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Images in the 'Looking Glass': self,  
ethnicity and multiculturalism in  
contemporary Australia

Leslie John Terry  
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# Images in the *Looking Glass*

**Self, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism  
in Contemporary Australia**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
from  
UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

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(1998)

# UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

## CANDIDATE'S STATEMENT

I certify that the thesis entitled Images in the 'Looking Glass': Self, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism in Contemporary Australia and submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is the result of my own research, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis (or any part of the same) has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Signed.....

Date.....

Leslie John A. Terry  
1<sup>th</sup> March, 1999

*For those who travelled with me.*

Unable as yet to walk, or even to stand up, and held tightly as he [she] is by some support, human or artificial (what in France, we call a 'trotte-bébé'), he [she] nevertheless overcomes, in a flutter of jubilant activity, the obstructions of his support and, fixing his [her] attitude in a slightly leaning-forward position, in order to hold it in his [her] gaze, brings back an instantaneous aspect of the image . . . I am led, therefore, to regard the function of the mirror-stage as a particular case of the function of the imago, which is to establish a relation between the organism and its reality—or, as they say, between the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt*. (Jacques Lacan 1977b: 44)

It wasn't a joke when I said that I migrated in order to get away from my family. I did. The problem, one discovers, is that since one's family is already 'in here', there is no way in which you can actually leave them. Of course soon or later, they recede in memory, or even in life. But these are not the burials that really matter. I wish they were still around, so that I didn't have to carry them around in my head, from which there is no migration. So from the first, in relation to them, and then to all symbolic 'others', I certainly was always aware of the self as only constituted in that kind of absent-present contestation with something else, with some other 'real me', which is and isn't there.' (Stuart Hall 1987: 44 - 45)

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# Abstract

During the past two decades the notion of ethnic identity has been discussed vigorously from a range of perspectives in much of the literature in the social sciences. This thesis continues this discussion by examining the ways in which the stories of ethnicity have been and are being told at both the theoretical and everyday levels. Making connections between the life narratives of people from a number of generations in six 'ethnic minority' families in Australia, theoretical insights on ethnicity, and the researcher's own engagement with issues of identity, the thesis highlights (following Butler 1991 on gender identity) the 'performative' nature of ethnic identities or identifications. It argues that while the different ethnicities examined in the study have specific individual and social genealogies, it is in the telling of the life stories that these ethnicities come into being in ways that cannot be reduced to what Bottomley (1997) critically refers to as 'celebratory pluralisms'. Engaging with contemporary writings in the area, the study contributes to a 'non-foundationalist' reading of the ethnic self.

Moreover, the thesis suggests that such a reconfigured notion of ethnicity raises important issues for theorists working around concepts such as 'multicultural citizenship' or 'post-multiculturalism'. Consequently, in the final stage of the study some proposals are made about the possible futures for multiculturalism in Australia, including the need to support the further development of past initiatives in the areas of languages,

education and employment. As well as this, it is suggested that 'post-multiculturalisms' will involve, among other things, a continuing response to racism at all levels of society, a connecting up of different social and cultural histories with key social institutions and a recognition of the way in which the new technologies are impacting on established social identities, as well as an engagement with some critical strands in contemporary social theory.

In looking back across the entire text the author of the thesis finds that the idea of the 'looking glass phase' or the 'mirror-stage' as proposed by Jacques Lacan (1977b) comes to mind. This is because, it is suggested, that in narrating the self or the stories of others, whether it be around ethnicities or some other identifications, we are in some ways returning to that original moment when we as infants, in an attempt 'to find a way around certain inescapable factors of lack, absence and incompleteness' (Sarup 1992: 65), tried to touch the specular image in the 'looking glass'. However, in contrast to the one-dimensional mirror which Lacan formulated, the writer of this thesis concludes by suggesting that in engaging with other ethnicities, he is looking into a three-dimensional mirror in which the image of himself is unpinned by the reflections of his significant others, while images of other people who do not share his ethnicity, such as those whose stories are retold in this text, provide another merging layer in the 'looking glass'. It is subsequently argued that any exploration of the self or the 'Autobiographical I' in the Australian context cannot escape acknowledging that difference has 'entered inalterably' (see Hall in Terry 1995a) into our lives and that such a recognition provides us with a starting point for developing forms of post-multiculturalism which above all are open and reflective.

# Preface

When I was a child I lived in the inner suburbs of Melbourne where many immigrants would first settle on their way to 'a better life' in other parts of this city. In these early years, I was always interested in these people's stories, as well as those told by members of my own family, about what life was like somewhere else and how we had come to be in Australia. It was only when I reached the end of writing this text that I came to see, in an uncanny sort of way, that I had never let go of the wish to locate myself and others in a more imaginary space, beyond the experiences of the everyday. This text, then, is a continuation of a journey which I began long ago, and, while it is written in my role as an academic, I have tried to draw on the early lessons I received from the story-tellers in my childhood, as well as those whom I met through this present work.

A task of this size cannot be completed alone. I therefore would like to thank all the individuals and families who shared their stories with me. I hope I have done justice to their 'memories' in the retelling. Clearly, the work could not have been carried out without their generosity, support and friendship.

I would particularly like to thank my supervisor, Professor Stephen Castles, in the Department of Sociology at the University of Wollongong who played an exemplary role as a 'critical friend', always posing the right questions, showing trust and waiting

patiently, aware of the complexity and size of such a project. I would also like to acknowledge the financial assistance provided to me in the fieldwork phase of the project by the University of Wollongong.

Moreover, my colleagues at Victoria University of Technology also assisted me in a variety of ways at different stages of the work. I particularly appreciated the encouragement shown to me by members of staff in the former Department of Social and Cultural Studies. I would also like to acknowledge the support of Pam Carswell, Barbara Brook and Janet Mau who meticulously proof-read the draft at different points in the process of writing and who each pointed out better ways for me to express my thoughts. The comments made by Heather Wallace, Joyce La Terra, Mustafa Rostom and Erik Lloga on early drafts of the text were also important in gauging how the work was proceeding and whether I needed to change direction in some way or another. As well as this I acknowledge the support of the Faculty of Arts at Victoria University of Technology, which showed its faith in the research by providing me with some time and resources necessary to complete the study.

I would also like to thank Professor Stuart Hall whom I interviewed for this work on two occasions at the Open University in England, and whose work has greatly influenced my intellectual development over many years. The results of our meetings are clearly evident in this text and I look forward to our next conversation. Professor Paul Gilroy at the University of London assisted in this study by allowing me to interview him about his work on the notion of 'diasporic identities'. I thank him too for his time and thoughts. An interview with Dr Juliet Mitchell at the University of Cambridge also provided me

with some insights into how we might move beyond superficial understandings of the self. I must also acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Yuping Li and Teresa Chu, who facilitated and translated a number of the interviews that I carried out with the Chinese families.

As well as this, I acknowledge the support of the Mildura Regional Gallery who gave me permission to reproduce Danilla Vassilief's gouache *The Family Group* for the front piece of the thesis. As usual Stephen Pascoe greatly assisted me in the final stages with the layout of the work.

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Les Terry

# Introduction

*In the late 1920s when Ming Zhang was eleven years of age, he waited patiently at the top of the dirt road that passed through his village for his father who was now returning from many years working in Timor. Ming Zhang had only come to know this man from the stories that his mother and grandmother had told him over the years. As with many other Chinese immigrants who had gone to live in places like Timor, Ming's father had established another home and family in Dili. The older Zhang spent only a few months in the village before telling his son that he was going back to Timor and that Ming would also be returning with him to this distant land. With only a few possessions, the young Zhang, waving goodbye to his mother and grandmother for the last time, set off on a long journey to a land in which he was to spend the next sixty years of his life. In the coming years, only a few letters kept alive Ming's memories of his mother and maternal grandmother. He would not see the village in which he was born for almost another seventy years.*

Some fifty or so years later, Albert Marshall decided that his artistic life was being stifled in the Malta of the 1970s. One night he came home from work in the television industry, and told his partner, Jane Marshall (Micallef), that he wanted to leave Malta, possibly forever. Within a matter of weeks, Albert and Jane and their two very young children boarded a plane for Australia. While they did not know how long they would stay in this

country, the Marshalls' migration never seemed as final as Ming Zhang's leaving of his ancestral home.

Anna Yang spent the first four years of her life in the Soviet Union of the late 1920s. But she lived most of her life in Xinjiang in north-western China. Life had been hard in this part of China and she had struggled to raise her three sons and one daughter. She had never dreamt that she would one day migrate to Australia. But in 1982 her children decided to leave China, and chose as their destination this large southern continent. She knew little about this country but, somewhat reluctantly, she took the long train trip from Umuchi in Xinjiang to Beijing to catch the plane to Sydney, where she was met by her sons, daughter and grandchildren. They drove her to a small house in the outer suburbs where the family had settled. She could quickly see that life would be easier here than in Xinjiang.

These fragments of life histories are from conversations that I had over two years with almost twenty-four people, from six families, who had come to live in Australia in recent decades. In listening to these stories, I heard about how some lived in China in the 1920s or the 1960s, or in Bolivia in the 1970s, or in Malta in the 1960s, and what it meant for them to continue their lives in Australia. I also gained insights into the ways in which people draw on a range of memories for the reconstruction of their stories of the self. Moreover, I have seen how life and family stories evolve across a number of generations and how different aspects of these narratives might be kept alive or dismissed as time passes. From my discussions with family members, I came to better understand that while our life stories may be 'bad copy', or merely the recollection and linking of

selected moments or events, or even some form of fiction, we are, as Stuart Hall tells us, 'always involved in producing more than mere fragments *of the self* [italics mine]' (Hall in Terry 1995a: 51). In this text, I am particularly thinking about the ways in which people draw on their ethnicity in producing stories of the self. I am also concerned with examining the links between ethnic identity and a range of other positions that individuals enunciate in narrating their selfhood and group identities. Furthermore, I am interested in the extent to which our life stories are grounded in the world around us, or whether we are free to choose our identities: whether we are merely 'post-modern nomads' (see Hall in Terry 1995a).

The stories told here, and their messages, are concerned with the very complex matters of identity, race, ethnicity and culture. They are being transcribed and worked with at a moment at the end of the twentieth century when many old narratives of ethnicity (and race) are reasserting themselves, often with dire consequences, while issues of who belongs and who does not become increasingly complex matters in an age that some theorists have defined as 'the age of migration' (Castles and Miller 1993; see also Hall in Terry 1995a). But in looking at the ways by which people narrate their subjectivities and inter-subjectivities, I am cognisant of the fact that these stories are relics from the past and, like all relics, 'are marked with the meanings of the occasion of their origins and . . . are always translated into something else for the moments that they survive' (Dening 1996: 46-47). I also agree with Dening that while 'our narratives are presented with some theatricality . . . [t]hey are ostensibly about something past, about something that has happened. But they are also the medium of our present relationships. Our stories are as much about us as about something else' (34). At one level, the reconstruction of



life stories in this work certainly gave the story-tellers a way of placing themselves in Australia at the end of the 1990s. At another level it is clear to me that even though, in this text, I am involved in others' narratives, including some of the theoretical perspectives or 'performances' which have emerged in recent times around the notion of ethnicity, I am really telling my own story, my continuing struggle to understand the stories of ethnicity and their importance in our personal and group histories, thereby expressing my own thinking about identities and the relationships between 'categorisms, difference and relations of power . . .' (Bottomley 1995: 2).

In Chapter One, I explore aspects of the theoretical narratives that have emerged around the issue of ethnicity in recent decades. As with our personal narratives, I selectively draw on the past, in this case my contact with the ideas of both Australian and some overseas theorists, to make some key points about the way in which the story of ethnicity may be told in the present. In a sense I am like Homi Bhabha, drawing on Walter Benjamin, 'unpacking my library . . . again' (Bhabha 1996a). Just like Bhabha, in this part of the work, 'I ask you to participate momentarily in the "dialectical tension between the poles of order and disorder" that have marked my life and work' (199). Given that my major concern is to reconstruct the stories of others and to look at the part played by the original narrators' ethnicities in this retelling, in Chapter Two I focus on methodological issues, particularly the nature of ethnographic work, and discuss the way in which I went about selecting, making contact with, and talking to the people and families that took part in this research.

In the next three chapters, using the transcriptions and insights that I gathered from

individuals and families, I have written down their stories, but in a way in which the narratives, while not telling a single story about identity, provide a means for thinking about the complex nature of our ethnicities, as well as the notion of identity, more broadly. In retelling these narratives and making connections between them, I have tried to represent them as I thought the authors would have wished or agreed for them to be presented. But, at the same time I am aware that because I am drawing them into my own orbit of thinking, for my own purpose, and using my own language, they will be altered. They are therefore reconstructions of reconstructions, and will not necessarily correspond to a set of 'social facts' in the way that some readers might expect. In listening to these stories, and in recounting moments in my own life, issues of authenticity come to mind. For as Freud, writing about national and personal memory at around the turn of the century, commented:

It was inevitable that this early history should have been an expression of present beliefs and wishes rather than a true picture of the past; for many things had been dropped from the nation's memory, while others were distorted, and some remains of the past were given a wrong interpretation in order to fit in with contemporary ideas. Moreover, people's motive for writing history was not objective but a desire to influence their contemporaries, to encourage and inspire them, or to hold a mirror before them. A man's [woman's] conscious memory of the events of his [her] maturity is in every way comparable to the first kind of historical writing (which was a chronicle of events); while the memories of his [her] childhood correspond, as far as their origins and reliability are concerned, to the history

of a nation's earliest days, which was compiled later and for tendentious reasons. (Freud 1984: 10)

I have already mentioned that in reconstructing the narratives of the people in this text, I am not looking to recreate an authentic history of their lives, supposing this were even possible. Rather, what I am trying to do is to see the creative ways in which people construct their life stories, whether real or imagined, to develop a discourse of the self and group. For as Butler (1997) informs us, '[t]he analysis of subjection is always double, tracing the conditions of subject formation and tracing the turn against those conditions for the subject—and its perspective—to emerge' (29). Consequently, building on the insights gained from the earlier sections of the thesis, in Chapter Six I describe the ways in which the individuals explicitly define themselves in terms of their ethnicities and how they see their future in Australia or another place.

While recognising the limits of our role as researchers, and the ways in which we intervene in others' stories, I have tried to 'break out' (see Stanley and Wise 1993) of the traditional way of 'truth telling' associated with the social sciences. This is because the social sciences have often excluded the possibility of mixing genres, as I have tried to do in this text. Moreover, in much of the formal writing in this area, there is a pretence that the inquirer is able to stand outside the material, and that this somehow provides us with a 'true account' of the events or 'performances' being examined. While I have respected the narratives of Ming Zhang, Anna Yang, Albert Marshall and the others, there are points where I have brought my imagination to bear on the way that this person or that may have felt or acted on a given occasion. I should add that the material provided to me

was so rich that, in retelling the narratives, I have only done this in a small number of instances. However, it must be remembered, as I have already commented, that this study is just as much about me as it is about the other people in it, though in writing it I was often aware of the different role I was playing to that of the other participants. To put it another way, the stories are an outcome of my interaction with others who have very different genealogies to mine.

While the text could have finished at the point where the telling of the different life stories seemed complete, for the moment at least, I believed that it was important to return to some of the theoretical issues which I raised at the outset of the work, which concerned the place of ethnicity in our life narratives. For as Hall says, '[i]dentity is formed at the unstable point where the "unspeakable" stories of subjectivity meet the narratives of history, of a culture' (Hall 1987: 44). To rest at this point in the work would have meant that I had only retold the narratives as they revolved around our subjectivities, and not our inter-subjectivities, nor would I have commented about the institutional arrangements necessary for ethnically and culturally diverse societies such as Australia's. Consequently, in Chapter Seven, I revisit some of theoretical debates about the ethnic self. Like a number of others (Levinas cited in Young 1991; Said 1993), I recognise that writers have an ethical responsibility to give something back to the community in which they live and work. Therefore, in the final part, given that earlier in the thesis I have tried to displace established notions about ethnic identity, I highlight, while building on the work of others, some of the ways in which we might respond to ethnic and cultural difference in Australia in the late 1990s and beyond (see, for example, Bottomley 1993; 1995).

