road and over the bridge nose to tail with traffic. An aftershock rocks the car and I dig my fingers into my arms. My mouth feels like sandpaper. A passing motorist winds down his window and laughs, ‘That was a good one eh!’ Others are ashen-faced. Marie talks non-stop as she tries to ring her daughter who works in the CBD. The driver talks in calm re-assuring tones. I text Chris then sit in numb silence.

A forty minute journey takes two and a half hours, but now I’m walking down our drive. Chris is standing in the doorway, anxiety etched on his face. It was a 6.3, he says. He couldn’t contact me as the phone lines were overloaded. Finally my text got through, so he knew I was safe. We watch the images on TV of the collapsed CTV building, people pulling the dead and injured from piles of concrete in Cashel Street. And only then do we realise how bad it really is.

The days are filled with phone calls. Some colleagues narrowly missed being flattened by falling masonry as they walked out of Ballantyne’s. A friend’s house has collapsed. Other friends have chimneys through their roofs. Another helped pull survivors from a crushed bus full of dead people. As news spreads around the world frantic family and friends ring.

I try to retrieve my car still parked in front of CPIT. The soldiers guarding the cordoned-off street refuse to let me pass. They send me on a wild goose chase of permits. There’s no traffic except army tanks and no people except soldiers. Grey dust blows over broken roads and wrecked buildings. It feels like the end of the world. I realise I’m hyperventilating. A policeman tells us we need to register the car which will eventually be retrieved by police. Five weeks later I try again. This time the soldiers couldn’t be
more helpful and I drive it away, first to the car groomers
to clean off the green paint that Civil Defence has sprayed
over the windscreen to signify it is undamaged.

CPIT’s students have been relocated to different
campuses and the staff is allowed back into the city
campus to collect teaching materials. Books lie in piles
on the library floor. Broken glass in the atrium. The guard
takes me up in the lift to my office. Is the lift okay? Well,
he wouldn’t be in it if it wasn’t, he says. Then, ha ha! But
you should see the other lift! After I find my files in the
mess on the floor I go back down the stairs. Resolve again
NOT to use the lifts. EVER.

The cordon is moved further down Madras Street
and we resume teaching at the city campus. The students
are tired and anxious, but happy to be back. Rachel Scott,
my publisher at Canterbury University Press tells me the
earthquake has caused some disruptions to the publishing
schedule, so my book, due for release in August, will
now be published in June. The publishing team has to
work from home as their building has been taken over by
staff displaced from the damaged Registry building. The
designer, Quentin Wilson, has had to move house several
times. I’m astonished and grateful for their commitment.

At the beginning of March our son Benjamin
arrives from Sydney and we drive to Cave Stream to
celebrate Chris’s birthday. We spread out a rug on the
ground and light a candle on Chris’s cake. A lone walker
passes by and calls out, ‘Happy birthday!’ It sounds so
normal it makes me feel ridiculously happy.

The sky is cerulean blue. We sit in tussock
grass eating the cake. Feeling the silence. Breathing
in the silence. Staring at the mountains rising blue from
the Plains. Thinking the same thought. The benign and
beautiful result of past earthquakes is all around us.
Beautiful? Oh yes, achingly so. Benign? Well, for now.

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Sandra Arnold has a PhD in Creative Writing (CQU)
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Songs: Losing a daughter to cancer was published by
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Fukushima

Sound travels at 760mph.

A volcanic eruption under the sea can generate an island.

The mind is full of razors.

The Ocean sez Beware of me!

A Fool shakes his fist at the sky.

Yellow capsicums are floating on the Ocean.

A 91 year old woman climbed Mt. Fuji.

You have to wrap your head around hearing; glass break!

Usernames are cAsEsEnSiTiVe.

Nobody knows Why, anything happens.

John Evans balanced a 100 bricks on his head.

Tsunami is a Japanese word.

2/3rds of people can’t see infront of them.

Never turn you back on the ocean; Always talk to it.

Tubs of cars are swirling around a car yard.

People are drowning.

The sciatic nerve runs along the whole length of the country.

The reactor at Fukushima has been hit by a tidal Wave.

White-noise is constantly on the telly.

4.4 million households are without electricity.

(The closer you get to a dog, the louder you whistle).

Smoke is rising from the Nuclear reactor.

In 1986 Charles Osborne went from 10 to
40 hiccoughs a minute.

The Prime Minister of Japan has declared
a ‘Nuclear emergency’.

Stupidity, reduces words to language.
What works works! (Even if it's only a placebo).
The shaking of the head from side-to-side, means No.
The TV camera has captured the explosion.
Fire describes a plumage of smoke.
4 workers are reported to have been injured
They're pumping seawater, into the fuel-rods.
How come it's always a Worker?
Grief stamps itself across the psyche.
Boron is used in Nuclear reactors.
The 6th sense of Management, is money.
Nothing to worry about; you can live on 80% of your liver.
The reactor has a hole in it.
William the Silent was murdered in 1584.
A small truth is a diabolical situation; the air is radioactive.
We are being mislead by a barrage of language.
Alfred Hitchcock directed Suspicion.
Truman Capote wrote In Cold Blood.
The Police were once known as Strontium 90.
To kill a seagull, is Unlucky.
Einstein erased equations.
There are 1,777 lines in a Comedy of Errors.
A paperclip's job is keeps things together.
Neutrons are being fired at the Atom.
A raindrop strikes a puffball, and the spores explode
in slow motion.
Fiasco comes from glass-blowing.
An exclamation mark always comes after a word, or phrase.
A pig squeals between 100 and 115 decibels.
There are 2,826 four-letter words in the language.

John Shore invented a tuning-fork: ¥!!!

Tell me what you think is important!!!!!!
A dog's got 4 feet, but can't walk in 4 different directions.
The maximum break in Snooker is 147.
The Air is antiseptic.
A zipper ++ + + + + completes a body-bag.
For all those who died on Friday: $2 + 2 = 30$
A cigarette-hole has been burnt thru a map of Japan.
Science, (Everybody!) genuflec!
We sincerely apologize for any distress.
What's left of the last line of defence
is a garden-hose.
A hundred-thousand paper cranes can cure leukemia!
All non-essential Staff have now left.
The United States Navy has pulled back 80km from the coast.
The ATMs have closed down.
Anyone living within 30 km is advised to stay at Home.
The Earth in outer space, is like a cracked billiard ball.
Jules Verne said, the end of the World would come
when an enormous boiler on Earth
over heated.
Yesss Sir, Now we're all sons of bitches!
as Robert Oppenheimer put it.
The Mississippi (after an earthquake) once flowed backward.
Disaster (and disastrous) have 3 syllables.
How many people are missing?

π.o
MELBOURNE, VICTORIA

While journalists have been covering traumatic assignments for hundreds of years, academic research into and awareness of the way in which these experiences may affect their mental health has a relatively short history. Traditionally, journalists would, following a harrowing experience, debrief at the local pub, drinking copious amounts of alcohol and consuming other drugs in order to help them forget, at least for a while. Trauma was, and to some extent still is, one of the big taboos within journalism. However, in particular the establishment of the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma at the University of Washington in 1999 has led to a rapidly increasing amount of research into the ways in which journalists are affected by traumatic experiences, raising awareness of the topic and allowing more and more journalists to deal with their trauma.

Doug Underwood, the author of Chronicling Trauma, is a former journalist and Professor of Communication at UW, where, as a member of the Dart Center, he has played an important role in contributing to the emergence of trauma studies in journalism. His latest offering, which builds on his 2008 book Journalism and the Novel: Truth and Fiction, 1700-2000, presents a fascinating and detailed account of the way in which traumatic events have shaped the careers of 150 British and US journalist-literary figures over the past 300 years. The focus on journalist-literary figures (which he defines as writers of ‘fiction and/or non-fiction who had an important career in journalism and built his or her literary work on a foundation of journalistic research’ (p. 6)) is a welcome one, as it allows us unique insights that studies of journalists may rarely provide. This is so, Underwood argues, because journalists tend to hide their real feelings based on journalism’s ideology of detachment, while as writers they enjoy the freedom their craft gives them to actually explore their experiences. And explore he does, weaving the various life stories and careers of his research subjects – which include such illustrious writers as Ernest Hemingway, Charles Dickens, Dorothy Parker, Graham Greene and Truman Capote – into a very readable account. At the same time, the book is couched within an inter-disciplinary framework combining trauma studies, literary biography and the history of journalism, highlighting the way in which such combinations can expand our understanding of complex phenomena.

The four main chapters deal with the writers’ life stories and early traumatic experiences (Chapter 1), their pressures on the job as journalists (Chapter 2), experiences as observers of war and military correspondents (Chapter 3), as well as their history of substance abuse (Chapter 4). Rather than simply adding writer after writer, Underwood sorts his analysis by themes, which gels well with his theoretical framework and avoids too descriptive an account. In what is perhaps too short an epilogue, Underwood speculates about the extent to which modern developments in journalism, such as the increasing isolation of journalists but also the higher awareness of trauma may be leading to different experiences or expressions of the issues affecting their lives. An added bonus is the appendix, which presents separate tables on writers’ traumatic experiences outside of and within journalism, making for an easily accessible overview of the main commonalities between them.

This book offers an incredibly rich and historically-grounded account of the intersection of trauma, journalism and literature, making it relevant reading for anyone interested in any of these three fields. It opens up a highly contextualised understanding of a phenomenon that is still somewhat under-researched.