In recent decades a number of theorists have posited the view that ‘human subjectivity is necessarily decentred and unstable; an entity which can only be integrated into a purposive social agent through the imaginary effects of misrecognition’ (Elliot, 1992: 166). While it might be that our subjectivities are illusionary, I argue that we are always involved in the struggle for an identity, and that in this process, the tendency is towards an ordering of the self. As well as this, the narratives in this text provide examples to support the contention ‘that the decentering—and recentering—of subjectivity is staged not as singular, noteworthy, or ritually dramatic events, but rather as ordinary narratives of dislocation and renewal’ (Ganguly 1992: 27). However, I go further than this and argue that these narratives, even if they are only my reconstructions of them, provide a means of moving beyond stable versions of ethnicity and race which limit our capacities for a new configuration of politics around notions such as ‘multicultural citizenship’ or ‘post-multiculturalism’. This is because the narratives are one means by which we can see that our ethnicities are, as Butler (1990) informs us on matters of gender, ‘instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous . . . a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves come to believe and perform in the mode of belief’ (1990: 141). Therefore the key argument in this text on the self, ethnicity and multiculturalism follows Butler’s view when she says that:

The foundationalist reasoning of identity politics tends to assume that an identity must first be in place in order for political interests to be elaborated and, subsequently, political action to be taken. My argument is that there need not be a ‘doer behind the deed,’ but that the ‘doer’ is variably constructed in and through the deed. (1990: 142)

While it may be the case that our ethnicities are merely performances of the self, each of the life stories in this text does relate to or come out of a specific history. The stories from Malta for instance are involved in some way with English colonialism, the narratives from China engage with social factors specific to that country such as Confucianism or Maoism. Likewise, the Spanish conquest of places like Bolivia provide a backdrop for our reading of the personal testimonies that are connected with that country. Nevertheless, in considering the different contexts for the stories I felt that it would be counter-productive to directly link these stories with the overall social changes that were occurring in each of these countries. I felt that a reading of the life stories in their own right would allow us to glimpse in more specific ways some of the issues relating to the larger social processes going on in the different societies in which the stories begin. Nevertheless it is clear to me that while many theorists talk about post-colonialism, the stories are all told within the shadows of different forms of colonialism.

As I have said, the present work aims at contributing to the debate about our ethnicities by engaging with the narratives of six families and twenty-four people who have migrated to Australia, or are the children of people who have migrated here, in recent decades. I have chosen to work with families whose ethnicities and cultural histories are still marginal within contemporary Australian society. However, in retelling and working with these stories, I am not interested in producing a new set of universals about identity. For as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak tells us (see Spivak in Stephens 1996), even theorists do not produce universals since they can only offer 'tentative generalisations' about the social world. This research on ethnicities has set itself the modest task of making such generalisations. In doing this, it confronts questions related to the future of modernity,

particularly as these affect issues concerning ethnicities in Australia. In part, my intention is the same as that of another researcher, who was also concerned with 'facing rather than effacing discomfoting differences and of developing forms of multiculturalism that can move beyond ethnic pluralisms' (Bottomley 1997: 47).

A central question for me in this text, then, becomes how are we to approach a discussion of the life narratives of the people portrayed? In recent years there has been a good deal of discussion about the nature of the self at a time of rapid social change. Some have referred to this moment as post-modernity while others have preferred the idea of 'late modernity'. However we might name this period of transition, there is no doubt that we are going to need to think carefully about the way in which this shift raises a number of problems in regard to the promises offered by modernity. For as Bauman says:

Having been trained to live in necessity, we have found ourselves living in contingency. And yet, being bound to live in contingency, we can, as Heller suggests, make 'an attempt to transform it into our destiny'. One makes something of destiny by embracing the fate: by an act of choice and the will to remain loyal to the choice made. Abandoning the vocabulary parasitic on the hope of (or determination for) universality, certainty and transparency is the first choice to be made; the first step on the road to emancipation. (1991: 234)

A major trend in how we might think about the notion of the self in this state of flux has been the proliferation of texts that have argued that our selfhoods are merely discursive formations, we are merely constituted in and through language. Central to this theoretical

tendency is the work of the French social theorist, Michel Foucault, who, according to Stuart Hall, undertook a 'radical historicization of the category of the subject' (Hall 1996c: 10). This work, according to Hall, saw the subject as being 'produced "as an effect" through and within discourse, within specific discursive formations, and has no existence, and no transcendental continuity or identity from one subject position to another'.

Nicholas Rose also argues a similar line to that of Foucault, when he proposes that: 'Our relation with ourselves, that is to say, has assumed the form it has because it has been the object of a whole variety of more or less rationalised schemes, which have sought to shape our ways of understanding and enacting our existence as human beings . . .' (1996: 130). In this, Rose distinguishes his analysis from those of a number of other writers who have 'explicitly or implicitly, viewed changing forms of subjectivity or identity as a consequence of wider transformations—modernity, late modernity, the risk society' (130). For Rose, and others, a study of how a history of the self, or what he refers to as a 'genealogy of subjectification', would take as its focus the 'practices within which human beings have been located in particular "regimes of the person" '(131). However, to my way of thinking, the problem is that this view sees the construction of the self as nothing more than a discursive formation which is imposed by a wide range of increasingly complex technologies of governance. Even where we seek to resist forms of personhood that are imposed on us by different technologies of governance, we are viewed, by theorists such as Nicholas Rose, as merely operating across different practices that address us in different ways. For Rose, then, ' . . . the existence of contestation, conflict and opposition in practices which conduct the conduct of persons is no surprise and requires no appeal to the particular qualities of human agency. . .' (141).



Others see the self as nothing more than simulation and simulacra reflecting some 'hyperreality' in a world of endless consumption (Baudrillard cited in Elliot 1996), while for some the subject is disjointed in a world of 'late capitalism' in which we are bombarded with images and messages from outside (Jameson cited in Elliot 1996; see also Jameson 1991). Or, our identities are 'market-promoted' ones in which 'the torments of self-construction, and of the subsequent search for social approval for the finished or half-baked product, is replaced by the less harrowing, often pleasurable, act of choice between ready-made patterns' (Bauman 1991: 206).

The view that we are nothing more than a discursive formation constructed by different technologies, authorities and strategies, or our identities are 'nothing beyond the cult of surface and style' (Baudrillard cited in Elliot 1996: 116), or merely something which we can obtain in a shopping mall, makes the self very flimsy indeed. Such views, however, force us 'back to a definition of identity as a "minimal self"': a notion of the self which does not take account of the fact that our identities come from somewhere; 'that every identity is placed, positioned, in a culture, a language, a history . . . It insists on specificity, on conjuncture. But it is not armour-plated against other identities. It is not tied to fixed, permanent, unalterable oppositions' (Hall 1987: 45-46). Moreover, such views do not address the question of why some people choose to connect with certain categories of the self, and others with very different ones. Why is it that some human beings, for instance, enunciate an identity position which is one of resistance, and others adhere to notions of a docile self (see Hall 1996c). Furthermore, these perspectives do not take account of the complex relationship between the lived social experience and the categories within which human beings choose to articulate their identities.

It may well be necessary, as some theorists have suggested, to look towards ‘a theory of what the mechanisms are by which individuals as subjects identify (or do not identify) with the “positions” to which they are summoned . . .’ (Hall 1996c: 14). In pursuing this task one writer has proposed that ‘[t]here may be a way to subject psychoanalysis to a Foucauldian redescription even as Foucault himself resisted the possibility’ (Butler in Hall 1996c: 15; see also Butler 1997a). What this indicates is that some theorists are working to provide a bridge between the notion that our identities are constructed by regimes of government and the idea that we have an internalist language that positions us for selecting from the repertoire of identity positions which are made available by different forms of governance. An important step in reconciling these different perspectives will be to think about the ways in which human beings ‘fashion, stylise, produce and “perform” these [identity] positions, and why they never do so completely, for once and all time, and some never do . . .’ (Hall 1996c: 14). This manuscript on ethnicities is primarily concerned with just this: the way in which I and members of ethnic minority families living in contemporary Australia in the 1990s ‘perform’ our identities; though, as I have already inferred, I am not always sure where their performances end and mine, the ‘Autobiographical I’ (see Stanley 1993), begins. This is because as Butler (1997a) tells us ‘ . . . “becoming” is no simple or continuous affair, but an uneasy practice of repetition and its risks, compelled yet incomplete, wavering on the horizon of social being’ (30).

In his 1993 work, *The Intellectuals*, Edward Said, has written about the notion of ‘intellectual [thinker] as exile’. He offers an alternative to those views which always position intellectuals as marginal. In contrast, he suggests that the ‘special’ location of

'intellectuals' (of all sorts) provides a possibility for understanding social reality in a very particular and insightful way, one that is not available when we follow more customary patterns of existence. While I recognise that the experience of 'exile' can provide a perspective for all of us that is often unique, I must also say, from my own experience, that 'homelessness' or the 'unhomely' can often mitigate against the development of such insight. This is because to write the writer needs to be settled, needs 'a room of one's own', at least for some moments in her or his life. I would therefore argue that the challenge for writers is to keep open that special insight which is to be found in 'exile', while simultaneously finding a settled space in which to struggle with ideas; to be 'in-between', to be 'exile', and 'at home', at one and the same time. This has been the challenge for me in this work on ethnicities.

Before proceeding I need to clarify some aspects of my work here. First, I have used the term ethnic, ethnicity and ethnicities throughout the text. In some cases these terms have been used interchangeably while in some instances they need to be read within the context in which they are used. Also, I have used the term race only where I felt it was required to make clear specific aspects of the stories or relationships which I was examining or where I used it as part of a quote. I am aware that key words such as ethnicity and race have complicated genealogies as some of the theorists I use in this text would also verify. Consequently, I have tended to follow my own inclinations in this matter and used the term ethnicity or its derivations generally throughout the text. Likewise, I sometimes use the terms difference and the Derridean notion of *différance* as interchangeable concepts, even though I realise that there were major disagreements between the originators (Foucault and Derrida) of these terms in social theory.

Nevertheless, my use of both terms indicates that I have not settled in my views here.

Last, I have not intended to privilege one form of family over any others. While the focus of the research did involve six families which could be described as living within the dominant notion of what constitutes a family, I recognise that there are many other ways in which families form. As will be shown in the methodology part of the study, my selection of participants was not by design but through relationships which I had already formed before beginning the research. Moreover, my focus here is not on family types but on the way we identify or do not identify across generations with our ethnicities.

## **Chapter one**

### **‘Unpacking My Library’ on Ethnicity**

In the post-war period large scale migrations across the major regions of the world have dramatically altered the ethnic and cultural characteristics of many countries. In order to address issues that arose as a result of these shifts in population, a plethora of studies appeared in the 1970s and 1980s. Many of these were concerned with the contribution of ethnic and cultural minorities to Australian social life. A key intention of these works was to ensure that the voices of groups which, until then, had been left out of the stories about ethnic identity in Australia, were represented in debates about social and cultural life in this country. Studies of Lebanese (Batrouney and Batrouney 1985), Maltese (York 1986; Cauchi 1990) and Italians (Pascoe 1986), for example, highlighted issues such as the early settlement of ethnic minority groups in Australia, as well as those of cultural heritage. Often, these texts focused on the situation of particular communities in regard to their lack of ‘success’ in ‘mainstream’ institutions (see, for example, Cauchi 1990).

Whatever the limitations of these texts, they played a very important role in contesting ethnocentric representations of Australian identity. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the critique that was offered was well overdue, this body of literature tended to represent ethnic identity as a reasonably stable concept. Some of these texts were also limited by the way in which they homogenised the different ethnicities, as if all people who shared a particular ethnic background were the same in all respects. Consequently, very

different histories of people, simply because they shared a particular ethnicity, were often lumped together into a single story. Sometimes such stories were presented only as historical artefacts, with little discussion of the very complex disadvantages that many ethnic minority groups confronted at the time of writing in the 1970s or 1980s.

Offering an alternative to the 'ethnic studies' approach was a stream of texts in which the idea of oral history or the personal account was central (see, for example, Lowenstein and Loh 1977). Some of these works sought to document first-hand the life stories of people who had immigrated, with the aim of allowing the 'immigrants' to speak in his or her own words, to tell their own story. This approach meant that the collectors of the stories played a minimal role in the retelling and, in most cases, it was felt that it was not necessary to theorise about the narratives as they 'spoke' for themselves.

On the other hand, a number of works focused on telling in the third person the stories of individuals or families that had migrated to Australia. To take one example, Hawthorne in her very readable work *Making it in Australia* (1988) wrote about the lives of ten immigrant families. Through this partial ethnographic study Hawthorne provided a close glimpse of the way in which the families were settling and living in Australia. One of the key strengths of this work was that it gave a more realistic view of how issues of ethnicity, class, gender, migration history, and generational factors shape life at the level of the everyday. A number of other works have also been produced using the family as a site of study. Preceding Hawthorne's research was *Ethnic Family Values in Australia* (Storer 1985) in which a number of writers provided an overview of how particular ethnic minority groups structured their family lives. The articles in this latter text,

reflecting some of the trends at the time, tended to reinforce homogenous notions of ethnic identity by trying to highlight the essential characteristics of families from specific ethnic communities. A later version of this text (Hartley 1995), offered a much more sophisticated view of the way in which ethnicity is negotiated within and through the family group. For as Hartley says: 'The task of describing family and cultural diversity raises complex issues which will remain the subject of continuing debate. Some of these issues are concerned with the institution of the family—relationships between the state and the family and between social change and family change, the impact of the feminist movement on families and society, and links between religion and family values, structure and functioning' (1995: 2). Pursuing some of these concerns within the context of Greek-Australian families in this book Tsolidis (1995) says: 'The diasporic existence destabilises crisp, clean demarcations between Greek and Australian. The insights, the literature and the dynamic view of culture grow out of the borderlands . . .'

(142).

The main strength of these oral histories, personal accounts or partial ethnographies was that they offered the possibilities for moving beyond stable categories of ethnic identity. This was because they built their interpretations of identity from the ground up. A limitation with this stream of writing about ethnicity, however, was that the authors tended to represent their role in the work as if they had no dispositions at all, as if their backgrounds did not impinge on the way the stories were reconstructed.

With a view to addressing issues of inequality, a number of studies have explored the relationship between the concepts of ethnicity, gender and class (see Bottomley and de

Lepervanche 1984; Tsolidis 1986; Kalantzis 1988). Moreover, in some of these studies there were attempts to obtain a more complex picture of how different groups negotiated their identities and relationships with 'mainstream' social institutions. For example, Marie de Lepervanche's book, *Indians in a White Australia* (1984), focused on the way in which a Sikh community in northern New South Wales contributed to its marginalisation by concentrating on the politics of its own community, to the exclusion of broader social concerns which also affected the fate of its members. Another key text in this latter genre was *Mistaken Identity* (Castles *et al.* 1988). This work examined the construction of ethnicity in the post-war period and the emergence of multiculturalism in Australia in the 1970s and 1980s. In this text, attention was directed away from a multiculturalism which was concerned with a celebratory notion of identity, towards one that focused on the construction of 'community without nation'. These writers argued that: 'Building communality means taking the real situation in our cities, suburbs and country areas as a starting point, adopting political and economic forms which correspond with the needs and interests of many of the groups who are voiceless at present, and working for change everywhere' (148). Here, the emphasis was on the need to encompass the idea that national identity could be constructed without recourse to a particular ethnicity.

Preceding the publication of *Mistaken Identity*, but similarly concerned with questions of ethnicity and social inequality, was the collection of articles titled *Ethnicity, Class and Gender in Australia* (Bottomley and de Lepervanche 1984; see also Kalantzis 1988). This work included pieces on a range of subjects such as the situation of women from non-English speaking background in the workforce (Martin 1984), the concept of



'migrantness' (Morrisey 1984) and a critique of 'multiculturalism as ideology' (Jakubowicz 1984). It focused particularly on the exclusion of ethnic minority groups from a range of key political and social areas in post-war Australia. The fundamental contribution of these essays to debates about ethnicity was their linking of the notions of class, gender and ethnicity in a way many of the earlier works had failed to achieve. Bottomley and de Lepervanche made explicit their intention to broaden the debate about the place of ethnicity in social life when they commented: 'We believe that it is not possible to include migrants as an integral part of Australian society within the framework of an orthodox social science, which continues to legitimise existing power relations' (1984: viii). Commenting further, they said: 'We want to alter the terms in which discussion about Australian immigration has taken place' (xi). Bottomley and de Lepervanche, and others, continued to advance the discussion of ethnicity in the later texts, *The Cultural Construction of Race* (de Lepervanche and Bottomley 1988) and *Intersexions* (Bottomley, de Lepervanche and Martin 1991). The first of these, following Barker (1981), investigated the nature of the 'new racism'. According to the authors this form of racism was characterised by the idea that: 'The rationalisations for excluding those who look different or who are actually unlike us, then does not directly appeal to the old fashioned notions of race but to ideas about an allegedly universal nature that is nepotistic and which seeks to preserve its own national way of life' (1988: 2). This work signalled a shift in de Lepervanche's and Bottomley's approach from a materialist conception of the social world to a more discursive set of models for understanding the way in which ethnicity and race develop as social categories. However, it was in their later work with Jeannie Martin, which had a significant impact on the thoughts of others in the field in Australia, that the discursive interpretation of ethnic and cultural identity

became most pronounced. These authors made the issue of 'representation' one of the main themes of the book and although they offered material which was 'critical' in its intent, they were also 'aware that categories and intellectual frameworks are constructed within relations of domination and subordination' (Bottomley, de Lepervanche and Martin 1991: ix). Therefore, their overall aim was to 'not merely offer a pluralist presentation of "life's rich tapestry", but to understand the processes by which such relations of power are maintained, reproduced and resisted' (ix). Addressing such concerns in this latter text Vasta (1991: 159), for instance, discussed the relationship between gender, class and ethnicity by looking at 'the domestic and work experiences of Italian migrant women in Australia'. As opposed to the earlier writings by theorists such as de Lepervanche and Bottomley, the shift towards issues of representation allowed for a more flexible use of the key categories of ethnicity, class and gender. Whereas earlier versions seemed concerned with ascertaining which one, class, gender or ethnicity, was more dominant in our social positioning (see Martin 1984: 121), the later writings offered a view which showed that ~~the~~ identities of Italian women, for instance, were not single but multiple. Commenting on this point Vasta says: 'They are working women, Italo-Australian women, wives, mothers, etc. who do not retain static identities but who struggle and resist daily, wherever and whenever possible, hegemonic constructions of them' (1991: 177). Martin's work (1991) also illustrates this shift in thinking about issues to do with ethnic identity when she observes that it was necessary to 'by-pass concerns with theoretical modes that deploy assumptions about, for example, universal and particular positions in analysis and strategy' (131). This is certainly a far cry from perspectives expressed in earlier texts which suggested that 'immigrant women, like their sisters everywhere, might be better to organise on a gender basis. There is little

evidence that their situation will be taken seriously from any other base' (121). While this view may be one which is still being debated in feminist and other circles, the main point which I am making here is that by the early 1990s there was a considerable change taking place in the way different thinkers were telling the story of ethnicity (and race) in Australia.

Interestingly, at a much earlier date, a similar approach to the discussion of ethnic identity was explicated by Jean Martin in her well-known work *The Migrant Presence* (1978). Here, Martin examined 'the response of a number of established institutions to the migrant presence, and to ethnic diversification, in terms of the constructs that have been attached to migrants and their relation to those institutions . . .' (25). Jean Martin was also concerned with examining who were 'the definers' of public knowledge in this field and who were actors or participants, 'the defined'. In conclusion, Martin argued that 'the thesis of cultural pluralism rests on the assumptions that ethnic culture can be sustained without ethnic communities and that a culturally diverse society is something different from a structurally pluralist one, assumptions which defy the weight of historical experience' (216). In *Intersexions* Bottomley, de Lepervanche and Martin (1991), brought together the views of different theorists who continued, not necessarily intentionally, the project initiated by Jean Martin. This was because it had as its central concern an analysis of the way in which the notion of ethnic identity was itself a focus of struggles and which, therefore, could not be easily reduced to simple categorisations. Reflecting this continuing concern in her work, Bottomley, writing at a later date, points out that: 'Migration implies a radical change in objective circumstances. Migrants move into different political and economic systems where they must come to terms with

already existing schemes of understanding and power relations . . . neither a subjective nor an objective account of this encounter is adequate by itself' (Bottomley 1992: 39). Implicit in much of this developing work was a dynamic interpretation of the notion of culture which was clearly absent from some of the earlier studies of ethnic minority groups.

More recently, a range of writers has continued to tell the story of ethnicity in Australia by looking at how a bridge can be built between the notions of difference and social equality (see, for example, Castles *et al.* 1988; Castles 1993; Tsolidis 1986; 1993). Much of the discussion in this area has particularly focused on education but has also involved a discussion of such issues as that of 'migrant workers' (see Castles and Miller 1993). A central feature of this genre is the notion of citizenship which has generally been discussed in broad terms of identity and social participation. For instance, Castles (1993: 22; 1994; 1996; 1997) points out the need to differentiate between 'formal citizenship' and 'substantive citizenship'. In his opinion, debates about citizenship, particularly in Europe, have focused on the former—'that is on the rules for access to citizenship for immigrants and their children' (1993: 2). For this writer, it is necessary to look beyond the idea of formal citizenship 'as ethnic minorities may be formal citizens and yet be excluded from rights' (2). In discussing the notion of substantial citizenship, a central issue for a number of theorists both in Australia and overseas (see, for example, Mouffe 1992; Spivak 1993; Castles 1993; 1994; Turner 1994; Hall in Terry 1995a), is best summarised by Mouffe when she says: 'How can the maximum of pluralism be defended—in order to respect the rights of the widest groups—without destroying the very framework of the political community?' (Mouffe quoted in Castles 1993: 32). As

some writers have pointed out, universal ideas of citizenship do not necessarily address the needs of ethnically and culturally diverse communities. Stuart Hall, for instance, (see Hall in Terry 1995a), has commented on the way in which universalism, while being concerned with the rights of all, has always been infused with maleness, and has provided a 'Eurocentric' perspective on matters arising from ethnic and cultural difference. Likewise, Castles (1994) also raises concern about the way in which progressive elements within universalist discourse need to be reconciled with the demands which arise out of the presence of difference. Castles suggests that the notion of 'equal treatment described by the idea of universal citizenship can actually be discriminatory and it is therefore necessary to rethink the relationship between ethnic groups and key social institutions such as our system of government' (32). In his idea of 'multicultural citizenship', particularly as it relates to the Australian situation, the central aspects of this model of governance would include 'group representation' and 'differential treatment of people'. In his view, such a model 'addresses the need to redefine the rights of citizenship in societies marked by a growing plurality in forms of identity, based on gender, age, sexual preference, life style, class and other criteria' (32). This model, he suggests, 'is appropriate to the multi-dimensional cultural and social identities which are emerging through processes of globalisation' (32). Clearly, as he points out, these identities 'apply not only to immigrants, but to many other people exposed to a multitude of influences and choices provided by global communication and cultural interaction' (32).

As already stated, the large scale migrations of the past few decades have dramatically altered the social, ethnic and cultural composition of Australia's population. We have

seen how, together with these changes, a number of different but overlapping discourses concerning ethnicity have come into being. With the emergence of such discourses, it is apparent that there has been a shift from an approach which emphasised ethnicity as a sole category in the formation of the social self to one in which issues of class and gender were also central. In recent years, as I have commented, the debates around ethnicity, both in Australia and overseas, have begun to focus on the implications of difference for social participation and citizenship. Through the introduction of notions such as 'multicultural citizenship', we see efforts being made to further develop ethnicity as an organising principle for social action and for a reinvigorated notion of citizenship. But these days the story of ethnicity is being told in a more sophisticated way than it was in the earlier stories about ethnic minority groups. Whereas some of the earlier versions stressed a singular notion of identity, the more recent writings are trying to grapple with the idea of 'multiple identities'.

Yet, when looked at closely, it is apparent that the tensions which exist between notions of universal citizenship and the idea of difference, are not resolved by the model which writers, such as Castles and others (see Habermas 1994; Kymlicka 1995), advance. For as Hall (see Hall in Terry 1995a: 20) says, such theorists, despite the very important insights that they offer, 'have not sufficiently disrupted the discourse of universalism'. I think that this is, in part, though they are trying to move beyond it, due to the fact that theorists such as Castles, following Habermas and Mouffe, are still working with the concept of ethnic identification in its old modernist guise; a guise which represents ethnicity as a rather stable category and not as one which is now a more decentred and fluid experience—more a set of 'new ethnicities' (see Hall 1996b; 1987b). For, once

again, as Hall has suggested, we need to think about how it is no longer possible to talk about a centred identity, a Cartesian self. Rather, he says, we need to deal with the emergence of new ethnicities which have brought into being a new cultural politics that moves beyond essentialist categories 'by engaging rather than suppressing *différance*' (Hall 1996b: 441-449; 1987b). This latter thinker regards the move towards the expression of new ethnicities as a journey which signifies a shift from an emphasis on the 'relations of politics to a politics of representation itself' (1996b: 442, 1987b). And while he sees the construction of this form of politics as problematic, he affirms it as one which 'works with and through difference, which is able to build those forms of solidarity and identification which make common struggle and resistance possible but without suppressing the real heterogeneity of interests and identities . . . ' (444). Here, he also recognises the need for an open-ended ethnicity which 'can effectively draw the political boundary lines without which political contestation is impossible, without fixing those boundaries for eternity' (444). For Hall, such a conception of ethnicity involves us 'in a struggle around positionalities' (444).

Writing from the late 1980s onwards, a number of other writers, both locally and overseas, also began to explore the idea of ethnic identity as a more fluid category (see, for example, Bhabha 1987; 1994a; Gunew and Yeatman 1993; Bottomley 1997). These writers recognised that the old meta-narratives which had formed around the notion of ethnic identity could no longer adequately contain complex identities which revolved around ethnicity within a single story. While we need not necessarily express 'incredulity' towards the old meta-narratives, these eruptions within theory led to thinking about what constituted the new ethnicities. What 'key words' do we use to

describe the processes at work that involve our ethnicities? To what extent is it possible to organise around these identities? These are some of the important questions which have been addressed by researchers concerned with fulfilling Hall's demand that we need to be constantly rethinking and reworking the notion of ethnicity and its relation to the politics of representation.

In his article 'Identity and Cultural Studies', Lawrence Grossberg (1996c) discusses a number of the key models which various writers have constructed around the notion of identity. Interestingly, he comments on the genealogies of terms such as fragmentation, hybridity and diaspora, the terms which I had also come to identify as being important in the writings that have influenced my thinking about identity and identity politics. In his work, Grossberg highlights the existence of two models which have emerged in recent years around the production of identities. He argues that 'the first model assumes that there is some intrinsic and essential content to any identity which is defined by either a common origin or a common structure of experience or both' (89). In contrast, the second model, he suggests, 'emphasises the impossibility of such fully constituted, separate and distinct identities. It denies the existence of authentic and originary identities based in a universally shared origin or experience' (89). In this latter model, he continues, 'identities are always relational and incomplete, in process' (89). Grossberg is particularly interested in the second model which, he argues, does not define a 'singular theoretical position or vocabulary'. Accordingly, he proceeds to discuss the key perspectives which have emerged within the framework of this model. For him, using a Derridean notion, 'the figure of *différance* describes a particular constitutive relation of negativity in which the subordinate term (the marginalized [*sic*] other or subaltern) is a



necessary and internal force of destabilisation existing within the identity of the dominant term' (90). On the other hand, Grossberg defines the notion of fragmentation or fragmented identities as one which 'emphasises the multiplicity of identities and of positions within an apparent identity' (91). For him the concept of hybridity 'is more difficult to characterise for it is often used synonymously with a number of other figures'. Lastly, he considers the notion of diaspora which 'links identity to spatial locations and identifications . . .' (92). In considering these different ways of thinking about or naming identity, Grossberg challenges these theories by suggesting that 'they have failed to open up a space of anti:—or even counter-modernity. In other words, they are ultimately unable to contest the formations of modern power at their deepest levels because they remain within the strategic forms of modern logic: difference, individuality, and temporality' (93).

Interestingly, in unpacking my library I also found that the terms that Grossberg refers to are significant ones for theorists working from a variety of theoretical positions. Hall (1987a; Bailey and Hall cited in Grossberg 1996c), for example, employed the idea of fragmented to posit an idea of minimal selves to show that there were changes occurring in the location of different groups within English society, as black identity became more centred and traditional notions of 'British' identity became somewhat unstable and marginalised. Hall says: 'Despite its fragmentation and displacements, then "the self" does relate to a real set of histories' (Hall 1987a: 44-45). At a later stage in his thinking on issues of ethnic and cultural identity, the idea of fragmented identities is a notion to which he is less committed:

I don't know that I want to stay with the notion of fragmented selves. I use fragmented selves as a way of knocking the Cartesian self on the head, but fragmented, I think, is probably too negative, too close to the post-modern nomad than I want to go. (Hall in Terry 1995a: 60)

However, Stuart Hall also comments that he uses terms such as hybridity, creolisation, 'all the ones which talk about being in two places at once, or being in more places at once or having to internally negotiate many different societies at the one time' (Hall in Terry 1995a: 60). In expressing his thoughts on this matter, Hall stresses the fact that he has not settled in his use of such terms: 'I'll keep using a variety of terms until I have frozen my work in relation to my significant others. These others are significant because they are offering critiques of essentialism' (61).