FOLKER HANUSCH, SENIOR LECTURER IN JOURNALISM, UNIVERSITY OF THE SUNSHINE COAST


The Creative Industries: Culture and Policy is an ambitious and timely project that helps frame the debates and contexts for cultural creative industry practitioners, media and cultural policy makers, and students of the communication, media and cultural studies. Terry Flew, instrumental in setting up Australia’s first Creative Industries program at Queensland University of Technology (QUT), undertakes a comprehensive review of the debates that are emerging with the rise of what we now recognise as the Creative Industries. The premise of his book is that in order to understand the dynamics of cultural markets, creative labour, and how culture is distributed, marketed and creatively reused through new media technologies, we need to be informed about the underlying ideologies that frame its discourse, and have a comprehensive global and historical picture of this emerging and exciting field of research and practice.

‘Cultural Industries’, ‘The Creative Economy’, ‘The Creative Industries’: Flew clarifies and contextualises these amorphous mystifying terms that have been used somewhat interchangeably. And although much of the
territory he describes has already been covered, Flew builds on previous attempts to consolidate this expanding field: for example, David Hesmondhalgh’s *The Cultural Industries* (2002) provides a similar overview of the key debates surrounding cultural production as Flew; Richard E Caves’ book *Creative Industries: Contracts between Art and Commerce* (2001) explores the organization of creative industries, primarily from the creative industries themselves; and John Howkins prefers to call the phenomenon *The Creative Economy* (2001), focusing on individual creativity and self-identity and its place in the global market economy, and his more recent *Creative Ecologies* (2010). Avoiding Howkins’ glib sensational approach, however, *The Creative Industries: Culture and Policy* aims for a more thorough and rigorous analysis of an industry that has changed radically in the ten years since Hesmondhalgh and Caves. Flew’s book focuses on management, production, law, policy, and labour-forces that collectively shape our understanding of the creative industries. Flew begins by undertaking an historical account of the creative industries, starting with Tony Blair and Gordon Brown’s ‘New Labour’ policies in the U.K. in the 1990s, and extrapolating to similar policy discourse that has been developed in Europe, the USA, East Asia, China and Australia.

Many practitioners in the ‘creative industries’ and the ‘education industry’ are still uncomfortable with the notion of viewing and measuring human creativity as an economic resource, and resist what they perceive to be a co-option into the capitalist, cultural, consumerist conveyor belt of mass production. Perhaps, as Hesmondhalgh (and Flew) suggests, they are still clinging to the negative associations of the term ‘The Culture Industry’ coined by Adorno in the late forties. And what about creative practitioners who approach the ‘Creative Industries’ with some scepticism, who see their artistic roles as autonomous, even antagonistic to the state, or who come from countries hostile to individual creative output and whose governments often ban or imprison its creative practitioners, where cultural production is another word for propaganda?

In my reading of Flew, I was hoping to find some way these concerns of the Left could be reconciled with what appears to be an unquestioning acceptance of the ‘Creative Industries’ by practitioners of the arts. To be fair, how cultural production reinforces dominant power structures in society is not in the scope of Flew’s book, but he does acknowledge and tackle these issues, albeit obliquely. He uses Michael Lowy’s term ‘revolutionary romanticism’ to describe those remnants of the ‘New Left’ who join Marcuse’s ‘Great Refusal’ to participate in capitalist consumerism and the hierarchical authority of the governments that support it, and suggests a way forward by referring to ‘capitalisms’ in the plural rather than ‘Capitalism’ with a Capital C, and to the pluralities of neo-liberalist doctrines rather than ‘Neo-Liberalism’, a ‘phenomenon which manifests itself everywhere and in everything’ (188). He also uses Lipietz’s reference to Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose* to make his point, that the monks in the fictive Benedictine monastery live in terror of a ‘master category’ (‘The Beast of the Apocalypse) instead of examining particular circumstances of the murders in their midst.

Flew suggests a deconstruction of such nebulous Master Categories, and an active engagement with the Creative Industries, in order that we (cultural practitioners, policy makers, students) do not dismiss cultural studies or ‘find refuge in the business school’. It is a call to negotiate the complex territory between economics and culture. Flew at times apologises for his detailed navigation through complicated and finicky policy debates, in what he says may be a ‘tedious exercise’ (183). *The Creative Industries: Culture and Policy* is a challenge, but a worthwhile and valuable analysis of an emerging global creative society.

Note:

References
Hesmondhalgh, David (2002), *The Cultural Industries*, SAGE.
A small group of third year graphic design students from the University of the Sunshine Coast were asked to work in teams to develop a visual definition for an array of related printed materials for a conference. Students needed to base their investigation on an international conference that considered thematic concepts around global ecologies and environmental challenges. It seemed fitting to showcase the submission produced by Timothy Clarke and Shelby Ashwin to reflect the issue editor, Ross Watkin’s theme of ‘Disaster Dialogues: Representations of catastrophe in word and image. Here the image depicts an emotional sense of impending disaster with the text justifying how this could occur. Presented are a series of ‘Storm Warming’ conference posters to create awareness for global warming.

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