Of the terms which Hall mentions, the notion of hybridity is one which is used by a number of writers who have worked on issues of racial and ethnic identity. Hall says that while he uses this term as a way of naming social experiences associated with race or ethnicity, he is aware of the fact that it 'can be a very celebratory notion where everything is wonderful, a place where there is no struggle, no pain either . . . and narratives of displacement are pretty painful' (60). Locating his use of the notion of hybridity in reference to other theorists of identity, particularly those of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, he observes that 'Edward and Homi use the concept very positively, but they don't mean the same thing by it' (60). Developing this point at some length he says:

For Said hybridity means people who have a positionality, in two cultural

worlds. He is a perfect example of this. He is steeped in European culture, in French culture in particular, and he has very strong allegiances and roots in the Muslim world. Homi too, has mixed cultural experiences. He is a Parsee and very well educated. By hybridity he means something different. He means something that doesn't settle down as a positionality but is what he calls the 'in-between'. Homi doesn't talk about identity; he talks about positions of enunciation. By hybridity, then he simply means any of those things that were constructed as binaries and that something disrupts. Mimicry, among the Anglo-Indian community, for example, is a disruption. It is not interesting because it is an identity, but because it comes between well established identities and breaks them up. This is another way of thinking about hybridity . . . My use of the term is more like that of Said than Homi. (60)

In his work *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said uses the notion of hybridity as a central concept in exploring the effects of imperialism on the imperial and non-imperial cultures. His 'principal aim here is not to separate but to connect . . .'. He is interested 'in this for the main philosophical and methodological reason that cultural forms are hybrid, mixed, impure, and the time has come in cultural analysis to reconnect their analysis with their actuality' (1993: 15). Underlining the importance of the notion of hybridity he comments:

As the twentieth century moves to a close, there has been a gathering awareness nearly everywhere of the lines *between* cultures, the divisions and

differences that not only allow us to discriminate one culture from another, but also enable us to see the extent to which cultures are humanly made structures of both authority and participation, benevolent in what they include, incorporate, and validate, less benevolent in what they exclude and demote . . . Far from being unitary or monolithic or autonomous things, cultures actually assume more 'foreign' elements, alterities, differences, than they consciously exclude. (15)

Here, Said is using the idea of hybridity to show us that there are 'no pures', and would, no doubt, agree with Hall when the latter says that ' . . . difference has entered inalterably into the equation, into the centre . . . ' (Hall in Terry 1995a: 56). Though Hall sees Bhabha's work as differing from his because the latter 'is much more in the literary tradition', he still regards his own work as being very close to Bhabha's, who has also worked with the concept of hybridity as a central notion in his exploration of ethnic and cultural identity. Writing as early as 1987, in his disruptive style, Bhabha says:

Any attempt, on my part, to frame the problem of identity leads inevitably to my being caught athwart the frame, at once inside and outside. And if the 'frame within the frame', *mise-en-abîme*, of the frame is one of the central tropes of post-modern culture, then such double inscription also provides the *mise-en-scène* of the post-modern writer writing on post-modern 'identity'; performing a certain problem of identification between nations and cultures, between foreign and floating signs. It is here that I want to begin, between history and literature, where the authoritative power of naming is undone by

the political and poetical conditions of its meaning; where language of the self is disseminated in hybrid tongues and traditions that determine the place from which one speaks—as other. (1987: 5)

Writing at another moment, Homi Bhabha utilises the idea of hybridity as a way of ‘naming’ the complexity of identity in a decentred world when he says:

The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy . . . (Bhabha 1994a: 4)

Diaspora and diasporic identities are also key words which have emerged in recent years to describe the way in which some ethnic minority groups develop notions of self and group (see Gilroy in Terry forthcoming, Hall 1990; Bottomley 1992; Hall in Terry 1995a; Cohen 1997; Clifford 1997). In looking at the issue of diasporas Cohen suggests that these phenomenon are often treated in too simple a fashion. In order to offer a more complex view of the notion of diaspora Cohen (1997: 27; see also Safran cited in Clifford 1997: 247) provides a set of defining criteria which include: dispersal from the original homeland to two or more foreign regions; a collective memory about the

homeland; idealisation of the ancestral home; a commitment to its preservation, restoration or even creation; and the possibility of a creative life in societies which tolerate pluralism. For Cohen, diasporas also refer to groups that have a strong ethnic consciousness sustained over time and often have a troubled relationship with host societies. Most importantly, a key criterion for diasporas is that the 'immigrant' has some form of connection with her or his counterparts in other countries of immigration. Working with this criterion Cohen is critical of the single notion of diaspora that has become central in much of the writing in this area. Consequently, he refers to 'victim diasporas', 'labour diasporas', 'trade diasporas' and 'cultural diasporas'. A category not usually thought of in most of the writings on diaspora is the idea of an 'imperial diaspora' which Cohen applies to groups such as the English who occupied large parts of the world at the zenith of Empire. While Cohen's recent exploration of the notion of diaspora provides some interesting insights, Gilroy's work *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993; see also Gilroy 1987) also utilises the idea of an 'African Diaspora' whose 'distinctive historical experiences . . . created a unique body of reflections on modernity and its discontents which is an enduring presence in the cultural and political struggles of their descendants today' (45). In his work Gilroy proposes 'that the history of the African Diaspora and a reassessment of the relationship between modernity and slaves may require a more complete revision of the terms in which modernity debates have been constructed . . .' (46). For Gilroy, the terms of diaspora and diasporic identities are not about 'a pattern of identification, a pattern of belonging, which is readily reversible, which is a kind of one-way street . . . a point that we can look back on with joy, or resentment, or loss, or where we can stay where we are, or to which we can return' (Gilroy in Terry unpublished). Rather, he is trying to develop

the concept of diaspora in a more sophisticated way that recognises that there can be no return to the 'original home' or what he calls the 'original moment':

I do want to get to something more complicated than the one way street idea that suggests that the origins of that dispersal process are knowable, fixed and, to some extent, reversible . . . I want to have a much more complex sense of that process of diaspora. I want to have, if you like, a different ecology of belonging which suggests that the process of dispersal is a much more multiple and a nuance thing; where the idea of origins, the original moment, is something that becomes irrelevant. Because there is no return, and if there is a return, the return is a source of frustration and complexity, as much [as it is] a source of anchoring. (Gilroy in Terry unpublished)

Clifford (1997) suggests that '[a]n unruly crowd of descriptive/interpretative terms now jostle and converse in an effort to characterise the contact zones of nations, cultures and regions' (245). For Clifford, the notion of diaspora is a way of showing the experience of groups as being 'more like exile: a constitutive taboo on return, or its postponement to a remote future' (246). Also, as with other writers such as Gilroy and Cohen, Clifford sees the notion of diaspora as a way of thinking about the connection between communities which are not bounded geopolitically but have a common history somewhere else. In his view, 'dispersed peoples, once separated from homelands by vast oceans and political barriers, increasingly find themselves in border relations with the old country . . .' (247). Moreover, he suggests, that '[i]t is now widely understood that the old localising strategies—by bounded *community*, by organic *culture*, by *region*, by

*centre and periphery*—may obscure as much as they reveal' (245). Taking some of the characteristics of diaspora as laid down by writers such as Safran (cited in Clifford 1997: 247; see also Cohen 1997), Clifford points out that 'the transnational connections linking Diasporas [*sic*] need not be articulated primarily through a real or symbolic homeland' (249). In line with Gilroy's views, he also proposes that '[d]e-centered, lateral connections may be as important as those formed around a teleology of origin and return . . . and a shared, on-going history of displacement, suffering, adaptation, or resistance may be as important as the projection of a specific origin' (250). According to Clifford, while 'diasporic practices' must be seen in the context of the workings of the nation-state and globalism, 'they also exceed and criticise them [these structures and processes]: old and new Diasporas [*sic*] offer resources for emergent "post-colonialisms" ' (Clifford 1997: 244).

In her paper, *Identification: Ethnicity, Gender and Culture* Bottomley (1997) advances the discussion of ethnicity within the Australian context 'as refracted through the prism of my [her] own perspective and interests, inevitably, but also through some of the current debates around related issues' (42). In exploring debates around the concept of identification (identity), this theorist argues that the vagueness associated with this notion arises from the fact that 'it resonates at a number of different pitches, from the orchestration of the national to the murmur of the personal' (42). Moreover, she suggests that the modernist emphasis on individualism fails to take account of the fact that 'we are already positioned within the contradictions of language, history and ideology' (43). Looking at how in recent years she has positioned herself in relation to the contemporary discussions on ethnicity, Bottomley, reflecting on the changes in her own narrative, says:



'During this odyssey, several themes have developed a kind of navigational chorus [for her] . . . [including] specific versions of the notions of network and diaspora, identity, community, ethnicity, culture and representation . . .' (1993: 2). For Bottomley, post-modern and other theoretical perspectives 'usually take the forms that have been refracted through British and American prisms' (4). However, she also recognises that 'despite reluctance on imported theory, all intellectual fields are structured in specific ways and "knowledge" is constantly filtered through sources that are not neutral in relation to other dimensions of power . . . In Australian society, those dimensions include a pervasive Anglomorph hegemony' (5). In much of her recent work, Bottomley's main concern is the inadequacies of the essentialisms of ethnicity, class and gender. Consequently for her, responses to ethnic and cultural difference, such as those involved in multiculturalism, will need to resist such essentialisms. In a developing body of work which is exploring a set of practices 'that can move beyond ethnic pluralisms' key notions such as heterogeneity, diaspora and polythetic form a link across a number of papers which draw these terms into a story which is grounded in the Australian experience: 'In art, music and other kinds of cultural production, we can see and hear some of these ways of living heterogeneity . . . The defining logic of practice is polythetic, ("many positions"), capable of sustaining a multiplicity of contradictory meanings . . . I believe that this logic of practice has been important to the degree of success of Australian multiculturalism' (1997: 47).

While in recent years terms such as fragmented, diaspora, hybrid, heterogeneity and polythetic have formed part of the semantic field on which debates over the concept of ethnicity among social theorists have been waged, the idea of ethnic or national identity

as an imagined identity has also been much discussed. Benedict Anderson's (1982) idea that ethnic and national identities are imagined communities has gained popularity in some contemporary writing on nationalism, colonialism and post-colonialism. Anderson stresses the way in which national identities came into being as a consequence of colonialism's efforts at re-organising social and political boundaries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For him, national identity has been constructed as an imagined identity, in so much as 'the members of even the smallest nation will never know their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (6). Hall, writing from a different perspective, has also discussed the idea that there is an imaginary aspect to identity formation. On this matter Hall says:

It may be true that the self is always, in a sense, a fiction, just as the kinds of 'closures' which are required to create communities of identification—are arbitrary closure; (1987a: 44)

At a later point, Hall, utilising Lacan's idea of the imaginary to make sense of the nostalgic and more essentialist notions of ethnicity, says: 'I have a Lacanian view of this, which is that the original home is like the mother and that the original relationship can only be imagined. The imaginary mother and I are so intermixed that there is no point at which I stop and she begins . . . We have to give up the literal sense of home being somewhere else because the literal sense freezes the home in relation to my narrative' (Hall in Terry 1995a: 62). Bottomley, too, attempts to deal with some of the concerns that take us to the central issue of whether it is possible to ever know ourselves, and if so,

what are the limits of this exploration, when she says:

The intensity of struggles over forms of liberation from normative identities has demonstrated the tenacity of historical and structural determinants. Within such struggles, the notion of identity as self-identification is highly motivating, but who we think we are, the consciousness of self, is fragmentary, even though it can activate forms of identity politics. This double-edged aspect of identity is important; one can identify positively with people who are perceived as similar to oneself, but mutual identification rests on shared objectives and understandings, as well as less conscious and less controllable orientations, perhaps in the form of habitus as described by Bourdieu—'a sense of one's place'—and by definition, 'of the place of others'. To put it more strongly, self-identification requires recognition, in precarious balance to . . . the significance of structure, policy and interaction within specific social fields. (1995: 6)

In order to think about the place of ethnicity in knowing of the self, it is necessary once again to turn to the work of Stuart Hall. While Hall suggests that there are some imaginary moments in the construction of ethnic identity or identifications (see Hall 1996c: 2-3), he has also provided one of most comprehensive analyses of the relations of ethnic identity to the specific social fields to which Bottomley refers. In a highly theoretical paper on the relevance of the work of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci to issues of race and ethnicity, Hall (1996d; see also Hall 1986) raises a number of important concerns about the way in which we might think about ethnic identity, his

main point being that there is no necessary correspondence between the economic level and the cultural or political levels within a society. Hall also highlights Gramsci's idea that 'subordinated ideologies [such as those that underpin ethnic identity], are necessarily contradictory: [because they include] "Stone Age elements and principles of a more advanced science, prejudices from all phases of history . . . and intuitions of a future philosophy. . ."' (1996d: 433). Here, Hall's use of Gramsci is useful for the exploration of identity, not only because it shows us that ethnicity cannot simply be narrated as part of the story of other social differences, but also because it underlines the idea that the social self, which often draws on ethnicities for its formations, is not a unified but a contradictory and fragmented self.

This way of thinking about ethnicity and identity indicates that in constructing self narratives we do have choices about the language which we might use to represent ourselves, but in so doing, we are always positioned by a history, by culture or by what Bottomley refers to as 'interaction within specific social fields'. Some theorists have recently argued that we are only able to interact with and position ourselves within those identities that are in currency at the time (Rose 1990; 1996; Butler 1997a). However, for theorists such as Hall (Hall in Terry 1995a), while there is no true or unique self but a number of positionalities into which we are 'interpellated', identity has some correspondence to our lived experiences: 'The fact that there is no true or unique self, and that there are a number of positionalities into which one is interpellated, does not mean that identity is nothing, or that it is dispersed and that one is free to choose in a consumer market by popping in today and popping out later. I don't hold that view and I don't hold the post-modern nomad view that everyone is a wandering star' (Hall in

Terry 1995a: 52). Hall also shows that 'events, relations, structures do have conditions of existence and real effects outside the discursive [outside of language]' (52), but for him it is only in the latter that they come to be infused with meaning.

As already stated, a number of writers working on the issue of ethnic identity have contested the notion that such identity formation is a stable category. In fact, as we have seen earlier in the discussion of key words, the use of terms such as hybridity, diaspora, heterogeneity, among others, all reflect a move away from settled notions of self and ethnic identity. For instance, Bottomley regards ethnicity not as a fixed set of parameters, but as 'a fairly fluid process' which is shaped by an 'active transformation and rearticulation of cultural forms in different times and different places' (1997: 46). For such theorists, ethnicity can be a shifting set of representations (Hall 1987b; 1996), sometimes representing itself through mimicry (see Bhabha 1996b), sometimes through hybridity (see Said 1993; Bhabha 1996b), and sometimes it takes the form of being diasporic (see Bottomley 1997; Gilroy 1993; Gilroy in Terry unpublished; Cohen 1997; Clifford 1997).

Another issue that continues to be of interest to a range of writers is the ambivalent nature of the categories of ethnicity and race (see Hall 1987; Pettman 1991; Turner 1994; Hall in Terry 1995a). Such categories can be a focus for liberating practices or they can become a means of organising groups around regressive kinds of nationalism or national identity. Hall suggests that: 'We know that ethnic affiliations can be very segmented and autonomous. This ethnization [*sic*] of politics is one of [the] possible futures . . . one of everybody climbing back defensively into their own space and trying to observe and

assimilate difference' (see Hall in Terry 1995a: 66; see also Gilroy in Bottomley 1993: 9). While dealing with a different aspect of how people organise on a political or social level around ethnic identity, Said raises concerns about what he regards as 'possessive exclusivism'; this being the idea that we can only speak about those issues that directly relate to our ethnicity (Said cited in Pettman 1992; see also Alcoff 1991-92). On the other hand, a number of writers have commented on the way in which ethnic identity can also be used to positively resist negative definitions imposed by others, as well as for making legitimate claims about rights, or what some theorists (Habermas 1994; Kymlicka 1995; Castles 1993b; 1994; 1997) refer to as 'substantive citizenship'. That is, while ethnic identity may bring with it all kinds of regressive tendencies, and also include dimensions of power, the new ethnicities, as argued by Stuart Hall, provide ways by which some people might begin to work with and express 'a new conception of ethnicity' as a kind of counter to the old discourses of nationalism and national identity (Hall 1987a: 46; see also Turner 1994; Bottomley 1993, 1997; Spivak in Stephens 1995), a counter-narrative to modernity (see Gilroy 1993).

Some writers find it is difficult to imagine the possibilities of organising political claims around notions of ethnic identity in which the idea of multiple identities and multiple voices occupy a central place. Hall, speaking on this matter has commented:

We knew how to organise a politics which was based on a single master identity. We knew how to organise class politics, because all the other identities were subordinated to class. We didn't need a politics about women or race because if we solved the class problem these other problems would

be resolved, race problems too. We know now that this is not so. We know how to deal with a politics around race and ethnicity, especially if ethnicity has a strong religious element . . . What we don't know is what sort of politics is fought from the position of multiple identities. (Hall in Terry 1995a: 66)

Continuing the interview Hall says:

We don't know whether the shift to centring on the cultural identities question represents a loss of the war [laughter]. Because we don't have the power to act at the global level, we retreat to the cultural or local . . . or whether this is really the form of a new politics that is dependent on the intersection of various localities. Is the Foucauldian, micro-politics of localism more exactly adapted to a decentred system such as that of late modernity, than the centred modernity of old? We still don't know the answer to that question! (66)

Hall suggests that while his work is close to Homi Bhabha's, he is not sure whether it is possible to develop an appropriate set of strategies for social change from, say, Bhabha's idea of 'positionalities' which lie somewhere 'in-between' and which seek to disrupt clear cut identities, through such things as 'mimicry'. Indeed, when Bhabha's (1994a) work is examined closely, it is difficult to see how it might be possible to achieve communication across cultural boundaries, because for this writer identity never settles down, it is always an 'in-between', never grounded enough to enunciate a politics of

representation (see Hall in Terry 1995a). Nevertheless, Jacqueline Rose in a review of Bhabha's work has suggested that 'he is performing a subject position symptomatic of the contradictions of post/colonial discourse, contradictions that he is also at the same time analysing'. Rose points out that Bhabha's work 'engages with complex theoretical issues in tangential rather than systematic ways . . . ' (Rose 1995: 368). However, for Rose, Bhabha 'writes like many other refugees, exiles, and migrants through "the uncanny influence of another's language, a fluency of the marginalised, a fluency of a certain desperate 'gathering' (of) the signs of approval and acceptance, gathering degrees, discourses, disciplines", a fluency of the marginalised determined no longer to be so . . . ' (386). Rose suggests that Bhabha's work displaces him so that he places himself in the position of the in-between, this also being the idea about which he is writing. For her, '[h]e is situated, then, not on the firm ground of marginality, but on the borderline between margin and centre, his text and his self symptoms of the hybrid contradictions found there'. Even though some theorists raise the question of whether it is possible to formulate a politics around Bhabha's notion of identity, because it is a positionality that never settles down, (Hall in Terry 1995a), Rose, who is also worried by the fact that 'his (Bhabha's) politics remain those of the supplement and not those of the social' (372), further comments on his work by suggesting that, 'far from being unconnected to the trenches of political struggle, the signs of struggle are all too apparent in his work' (368).

However, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (see Spivak in Stephens 1995a; 1996) also raises some important issues concerning the pluralised notions of identity that have come into being with the 'incredulity towards the grand narratives' (see Lyotard 1984). According



to one writer, Spivak's work 'offers no position as such that can be quickly summarised: in the most sustained deconstructive mode, she resists critical taxonomies, avoids assuming master discourses. To read her work is not so much to confront a system as to encounter a series of events' (Young 1991: 157). Some of the strategies, rather than categories, which she employs in naming the 'events' which provide an alternative to imperialism as a subject-constituting project, involve the idea of the 'subaltern', a term originally employed by Gramsci (see Young 1991: 159). Spivak, nevertheless, envisions some difficulties in achieving a 'common language' around which it might be possible to organise a progressive cultural politics. For Spivak, the notion of 'First World multiculturalism' in the post-Soviet world seems very useful for transnational companies. She also comments on the way in which a 'benevolent sector, the radical sector' in the 'West' conflates the problems of the victims of earlier colonialisations with migrancy as the problems. As a consequence of these events, Spivak suggests that she does not believe that 'a new language is being forged *across différence* [my italics]' (Spivak in Stephens 1995a: 21). Continuing, Spivak says:

All we are saying is that they [the problems] are crucially important but that we are talking about different problems and we must tackle them differently. Don't silence us by imposing culturalism upon us. In the areas where this work is going on, the cultural identitarian lobbies are in fact quite often middle-class elite or fundamentalists. Yet it is people with our interests who are called by other more visible kinds of radicals in the countries of the North 'people who are sympathetic to fundamentalists'. We are zapped from both ends. I think we have to keep these specificities in mind. But no, the forging

of a common language is not something that I can comfortably look forward to . . . (21)

In contrast to Spivak's pessimism, a number of other theorists see identity politics, particularly in the way it might form around ethnicities, as offering a way forward at a time when the forces of globalisation are assuming a total hegemony over the life-worlds of diverse peoples (Turner 1994; Giroux 1993; Bottomley 1993, 1997; Castles 1993, 1996; Hall in Terry 1995a). Gillian Bottomley (1993), for instance, argues that 'the post-modern condition begins to appear as something more like the empire striking back . . . by various counter-narratives that cannot so readily be pluralised' (9). For Bottomley, while the discourses on multiculturalism are still connected with the management and control of racial and ethnic differences, some forms of multiculturalism have 'revealed possibilities, expanded symbolic and imaginary capacities and forced a degree of generalised reflexivity' (15): perhaps providing the basis for a common language or framework from which to begin to negotiate difference or *différance*. Likewise, Hall argues that ethnic identity politics 'has won some space for difference' (Hall in Terry 1995: 14). In his view:

The indigenous people in Australia or in the Amazon basin have fought on this basis. The struggles of Muslims against discrimination in Britain have organised around ethnic identity politics, and while it has all sorts of associated problems, it has also been the basis of an anti-racist politics. (14)

However, while there may be a cautious endorsement of ethnic identity politics,

particularly as it might form around the new ethnicities, among some contemporary theorists, this politics has been criticised on a number of fronts. Of course, there are those critics who want to reassert the idea of identity and nation as a single story (see Hirst 1994; Birrell 1995; Sheehan 1998). We have also seen how some of the narratives of ethnicity allowed us to think about multiculturalism's role in diverting attention away from the larger narratives of class, thereby disrupting the possibility of alliances being formed among differently placed sections of the community. That is, some writers put forward the view that because multiculturalism as ethnic pluralism cannot address differences which arise largely as result of class, then an overemphasis on its role in social change 'can become itself a form of domination' (see Bottomley 1997; see also Castles *et al.* 1988; Jakubowicz 1984). More recently, Slavoj Zizek (1997), as with Spivak (Spivak in Stephens 1995a; 1996), has suggested that multiculturalism plays an important role in creating the conditions for the construction of the global economy—a form of colonialism 'in which there are only colonies, no colonising countries—the colonising country is no longer a Nation-State but directly the global company. In the long term, we shall all not only wear Banana Republic shirts but also live in banana republics' (44). According to Zizek,

... the ideal form of ideology for this global capitalism is multiculturalism, the attitude which, from a kind of empty global position, treats each local culture the way the coloniser treats colonised people—'as natives' whose mores are to be carefully studied and 'respected'. (44)

However, the narratives of ethnicity as they have emerged in Australia over the past two

decades have also been criticised from the point of view of the indigenous communities who rejected the definition of themselves as occupying the same narrative space as other ethnic and cultural groups which have very different histories in Australia. According to John Docker, 'the multicultural discourse by insisting on and enclosing "the migrant" within another myth of extreme marginality' empowers and advantages the latter in a society in which indigenous peoples have been dispossessed. In the view of this writer, '[s]uch a claim by multicultural discourse can only hinder recognition of Aboriginal claims to sovereignty, to their different rights and history as indigenous people. As ever, discussion of nationhood in Australia, including questions of the multicultural, returns to that history' (Docker 1994: 41; 1995).

In thinking about these criticisms of the narratives of ethnicity as they have unfolded in this country in recent decades, it is possible to engage with both those outside the narratives (see, for example, Hirst 1994; Birrell 1995; Sheehan 1998), as well as those who are inside the story (Jakubowicz 1984; Docker 1994; Zizek 1997). Writers such as Hirst (1994), a Whig historian turned social commentator in recent years, as well as my former teacher, friend and now philosophical adversary, view ethnic identity politics, and its effects, as represented by the policy of multiculturalism, as divisive. According to Hirst,

What the social scientists have to explain is not migrant disadvantage, but why migrants have done so well. For many this will not be a congenial theme. The migrant experience in Australia explodes their contention that inequality in Australia is deeply-rooted and structural. The migrants have shown that this is still a land of opportunity for the determined and the hard-

working. Ordinary people have long known that migrants were doing well, which was one reason why hard multiculturalism had difficulty finding general acceptance. (1994: 31)

Consequently for Hirst Australia has always been successful in accommodating its immigrants by treating everyone the same and therefore the term multicultural is an 'ugly' one, while Birrell argues for a 'common Australian identity' that revolves around values such as egalitarianism. While approaching the issue of ethnic identity from different perspectives, Birrell and Hirst look to some form of an Australian legend to counter the idea that there are a range of different histories and interpretations of the past that constitute the social body in this country. According to Docker such views have their 'roots in a mythology of the Australian spirit which was based on the fabled 1890s strike, and which revolves around the mythical values of outback bush workers, drovers, and the like, men who were ideally laconic, irreverent and dryly deflationary of claims to authority, yet ever egalitarian and co-operative amongst themselves' (Docker 1994: 40). This mythologised image has been rightly criticised 'as a story of white male nomads, free of family and women, Anglo-Celtic, racist towards Aborigines and exclusionary towards Chinese (Docker 1994: 40). Consequently, the advocates of national identity based on a single ethnicity are outside the multicultural narratives because they do not really engage with difference, they do not seek to understand its claims, its nuances, its elisions, its hybridity, but simply proclaim it as divisive. Moreover, both Hirst and Birrell, among others, generalise about the 'success' of ethnic minority groups in Australia by ignoring the very different experiences across and within very diverse communities. With little direct experience of the way in which multiculturalism works

at the ground level, these writers offer us little guidance in a world in which ethnic and cultural differences will become even more complex in all societies such as Australia's in the future.

On the other hand, while writers such as Docker and Jakubowicz are critical, or in the case of the latter, cautious of some forms of multiculturalism, they are engaged with the language and the substance of the material before them. They pose a challenge for the way in which ethnic differences are to be thought about. As we have seen, Docker's (1994; see also Docker 1995) concerns revolve around the way in which multiculturalism displaces indigenous narratives, while Jakubowicz's disquiet, which he expressed in the mid 1980s, focused on the way the narratives of ethnicity displaced those of class, though the criticism offered by this latter theorist was more to do with 'neo-conservative' and not 'critical' forms of multiculturalism which viewed ethnic groups as self contained authentic communities. While Jakubowicz's views were important in ensuring debate about the way multiculturalism emerged, they were still very reductionist, in that they treated ethnicity as merely a way of papering over social class differences. Here I am not disputing the fact that there is a relationship between other social positions which people occupy and those of ethnic or racial status. What I am questioning is the way in which it was assumed that everything could be incorporated into the 'master' narrative of class, a position which Jakubowicz himself would now see as too simplistic in its explanation of the roles played by ethnicity and race in social life (see, for example, Jakubowicz *et al.* 1994). For as we have seen in recent years, a number of innovative thinkers (Laclau and Mouffe 1985; see also Hall in Terry 1995a: 57) have questioned the assumption that economic class positions give you political and cultural

class positions; this is because '... questions of race, gender, sexuality and masculinity are not subordinate to class positions but are integral to the analysis' (Hall in Terry 1995a: 58). It is apparent from this that the discussion of ethnic identities as they unfold in Australia in the 1990s is based on a far more complex appreciation of the relationship between the range of identity positions that we are able to occupy simultaneously or across time and space.

However, on the matters raised by Docker, there can be no disagreement with the view that all our stories about ethnic identity in Australia must return to a 'history of Aboriginal sovereignty, to their different rights and history as indigenous peoples' (1994: 41; see also Docker 1995). Nevertheless, to suggest that the discourses associated with multicultural identities, by blurring the lines between the colonised and colonisers, is complicit in dispossession is certainly to simplify the way in which the story of ethnicity has unfolded on this continent over the last two centuries. It is also a failure to recognise, as some of the more traditional story tellers of ethnicity have informed us, that the experience of many ethnic minority people in this country has not been the one that they dreamed about when they parted from the original home. It is apparent that in some communities, even after three generations, there has been little social mobility, which suggests that Australia is not a 'lucky country' for even some of the colonisers, a fact with which Hirst and Birrell have also not been able to come to terms (see, for example, Castles *et al.* 1988 Collins 1991; Terry *et al.* 1993). This is not to say, as Docker asserts, that 'migrants' should be viewed as occupying a similar location to that of indigenous Australians, with respect to their participation in key social institutions such as education nor do they have the same relationship with this land. However, it is to recognise that

there are a number of different stories which colonialism has brought into being on this continent and which pose very difficult issues for all of us. Surely, to address these differences does not mean that we need to displace the narratives and demands of the indigenous communities in this country. What Docker does is to shift the emphasis from an ongoing analysis of the way in which ethnic and cultural groups become differently placed in the process of colonialism to an analysis that disenfranchises groups, which also do not have substantive rights. In so doing, he sets up oppositions between groups that should be looking for ways to form allegiances (see also Hage 1998) even if they do so from very different identity and historical positions. In contrast, in his criticism of multiculturalism Zizek (1997) does not even provide a definition of multiculturalism or consider the way in which this notion has itself been a source of debate among its advocates. More importantly, the views offered by Zizek do not seem to offer much for countries such as Australia, where large scale migration over a very short period of time has created a range of complex issues about ethnicities which are different from the field for his observations in Slovenia. While multiculturalism, as Zizek suggests, may be a convenient vehicle for multinationals it is an ambivalent concept because it also involves the idea of social rights (see Vasta 1996; see also Bottomley 1997).

If in our personal narratives we are always involved in producing more than the mere fragments, so it is with the way in which we construct the stories of notions such as ethnicity or multiculturalism. So far, I have told the story of ethnic identity from the position of my own engagement with the issues and with other theorists over two decades. But, as I have already commented, I have also drawn it into the present. For as Denning (1996) says, historical reconstruction 'is not the past. It is the past transformed



into something else, story. Metonymy: History is metonymy of the present' (34). This is not to say that I have consciously set out to exclude memory of some 'performances' or views, but that I have retold the story in a way which is meaningful to me now and which I hope is of benefit to others in the present who are interested in the unfolding narratives on ethnic identity as they take shape at a theoretical level and filter into the domain of the everyday.

By examining the way in which I understand others to have narrated ethnicity as theory, it is possible to see where my thinking is located in the 'webs of meaning over which we clamber in various figurations of action, history, and intention' (Watts 1993-94: 122). It is apparent that within these 'webs of meaning' those constructing the story of ethnicity are involved in struggles over defining and redefining the ways in which selfhoods shape and are shaped by our ethnicities. Nevertheless, the question that arises from a review of some of the thinking in this area is how might we work with the participants and their life stories which are central to this text on ethnic identity?

## **Chapter Two**

### **‘I Stay For Dinner . . .’**

A major task in this project is to map the ways in which the notion of the self is narrated at the level of everyday life. However, a key concern for me, as I set out on my journey with the families, was how to proceed. Some writers have expressed the view that it is only possible to speak about or on behalf of individuals or groups with which, through a shared history, we are intimately connected. The reasons for this standpoint are obvious, given the particular ways in which colonial discourses have constructed less powerful groups as something exotic, deviant or inferior; as ‘oriental’ (see Said 1978). Moreover, it is obvious that the writer is always enmeshed in a net of social and cultural forces that are often out of sight, only partially recognised, or sometimes mis-recognised. Consequently, whatever our best intentions, it is possible for authors to attribute motives or actions to others simply because they have misread the living texts with whom they as writers are engaged. For as a number of theorists have informed us, there have been many instances where the outsider has misrepresented the interests of the individuals or groups with which they are working, often with some serious and negative consequences (Alcoff 1991-92; see also Gunew 1994). In thinking about this issue, it becomes apparent that working cross-culturally is fraught with difficulty. It seems that a simple response to this issue is to work only with others who share your particular history. But, as a number of writers have suggested (Alcoff 1991-92; Said 1993; Hall in Terry 1995a; Wolfe 1997), to do so bypasses our political responsibility to engage with a range of issues which may

well not directly affect us but which are important to the broader 'social good'; though it is important to recognise that the idea of the 'social good' may also be a source of contest that involves debate across different cultural perspectives. Consequently, while our efforts in such areas may pose some risks, I, like Said and others, have decided that we cannot avoid that we are 'worlded' (Said quoted by Hall in Terry 1995a), and consequently we have a responsibility to engage with issues of difference, but in such a way that we maintain vigilance about the effects of what is being said and who is saying it (see Alcoff 1991-92). I also agree with Said when he talks about the fact that '[p]artly because of empire, all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated and unmonolithic' (1993: xxix) and therefore leave open the possibility of a genuine engagement with others who have very different histories to us. I also recognise, along with others (see, for example, Ganguly 1992), that to see people and groups as always 'Other' is to permanently position them as outsiders, as mysterious, as exotic. As with Ganguly (1992), I 'want to refuse this impulse to exoticise the other; [because] it seems that many "experimental" modes of representation continue to locate the other in a distant place and all too readily reduce her voice to a metaphoric turn' (28). Or, as a number of theorists have pointed out (see Spivak in Stephens 1995a; Giroux and Trend 1992), it could be racist not to enter into genuine and critical dialogue with those individuals and groups that are culturally different to us.

On my journey with members of the families, I carried out a dialogue with many people whose histories and languages were very different to mine. But in order to work cautiously with these stories, I sometimes depended on people of the same language and

cultural background as the participants to assist me with interpreting, translating and developing an understanding of the contexts in which I was operating with each of the families. And while there were differences to be negotiated with the people to whose life stories I listened, there were also connections that I was able to make between some aspects of their histories and my own. When Peter Wu told me about his mother dying at an early stage in his life and what it meant to him, this was something I felt I understood. When Ming Zhang spoke about his early life with his grandmother and about his absent father, I also felt I could glimpse some aspects of what he might have experienced. Likewise, when John Vella talked about his unhappiness at school, I could easily picture him sitting at a desk alone, looking out the window as the teacher berated him for his dreaming. What I am saying here is that while we need to approach our work with others whose histories we do not share with some caution, we should not let such differences define the limits of our attempts to communicate and work with one another. For as Said has commented, we need to be careful in how we view others through a 'fetishization and relentless celebration of "difference" . . . ' (Said quoted in Gunew and Yeatman, 1993: xxiv). Nevertheless, while recognising that working across cultures and the biographies of others takes us into 'overlapping territories and intertwined histories' (Said 1993: 31), it is important to consider how we might deal with the complexities of such a journey in a way that the 'imperial position' of the writer is not reproduced, either intentionally or unintentionally, or at least make explicit such a tendency so that its effects are obvious to the readers and to the writer himself.

It has been argued by a range of critics that ethnographic or case study methods can provide a way of bridging the gap between the researcher and the other participants (see,

for example, Marcus and Fischer 1986; Rizvi and Kemmis 1987; Ganguly 1992; Stanley and Wise 1993; Bottomley 1992; Denning 1996; Clifford 1997; Singh unpublished). However, as Kirby (1993) has pointed out, such methods, while offering an alternative to other approaches that mistakenly assume the position of an 'objective' science, can actually mean that the ethnographer is complicit in reproducing the very same circuits of power (28). For as Kirby says: 'The ethnographer is now a caring ethnographer, sensitive, self-reflexive, sharing, sympathetic, consciousness-raised; in other words, a nice sort of person—someone you might trust' (1993: 28). Also, while such approaches have been viewed as improved practices, it has also been pointed out that 'even when differences between women (or others) are the proposed stuff of investigation, these differences must comply with feminism's and/or anthropology's essentializing [*sic*] frame' (Kirby 1993: 29). Reflecting further on this matter, Kirby draws attention to the idea that, 'much of the rhetoric that pervades both feminist ethnography and its post-modern protagonists worries at how the ethnographer can escape the embroiling actuality of his or her imperial position' (1993: 29). Even though this is so, efforts in this regard have indeed been problematic because it is not clear, according to Kirby, that the ethnographer is ever able to fully escape the 'essentializing [*sic*] frame'. Dipesh Chakrabarty also takes a similar position when talking about the study of history as a discipline. He says: 'So long as one operates within the discourse of "history" produced at the institutional site of the university, it is not possible simply to walk out of the deep collusion between "history" and the modernizing [*sic*] narrative(s) of citizenship, bourgeois public and private and the nation-state' (Chakrabarty 1992: 337). If, as Kirby suggests, 'cultural translation is a project that seeks to render difference commensurate, comprehensible, same' (1993: 29), it is difficult to imagine what methods of enquiry are

indeed ethically viable in a world in which *différance* persists or an everyday characterised by 'radical heterogeneity' (Chakrabarty: 1992: 337).

In Hall's view, the starting point for such work is the idea of difference, but this does not mean that we need to be constrained in our enquiries by this notion. In his view, it is still possible to link different stories in the way we might narrate them but we must be careful not to force them into a single story: 'an imagined community' around ideas such as 'nation' (see Hall in Terry 1995a). Similarly, Said's work on the way in which imperialism has altered the relationships between 'colonisers' and 'colonised' also deals with the question of how we deal with difference when he says: 'If I have insisted on integration and connections between the past and the present, between imperializer [*sic*] and imperialized [*sic*], between culture and imperialism, I have done so not to level or reduce differences, but rather to convey a more urgent sense of the interdependence between things' (Said 1993: 72).

Bearing in mind this interdependence between different cultural histories, one way to work is for the writer to place themselves in the text too, so that the narrative becomes a shared artefact. It is not a study of them by me, but a text about us, sometimes about them and sometimes about me—though it must be conceded that it ends up as my story and my interpretation of the stories told to me by others. Nonetheless, this way of working enables us to go some of the way towards avoiding studying others as objects and allows us to enter into dialogue, a dialogue in which I, as a researcher, the 'Autobiographical I' (see Stanley 1992), am changed by my experience of listening to the life narratives that emerge from very different histories to mine. This does not mean that the boundaries

between myself and the other participants are dissolved. However, it does offer some possibilities of genuine engagement across cultural difference, even if in all areas of human activity there are some risks of reproducing an 'orientalist' view of those groups with whom we are working. Naturally, in my recording and retelling of the stories of others, I could not avoid seeing the 'performances' through the prism of my own cultural world. However, I was not concerned about documenting the authentic stories. Rather, I was interested in developing further my own thinking about our ethnicities.

As I have already commented, as I became involved with the texts of others, thereby entering into dialogue with people who had 'lost' their mothers in early childhood, been raised by their grandmothers, experienced material hardship and had survived, I found that I was reflecting on many of my own experiences that continued to haunt me many years on. Moreover, as my conversations with the others whose stories are represented in this text continued around such questions as, 'Where is home?', I also reflected on those moments, symbols and struggles that had contributed to the formation of my own identity. My own childhood involved loss of the 'biological mother', the death of the 'adoptive mother' at eleven, and 'absent father'. Isolation from other families and lack of social support is an ineffaceable memory for me, since the local neighbourhood in which I grew up underwent dramatic change in the 1960s as a result of economic restructuring, social re-organisation and large scale migration, particularly from the southern European countries of Greece, Italy and Turkey. Growing up with my maternal grandparents, particularly my grandmother (adoptive mother), I was directly in touch with thoughts and memories that covered two generations, or were in fact located two generations back in time. My maternal grandmother was born in Tasmania, a place that

has always been represented as being 'backward', exotic and sad, as 'Other', within the images of modern Australia. My grandmother was one of five children and, so far as I know, her grandfather who had been born in the Netherlands and her grandmother who had been born in Scotland had both migrated to become small farmers in Australia. It appears that in the late 1800s my Tasmanian ancestors migrated from Port Sorell to King Island in Bass Strait where my grandparents met and subsequently married in 1937. After having their homes 'burnt out' twice in a number of years, they left the island and moved to Melbourne, returning for only short visits. In my early years my grandmother, through adoption, had become my mother and major caretaker until her death from a stroke when I was eleven years of age. At this point I was sent back to King Island to stay with my relatives for a short time. Because my visits to the island coincide with a moment in my life of tremendous happiness (my early visit when the adoptive mother was alive) and also a moment of great anguish (my second visit just after the death of my adoptive mother), as well as being a place where my 'biological' mother was born, the island occupies a place of real significance in my mind's eye as I gaze over that period of my life. My maternal grandfather, who became my adoptive father, had grown up in a 'boys' home' and had only six years of formal schooling. In my early life, I was given the impression through always half-finished songs and stories, sung and told repeatedly by my grandfather, on the few occasions that he was home, that we had not long ago migrated from Ireland, despite the fact that on this side of my family, I was actually fourth-generation Australian. Like myself, my grandfather had grown up with his grandparents in an inner city industrial suburb. My great great grandparents, I was told, had in fact migrated from County Cork in Ireland and had spoken only Irish to their grandson, my grandfather, who many years later still believed, or at least imagined, that





Figure 1. (The 'Autobiographical I': The author with his great aunt on his first visit to King Island).



Figure 2. Thomas Terry Snr: The author's maternal great grandfather. While this relative is not mentioned in the text, this is one of the few pictures remaining of the author's relatives on the Terry side of the family.

we would one day return 'home'. Somehow, because my grandfather's self-identity had been strongly influenced by his grandparents' desire to return to Ireland, there were moments when I really did think that I belonged somewhere else. Moreover, as I have commented, Said has told us how our histories are often more overlapping than we might imagine, and in mid-life I discovered that my 'biological father' and grandparents had migrated from a very different part of the world (Greece-Samos) to that from which my other ancestors had come, thereby even further complicating my genealogy.

In highlighting my own personal, rather than intellectual, narrative here, I am not attempting to enunciate identity positions or set of identifications that are located in my past. To do so would be to disregard the dramatic changes in the cultural contexts between the one in which I now find myself, and that from which I have come. Male, middle-class and an 'academic' in a developing university with a professional (as well as personal) interest in a range of current social concerns, I know I have little recourse to an identity which belongs to some other moment in my life or one which lies in a part of my genealogy of which I have only recently become aware. Moreover, to attempt to speak as if I am talking from a 'subaltern' position poses the risk of occupying a space that now belongs more legitimately to those groups and individuals who are experiencing oppressive material and social realities in our community.

But I would like at this juncture to examine some of the reasons for embarking on my journey here. I think that it is worth considering the way in which our choice of topic and our intentions may well be informed by our unconscious wishes. Some writers, drawing on psychoanalysis, claim that the 'unconscious insists on being heard in our dreams,

forgettings, misrememberings, slips of the tongue, jokes and our symptoms *and stories we tell about ourselves* [my italics]’ (Sarup 1992: 75; see also Grosz 1990). Despite the idea that the unconscious ‘is always speaking in the case of censorship and repression. . . it has a *structure*, and this structure affects in innumerable ways what human subjects say and do. . .’ (75). Consequently, as I went about writing this text, it became apparent to me that, certainly at one level, the focus of my efforts was inexplicably linked to an uncanny sense that I never felt settled anywhere. As I listened to the stories of others I found long-forgotten memories of my past intruding into my mind. I have already commented on some aspects of my personal history which I see as having informed my interest in the issue of identity. As the enquiry proceeded it seemed to me that my coming to terms with ‘a lack’, a sense of grief, in my own past was one of my motivations for this work. In her book *Black Sun*, Julia Kristeva says that she is ‘trying to address an abyss of sorrow, a non-communicable grief that at times, and often on a long term basis, lays claims upon us to the extent of having us lose all interest in words, actions, and even life itself’ (1989: 3). As I began to undertake the work with the families, I came to sense what Kristeva was talking about. It may have been the fact that my grandfather (adoptive father) was dying at this point in time and that this brought to the fore an ambivalence, the tension between love and hate, that can often arise in some personal histories (see Freud 1916; Hall 1987a). It may have been that this ambivalence, together with the stories told by some of the family members in this work which, in some instances, involved great grief, opened old wounds for me; for as Kristeva observes: ‘. . . the disenchantment that I experience here and now, cruel as it may be, appears, under scrutiny, to awaken echoes of old traumas, to which I realise I have never been able to resign myself’ (1989: 4-5). As I reflected on this work in progress, I began to sense that

I was in some ways perhaps trying to reconstruct my own sense of 'family' through the stories of others, a return to the uncomplicated moment when I first visited the island in Bass Strait to meet my relatives.

But there were other concerns that motivated me in this task, arising from my intellectual engagement with issues of identity and ethnicity, which also formed a key part of my personal narrative. In my roles as policy worker, community educator and sociologist I had worked extensively over nearly twenty years with a range of ethnic and cultural groups, to identify and explore the difficulties they encountered with key public institutions, particularly schools and universities (Terry 1989; 1995b; see also Terry, Borland and Adams 1993). In these efforts I was informed by the theoretical narratives on ethnicity that I have recounted above. Central to my thinking were the ways in which class, gender, and ethnicity operated to marginalise particular ethnic and cultural groups in Australian society. At the beginning of this work, I began to realise that these categories, while useful, were always at risk of becoming 'essentialisms' or that I was often using them too uncritically. My task in this research on ethnic identity, so I felt, was not so much to question the unstated assumptions behind these categories or to find ways to use them more carefully, but to assist in thinking about how best we might reform institutional life, so that it incorporated the aspirations and lived experiences of ethnic and cultural minority groups. While I recognised that there has always been debate about these categories, I regarded them as rather stable concepts and I felt reasonably secure with the way they underpinned my thinking at that time. Moreover, in the initial stages of this work, I had only minimally questioned the unified notion of the self which until recently seems to have dominated much of the literature in the social

sciences. Until I became involved in the writing of this text, I had not properly explored some of the critiques of the idea that it is possible to fully know ourselves. I had not considered, for instance, the way in which Freudian and post-Freudian thought had shown us that much of the knowledge of the self was submerged in the unconscious and that we could only recover such knowledge through such processes as valorisation, a process in which our desires or wishes return to consciousness but in a distorted and unrecognisable way (see Freud 1958; Grosz 1990; Elliot 1996). Furthermore, in the initial stages of this work, I was still cautious of some of the trends within post-structuralism and post-modernism, which seemed to suggest that we could completely do away with the old meta-narratives, which I think, at least in some regards, had served us well. As I have already pointed out, I was still working with language that regarded ethnic identity as a rather stable category. While I realised that ethnic cultures, like all cultural forms, were always changing and that such cultures were shaped by specific contexts, terms, such as diaspora were either not part of my vocabulary or, if they were, I tended to use them without thinking about the complex way in which they 'interrogated' issues arising from ethnic and cultural difference.

My thinking in the initial stages meant that one of my original purposes was to represent the narratives of people and families from a wide range of backgrounds over a number of generations, with a view to showing how, as result of their life and other journeys, each of the families and individuals, despite their different starting points, found themselves within the same space, at the same point in time, facing similar issues. I wanted to illustrate the idea that while someone may well have left China in the early 1900s and someone Malta in the 1960s, or Alexandria in North Africa in the 1950s, all

were located in the Australia of the 1990s and were travelling, so to speak, towards some form of common citizenship. At that stage, I felt that it was possible to narrate the particular stories as part of a larger story. Yet, as the work proceeded, I too, like Bhabha, began to sense that 'it is actually very difficult, even impossible, and counterproductive, to try and fit together different forms of culture and to pretend that they co-exist' (Bhabha in Rutherford 1990: 209). I was also struggling with how such a view could be reconciled with 'the assumption that at some levels all forms of cultural diversity may be understood on the basis of a particular universal concept, whether it be "human being", "class" or "race" ' (209). Once again, I too recognised that to develop the stories as if they were a single narrative 'can be both very dangerous and very limiting in trying to understand the ways in which cultural practices construct their own systems of meaning and social organisation' (209).

Nevertheless, while working vigorously to move beyond the simple incorporation of the others' experiences into a common framework, I was not convinced that we had to make a choice between the idea of endless differences or *différance* and the belief that it is possible to make connections across cultures. Kirby (1993) informs us that while the re-positioning of different and absent voices and genres is 'an important and necessary project . . . different modes of writing [and speaking] ultimately engender different ways of producing an object as knowable, and all of them involve the exercise of power' (30). While I recognise that as an enquirer it is not possible to remove oneself entirely from this situation, I am also aware that it is only through struggle and involvement that we come to understand the limits and possibilities that are offered by the 'sociological imagination' in working cross-culturally. But this requires us to think not just about how

we as the enquirers are positioned, but to find ways by which we can make some connections with others whose histories, or social locations, or identities, we may, at least in some regards, not share. Once again, the thoughts of Homi Bhabha are of relevance here when he points out that 'the articulation of cultures is possible not because of the familiarity of the *contents*, but because all cultures are symbol-forming and subject constituting, interpellative practices . . . Meaning is constructed across the bar of difference and separation between signifier and signified. So it follows that no culture is full unto itself, no culture is plenitudinous' (1990: 210). While the views expressed by Bhabha and a range of others working in what can be broadly defined as cultural studies are useful as a starting point for my field work, like many of the theorists writing on ethnicities they tantalised me but did not fulfil my desires in this matter.

This leaves me in a predicament on the issue of method. After all, if ethnography, as with the discipline of history, is always a part of the Europeanising conquest (Chakrabarty 1992) of which there seems to be no way out, then there is little that can be done to achieve some form of cross-cultural understanding. Here, while struggling with the risks involved in the work of cultural translation, it has been necessary to draw on the insights offered by those involved in the development of critical ethnography and interpretative anthropology (see Marcus and Fischer 1986; Bottomley 1991; 1992; Clifford 1988; 1997; Bourdieu 1977; 1984; 1990). In his efforts to develop practices in the area, Clifford, in a recent work, comments:

As a historical critic of anthropology, I have focused primarily on ethnographic fieldwork, a cluster of disciplinary practices through which



cultural worlds are represented. In the [his] book's first part, research in 'the field' is portrayed as part of a long and now-contested history of Western travel. Where professional anthropology has erected a border, I portray a borderland, a zone of contacts—blocked and permitted, policed and transgressive. To see fieldwork as travel practice highlights embodied activities pursued in historically and politically defined places. This worldly emphasis contributes to an opening of current possibilities, an extension and complication of ethnographic paths. For as the travelers [*sic*] and research sites of anthropology change in response to geopolitical shifts, so must the discipline[s]. (Clifford 1997: 8)

So what strategies does such a reformed or at least partly reformed ethnography offer the 'traveler' [*sic*] or 'pilgrim' as Clifford refers to those involved in interpretative anthropological or ethnographic work? In considering the nature of such work, Marcus and Fischer comment that as part of the reforming process it has been necessary for researchers to shift their attention away from such things 'as public rituals, codified belief systems, and sanctioned familial or communal structures for capturing the distinctiveness of culture' (1986: 45; see also Clifford 1997). With this shift, these authors suggest that it has been necessary for anthropologists to 'resort to cultural accounts of less superficial systems of meaning' (45). For these writers, '[t]he focus on personhood is an attempt to do just this' (45). Examining a range of anthropological studies, Marcus and Fischer, 'for simplicity of discussion', classify the writings in and around the notion of selfhood into three main groups, which they define as psychodynamic, realist and modernist ethnographies. The first categories of writings are

those which have been written utilising Freudian perspectives in exploring the way in which the subject comes into being in different cultural contexts. Here Marcus and Fischer (1986: 49) cite works such as Levy's *Tahitians: Mind and Experience in the Society Islands* and Krake's *Force and Persuasion: Leadership in an Amazonian Society*. Realist ethnographies are seen as those texts that 'tend to draw their initial frames of analysis from the public common-sense world' (54). According to Marcus and Fischer, in these latter works the ethnographer remains unchallenged over the account, thereby 'delivering a distanced representation of cultural experience' (55). Works that come under this heading 'constitute the dominant legacy of the influential genre of British ethnography created in the 1920s by Malinowski and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown' (55). More recent texts which accord with this type of ethnography include Michelle Rosaldo's *Knowledge and Passions: Ilongot Notions of the Self and Social* (cited in Marcus and Fischer 1986: 55). Commenting on more contemporary writings in the 'realist tradition' Marcus and Fischer suggest that these texts are characterised by the writer's self-consciousness about his [her] textual-display devices, and his [her] interest in exposing the frames of reference for describing experience used by the native informants themselves' (57). Modernist texts, however, it is suggested 'arise centrally from the reciprocity of perspectives between insider(s) and outsider(s) entailed in any ethnographic research situation' (67). Speaking about the difference between realist texts and modernist ones Marcus and Fischer comment:

If realist texts continue the convention of allowing the ethnographer to remain in unchallenged control of his [her] narrative, modernist texts are constructed to highlight the eliciting discourse between ethnographer and

subjects or to involve the reader in the work of analysis . . . the experience represented in the ethnography must be that of the dialogue between ethnographer and the informants, where the textual space is arranged for informants to have their own voices. (Marcus and Fischer 1986: 67)

According to Marcus and Fischer modernist ethnography has drawn on French surrealism, structuralism and post-structuralist thought for the development of approaches in which there is 'considerable experimentation with textual presentation . . . the focus on "dialogic" interchange can be used to reflect upon experience in another culture as it reshapes the definition of reality of someone from our own culture' (see, for example, Dwyer cited in Marcus and Fischer 1986: 69). Other aspects that characterise works in this vein are the idea of cultural criticism of the ethnographer's own 'home' as well as the idea of the co-operatively constructed texts such as that of Vincent Crapanzano's *Tuhami: Portrait of a Moroccan* (cited in Marcus and Fischer 1986: 71).

While recognising that Marcus' and Fischer's framework for thinking about the different strands which have characterised anthropological work during the twentieth century are too neat, my text on ethnicity and identity engages most with those trends or strategies used by what the above authors describe as modernist texts, though it does also engage with some post-modernist thinking. This is because it attempts to allow the individuals and families that took part in the research to tell their stories. The notion of the 'dialogic' is also central to the study as is the idea that the text can be worked on together (use of translations, drafts for comment and so on). However, while Marcus and Fischer provide a way for me to make explicit my method by placing it within a particular genre, it is the

work of theorists such as Keya Ganguly (1992) and James Clifford (1997) who are also involved in rethinking ethnography within the framework of contemporary cultural and social theory, but in a way that provides some practical thoughts about how it might be carried out.

In her study of a specific 'community of post-colonial immigrants', this being a group of middle-class, professional Indians who had been in the United States since the late sixties and early seventies, Ganguly was engaging with a community in which her membership was taken for granted. As a result she was not able to distance herself 'as an "objective" investigator, or seek refuge in the conceits of scientific "rigor" and "detachment" . . . My account of this community, then, stands as an interested and partial ethnographic narrative' (29). Ganguly had to think about the way in which she would sort out the different levels in the relationships between her and members of the community with whom she was intricately involved, and whom she was now moving amongst as ethnographer. On this point she comments on the way in which in the early stages of the research she 'did not enter every social occasion armed with the technological apparatuses of fieldwork - i.e., tape recorder, notebook, or camera' (48). Instead taped interviews were carried out as a follow-up to the informal conversations and interaction. While Keya Ganguly was not concerned with the notion of 'objectivity' she still 'had to struggle with the present danger of transforming into larger truth claims propositions and experiences so contingent upon my own investments and upon concessions of familiarity granted to me . . .' (29). Consequently, the key task for this ethnographer was to 'trace the links between discursive self-production of subjects and a contestatory theory of social agency . . . I try to engage these concerns at the level of

a local exploration of the boundaries and intersections between culture, politics, and selfhood' (Ganguly 1992: 29).

While Ganguly's approach to matters of selfhood provides a useful model for thinking about the way in which I approached my research, James Clifford outlines the specific ingredients for a contemporary ethnography. According to Clifford '[f]ieldwork defined through spatial practices of travel and dwelling, through the disciplined, embodied interactions of participant-observation, is being re-routed by "indigenous," "postcolonial," "diasporic," "border," "minority," "activist," and "community-based" scholars. A contemporary ethnography, for instance, would question 'the opposition of native and non-native, insider and outsider anthropologists [because] [i]dentifications [always] cross-cut, complement, and trouble one another' (Narayan cited in Clifford 1997: 77). Moreover, such an ethnography would involve a reworking of the idea of 'the field', thereby 'multiplying the range of acceptable routes and practices' (Clifford 1997: 78). This would also mean that '[t]he West itself becomes an object of study from variously distanced and entangled locations. Going "out" to the field now sometimes means going "back", the ethnography becoming a "note-book of a return to the native land" . . . It is also traveling [*sic*] in and against, through the West' (Clifford 1997: 80). Connected with this is the notion of 'home' in the emerging anthropological approaches. For Visweswaran a reformed version of 'travelling' would recognise the false distinction between 'home' and the 'field', with the home being a person's location in determining discourses and institutions—'cutting across locations of race, gender, class, sexuality, culture . . . "homework" is a critical confrontation with the often invisible processes of learning' (see Visweswaran cited in Clifford 1997: 85). Of course, reform to the practice

of anthropology must also involve some thinking about the way in which the writing up of the material itself is done. Consequently, according to Clifford a variety of textual strategies are now evident in the practice of anthropology as ethnographers often 'express their complex situated knowledges by textual strategies in which the embodied, narrating, traveling [*sic*] scholar/theorist is prominent . . . [a] choice [which] should be seen as a critical intervention against disembodied, neutral authority, not as an emerging norm' (Clifford 1997: 81). For Clifford, '[t]here is no narrative form or way of writing inherently suited to a politics of location' (81).

A number of researchers (see, for example, Rizvi and Kemmis 1987; Ganguly 1992; Clifford 1997; Singh unpublished) have utilised aspects of a revitalised ethnography in the form of case studies to investigate a range of concerns. My work follows a similar pattern in that it may be described as a case study or 'partial ethnographic narrative' (see Ganguly 1992: 29), and I would argue that it has the 'depth', intensity and interaction which Clifford sees as being an essential part of 'travelling' across cultural boundaries. As well as this I would agree that it is necessary that 'some defining spatial practices . . . be turned to new ends if a multiply-centred anthropology is to emerge' (Clifford 1997: 91). I have already commented in another piece of work (see Terry 1995a), about the benefits of the case study method. Just to repeat some of my thoughts on this matter, I agree with others who have suggested that the case study 'provides descriptions of the particular moments which are intimate, complex and episodic. It provides a rich sense of "human encounter", a holistic regard for human phenomena' (Singh unpublished: 64). Just as important, for this particular text, is Singh's idea that the case study 'belongs to that tradition which seeks truth through the portrayal of multiple realities, providing a

vicarious experience of the world as it is lived by the people in it' (64).

Of course, some more traditional researchers and reviewers may argue for the dominance of a more detached type of research in which the investigator plays the traditional role of being the 'objective outsider' or prefers the use of quantitative methods to put their case. One reviewer (Stavropoulos 1996: 104 - 105) of an earlier piece of mine (Terry 1995b) suggested that my work, while 'important', 'welcomed' and 'successful in its primary aim of stimulating interest, debate and controversy' (105), could not be judged on the validity of its evidence. Denning's (1996) book *Performances* has had similar criticism made of it by one reviewer (Griffin 1996) who suggested that Denning 'with his originality and immense scholarship . . . could still have a future as a most readable historian providing he decants much of Barthes water and represses his alter (*sic*) ego'. Without extending the discussion here into a long debate about method, it is worth taking note of Clifford's view that '[a] stress on shifting locations and tactical affiliations explicitly recognizes [*sic*] ethnography's political dimensions, dimensions that can be hidden by presumptions of scientific neutrality and human rapport'. For as he says: 'There are no guaranteed or morally unassailable positions [methods]' (Clifford 1997: 87). This does not mean that we need to revert to 'rigid prescriptions of advocacy' (87), but simply to recognise that all of us 'travellers' find ourselves in a 'habitus'—'a cluster of embodied dispositions and practices' (Bourdieu cited in Clifford 1997: 69; see also Bourdieu 1977). It was with such an understanding that I set out to explore our ethnicities.

Nevertheless, having identified some possible strategies for proceeding in this difficult

terrain, I still had to consider a range of specific problems. How many people should I involve? What groups should be represented? How do I go about my discussions with the family members? What languages should be used and would I need the assistance of interpreters and translators?

The bulk of the material was collected over an eighteen-month period and included between three and five visits to each family. In all, twenty-four people, from six families, agreed to tell me their life stories. In some families two generations took part, in others three generations, and in one family four generations as well as the different sides of the family were involved. Where it was appropriate the conversations were in English. However, when it was required, or preferred, bilingual facilitators played a crucial role in the discussions, though in these cases I was still involved as a third party. Since I was not comparing the families concerned, but rather treating all the stories as case studies in their own right, I was not constrained in my selection of people, families, or ethnicities. Most of the discussions were carried out on an individual basis, but in some cases, partners took part in the sessions together. Here I made a conscious effort to ensure that equal space was given to both male and female participants. In three cases I interviewed female members of the families on their own. Given my friendship with two of these participants I am not sure to what extent this had a bearing on the information that was proffered. Background material was also collected first-hand from Malta. It was not possible, for various reasons, to collect the same material from other countries with which the participants had links. All of the conversations lasted for between fifty minutes and two hours, though in one case the two main sessions went on for about five hours each. As stated I was already on friendly terms with a number of participants before



starting the research. Here I was not concerned about 'contaminating' the material, but felt that my existing relationships with some participants would give me a better understanding of what they were saying about themselves. In some cases, as a result of our meetings, I established some long-term friendships. While to some extent I brought an ethnographic approach to the task, I did not see my role as entering into the lives of these families, gathering information and just leaving. Where possible, and where it was welcomed, I continued my association with a number of the participants well after the fieldwork was completed. In most instances, this 'closeness' to a number of the participants in the study proved to be a positive benefit for the research, as well of course for me personally. While the distinction between research and personal issues ran the risk of becoming blurred, for the most part I seemed to manage the tensions created by involving in the project people with whom I already had an acquaintance.

As the study unfolded, I became aware that I was not trying to construct a text that travelled in one direction over two, three, or four generations. Rather, I was concerned with showing how people who are placed at different points in time and space (see Giddens 1990) narrate their self and group identities. This meant that I was dealing with multiple realities within and across families. From this point of view, one of my key interests in the work was to see how different members of a family drew on the past to tell similar or different versions of that family's history. Given the case study's capacity for obtaining and representing multiple perspectives, this approach was well suited to my needs.

Furthermore, the case study (partial ethnographic) approach provided me with a way of

working which allowed me to always negotiate the context, the questions, the languages, and the shape of the text with the family members throughout the work. This more 'democratic' approach also allowed me to exchange my own stories with participants. It was therefore not a one-way process. To this end, the people with whom I worked were given copies of transcripts and/or were given a draft copy of the text, with a view to enabling them to comment on their own stories so that they could see the way in which they had been represented as part of a larger text. In the case of those who could not read English, I arranged for the facilitators to discuss the text with them in their first language. I recognise that there are limits to this process in that there will always be the question of how to obtain the approval of those whose stories you are engaged with. Moreover, I wonder how the stories may have been different if they had been written by the storyteller or written in the original language.

In the early discussions with the family members I used a set of open-ended questions to assist with the interview. These questions covered matters such as place of birth, early years and memories of schooling. They also addressed family life, marriage and migration and post-migration experiences. These questions were re-arranged slightly for younger members of the families to make allowance for age or the fact that some of these participants had not migrated but had been born in Australia. As I became more comfortable with the processes that I had negotiated with the individuals and families, I realised that the initial questions which I had used to shape the conversations were an unnecessary interruption on my part to the stories that were being told. This is not to say that I did not have a role in the conversations: simply because I was there and had an interest in the work succeeding, I am sure that I had an effect on what was being

communicated. However, after a number of meetings with family members, I felt that it was important that people were able to narrate their stories without my directly shaping them through my questioning. Consequently, most of the conversations began with the simple invitation, 'Tell me about yourself-'. In response, most people talked freely about their lives in some detail, with only a few interventions needed to clarify some point or to exchange a particular life experience. With the permission of the participants, many of the discussions were taped in order 'to catch the instance' in the stories as they were told. Moreover, the taping allowed for a close translation where the conversations were carried out in Chinese or, in one instance, partly in Maltese. In some cases, I have changed the names and other personal details to assure anonymity of the people and families that took part, though in two families the members expressed a desire to have their stories told using the original names, places and events as remembered by them. The Chinese interpreters/translators also wished to have their own names used.

While the work did not require me to focus on a particular ethnicity, it was the family's place of origin that seemed to provide a starting point in my thinking about the approach to the study. Over the coming months, I was introduced to many different places, times and people, all of which assisted me in developing my ideas on ethnicities and also my responsibilities for living in a complex society such as Australia. I have recorded my meetings below using the present tense (and italics) in order to try to 'capture the moment'.

Nellie Mizzi	Lilly La Terra (Mizzi)	Sam La Terra	Linda La Terra
	John Vella	Joyce Vella	Kevin La Terra
	Anna Yang	Li Li Sheng (Yang) Zhu Sheng	Ivan Sheng
	Ming Zhang		Mary Zhang
		Albert Marshall Jane Marshall (Micallef)	Kristina Marshall Mark Marshall
	Peter Wu	Matthew Wu Francis Wu (Ho)	Anne Wu
		Jose Terceros	Rosa Terceros

Figure 3. An overview of the families.

## Introducing the Sheng Family

*Yuping Li, my Chinese teacher and friend, has been keen for me to meet with members of the Xinjiang community, with the idea of involving some of these families in my research. Yuping does not come from Xinjiang, but from Beijing. However, on arriving in Australia for study and work, she lived for some time with a family from Xinjiang. Immigrants from this part of China have not migrated in substantial numbers, but because the community has settled in a particular outer eastern corridor of Melbourne, it gives the impression of being much bigger than its actual size. Rather than introduce me to this family, Yuping thinks that it would be best for me to make contact with the broader community. This is because at this stage I am not sure how many individuals and families from China with which I will work. I wait for a few weeks to meet with members of the Xinjiang community. Yuping points out that in China 'networking' is very important in building personal and professional relationships. She informs me that I need to be patient in this matter. Xinjiang is a long way from the eastern seaboard cities that usually come to mind when I think of China. I once visited Shanghai in 1978 and can recall the buildings that remained from colonial days when this large city was controlled by foreign powers. But Yuping informs me that it takes about five days to travel from Xinjiang in the north-west to the eastern coast of China, and that 'it is remote and that life there is harsh'.*

*At last Yuping Li tells me that she has arranged for me to meet with members of the Xianjiangian community. However, she informs me that it might still be a number of weeks because the renovation of the community hall is not yet finished. She thinks that it*

would be good if I attended the celebrations and made contact with families. Her discussions with me about Xinjiang make me consider the possibility of carrying out a case study of this particular community, rather than a broader enquiry on Chinese identity in Australia. In so doing, I think about the possibility of working with a small number of families to show the diversity of experience within a specific ethnic minority group.

Nevertheless, I wait for Yuping Li to make contact for me with some of the families. But this seems to be more difficult than anticipated. Finally, Yuping provides me with a time and address for the evening. She says that my family would also be welcome. We arrive at the agreed time. Yuping is waiting outside a school hall. She tells us that the community hall is not complete so the event has been organised at this location. Behind her on the steps of the school hall are a well-dressed man and woman shaking hands with people as they arrive for the function. Yuping tells me that this is both a wedding celebration and a community function. Rather hesitantly, feeling like intruders, we enter the hall in which there are about two hundred people sitting around the tables. We are among a small number of non-Xinjiangians attending the function. The next stage in the celebration is to toast the married couple as the father and some other relatives of the bride move from table to table. We all stand with our glasses raised. The alcohol is extremely strong.

Yuping tells me that the indigenous people of Xinjiang are 'Turkistan Muslims'. As I look around the room I see groups that are obviously Han Chinese, but there are also other groups whose appearance seems to be a mixture of Chinese and Russian. A young girl

is introduced to us who has blonde hair, looks Eastern European, but speaks to her father in fluent Chinese. During the cultural revolution, I was told, many of these people had been living in Shanghai, but in accordance with one of Mao's edicts had been sent to remote areas of the country. Others obviously have their histories, or part of them across the border from Xinjiang, in the former Soviet Union.

At this function the bride and groom get up and dance the bridal waltz. This is followed by fox-trot music as many people there are familiar with ballroom dancing. It is obviously an art of long standing which some of the younger generation seems also to have acquired. Later in the evening someone else gets up and plays traditional Chinese music with everyone listening intently. A female member of the audience suddenly performs a 'handkerchief dance'. I am certainly outside everything that is going on but I do not feel uncomfortable but am aware of my intruding into a community event. I am excited by the evening. Am I being 'orientalist' seeing the performances as exotic? I wonder. We are made welcome. We take part in conversations sometimes in English, sometimes through an informal interpreting, sometimes using my very limited Chinese.

Later in the evening Yuping Li brings one of the 'community leaders' over to talk to me about the idea of meeting with some families. With Yuping acting as an interpreter, I let 'the leader' know what I am hoping to do and ask whether he can assist me in making contact with some families. He nods as we are talking. He tells me, through Yuping, that he might even be interested in taking part himself. Later in the evening he brings his daughter over to talk with us about the study. She is a university student and is completing a science degree. She says that her family might be interested in being

*involved in such a project but that it would be best if I gave them a survey so that they could fill it in and send it back to me. However, after talking with these community representatives, I begin to think that I am asking too much of myself and others in taking on an enquiry of this type. I recognise that the people have a right to say 'no' to involvement and that such work always brings with it the uncomfortable feeling of imposing on people, no matter what model or intentions you use for 'travelling'.*

*On the way home, I realise that my discussions with Yuping have enthused me and that perhaps I had been too hasty in thinking about working with only a sub-group of a particular community. I am also uncomfortable about the idea of working with people that are 'leaders' in their community, as they often represent a very particular view of the experience of the community. Of course, the community organisations and 'leaders' can play an important role at key points in the process whereby ethnic minority groups articulate their demands to become equal members of the host society, but as enquirers we need to be careful that we are not simply obtaining a privileged view. To avoid these sorts of complications, I decide to work with individuals and families with whom I could build more genuine relationships, and in situations where I could also better reflect on my own thinking and practices in the writing of this text.*

*Around the table sit eight family members. It is Chinese New Year and the family has come together to celebrate. I shake hands with a number of members of the family. Anna Yang, the grandmother whose grandparents had migrated from Hunan in China to Russia late last century, speaks little English, but asks me through Yuping whether I can speak any Russian. Her daughter, Li Li, her two sons, their partners, and their children,*



are all engaged in conversation. The family knows that I am interested in talking to them, but today I am clearly, and intend to be no more than, a guest at their celebrations. 'Xinjiang is like Australia. It looks the same,' says Anna, through Yuping, who assists me in making conversation. Anna's youngest son speaks English well, as do her two grandsons, one about fourteen and the other, Ivan, who is about sixteen. During the rest of the afternoon we talk about family life, Chinese New Year and the education system in Australia. Of course, as a researcher, once again there is an uneasy feeling about being invited for Chinese New Year, with a view to seeing if the family is interested in taking part in a study on ethnicities. Nevertheless, the meeting is not constrained by this, and relationships are developed which, except for obvious cultural differences, proceed along the same lines as any other similar social activity. At this point, I become unconcerned about whether the family wants to involve themselves in the project. I sit back and relax. Anna explains that Yuping has been in Australia for ten years and that no other non-Chinese-speaking person has shown any interest in them. During the afternoon, I learn a great deal about Xinjiang, its people and its history. Later, Anna sits with me and Yuping and talks about her life that began in Chabarovsk in the former Soviet Union. The discussion lasts about an hour and half, sometimes interrupted by Anna getting up to stir the soup cooking on the other side of the bench that divides the room.

The next time I meet members of this family is at the house of Anna's daughter, Li Li Sheng (originally Yang) and her spouse, Zhu Sheng. This time my family is invited for lunch and time is set aside for discussion with one of Anna's grandsons, Ivan. Ivan Sheng is interested in talking about his life in China, his on-going interest in that country, and

*what it means for him to live in Australia. The interview with Ivan proceeds for about fifty minutes, though more informal discussion takes place with him later in the afternoon and also when we meet on a subsequent occasion.*

*Zhu returns from his shift at the factory and joins in the social activities. A few hours later, with the assistance of Yuping Li, who demonstrates a high level of interpreting skill, I meet with Li Li and Zhu for about seventy minutes. Li Li and Zhu also focus on their lives in Xinjiang and what it had been like coming to Australia about ten years earlier. Over the coming weeks Yuping transcribes the tapes that she takes back to the family members for their comment and amendments. With their permission she provides me with English translations of the revised material.*

## **Introducing the Wu Family**

*Before meeting the Wu family for the first time, Teresa Chu, the other Chinese facilitator involved with the research, and I meet to discuss the types of questions that we might ask the members of this family. At this stage in my work, I am still using a broad set of questions to guide the discussions with the participants, but we agree to allow the conversation to go whatever way the family members decide. Teresa tells me that this family is from Nanjing and that she came to know them at the Chinese Catholic Church. I impress on her that I do not want her to work in a formal interpreting role but that the discussions, which are to be in Chinese, need to be a three-way conversation where possible, though I realise that I will 'perform' as the outsider in this dialogue.*

*The Wu family live in a small house in the north-western suburbs of Melbourne. The door opens and Peter Wu, who looks a youthful seventy, along with his son, Matthew and his daughter in-law, Francis (originally Ho), greets us warmly. Teresa has already talked to the family about their participation in this work. She has told me that the family is very interested in being involved, as they felt that stories of 'migrants' like themselves 'should be told'. The room in which we sit could be a small apartment in Nanjing. Peter Wu jumps up and pours us some Chinese tea which he regularly offers throughout the rest of the evening. The room has a small desk which seems to be Peter's desk for reading and writing notes on from the Bible and also letters to relatives. Pictures of some relatives and religious mementoes are displayed among the papers on his desk. As with all six families, the first meeting with the Wu family is to explain the project and to gain their support. Peter Wu is keen to engage in discussion with us about his life. Matthew and Francis Wu also seem happy to be involved and give permission for their daughter, Anne, who is eight years old, to talk about herself.*

*At this first meeting, Peter Wu says he would need much more time with us than the couple of hours that I had requested. He says that he 'has a lot to tell.' He also asks me, if I mind him crying during our discussions as he has 'many sad memories'. Teresa and I meet with Peter twice for about five hours at a time over the next two weeks. We even continue our conversation over lunch, which he provides for us. The conversation is in Chinese, with Teresa stopping regularly to involve me in the discussion or to clarify a point in English.*

*As well as meeting with Peter Wu, during the same month we meet with Matthew and*

*Francis Wu. Both work long hours in factories and can only be interviewed at night. Once again the discussion is mainly in Chinese, with me taking part only occasionally when Teresa tries to keep me informed of what is being said. This meeting goes for about an hour and a half. On another occasion, Anne Wu speaks to me in English for about half an hour.*

*Teresa takes the tapes home and works for a number of weeks translating them into English and Chinese. She returns the translated material to the Wu family, so that Peter Wu, his son, and daughter-in-law can read and comment on them. By the end of the discussions I have been to the Wu house four times. Over the coming eighteen months Peter Wu regularly asks Teresa at church how the work is going and when it will be finished. At a later stage Teresa Ghu and I visit him to discuss the final shape of the work.*

## **Introducing the Marshall Family**

*I come to know Albert Marshall through another enquiry that I had carried out with colleagues concerning the Maltese community in Melbourne. On this occasion, Albert had provided background advice on community issues, assisted with the preparation of questions that we were to ask the Maltese background families, and also facilitated and translated the proceeds of the meetings with Maltese-speaking parents. Through this contact, I developed a friendship with Albert and, given his interest in language and cultural issues, thought that he would be interested in taking part in the study. When I approach him on this matter, Albert shows some interest, but he tells me that he is not a*

*'typical case' of someone who has migrated from Malta to Australia. I do not regard this as posing any difficulties. Nevertheless, while Albert Marshall is supportive of the idea, it is still necessary to obtain the support of his partner, Jane Marshall (originally Micallef), and his children, Mark and Kristina, who are now both in tertiary education.*

*The Marshalls live in a seaside suburb on the edge of a heavily industrialised suburb in Melbourne's west. At my first meeting with the family I explain my intentions in the study. Albert, Mark and Kristina are keen to be involved, while Jane is concerned about issues of confidentiality and the types of questions that she might have to answer. I leave the family to discuss the matter for a few weeks and find out that Jane is now interested in taking part in the discussions. The first conversation takes place over the coming week. Mark Marshall is twenty-one and is an engineering student. The exchange with him lasts for about one and a half hours. Mark seems excited about his involvement in the study. About a week later, I meet with his sister, Kristina, who is nineteen, for a similar period of time. As with Mark the discussion flows well. Albert and Jane decide that they would prefer to meet with me together, as did Matthew and Francis Wu. Because the conversations are unstructured, I try to work out how I will make sure that both the stories are given equal space.*

*Unlike a number of the families in this text, Albert and Jane came to Australia without their parents, though Albert does have two sisters who had migrated earlier and a brother here. The brother arrived in Australia about one year after Albert and Jane and their children had settled in Australia. Jane has no other family in Australia and left behind her father and mother, her brothers and their families. In order to collect more*

*background material on this family, as I did with one of the other Maltese families with whom I was involved, I visit Malta. On this visit, I meet with Jane's parents Vincent and Tonina, and also talk to Jane's brother and his two children. As well as this I walk some of the streets which Jane and Albert had walked in their earlier life, as well as experience some of the atmosphere of the place where they had grown up. I enjoy my evening in Sliema.*

*I telephone Albert's parents and arrange a time for a meeting. On the way to the Marshalls' house which is located in Msida not far from the University of Malta where Albert takes up a position for a short time later in his life, I am able to imagine what it would have been like for Albert, living in this area as a young man. At the house I see that the walls are lined with photographs of John and Mary Marshall's children and grandchildren. As I look at these icons my eyes come across a picture of Albert. I am instantly struck by his resemblance to his mother. When she laughs it is as if Albert is in the room. My visit to the Marshall's lasts for a number of hours.*

## **Introducing the La Terra, Mizzi and Vella Families**

*Joyce La Terra (originally Vella) is a mature-aged student in one of my classes. Later she becomes a colleague and a good friend. Like the Marshalls, she is of Maltese-speaking background. However, unlike the former she came to Australia at two years of age. Nevertheless, when she finds out that I am working on a project that involves Maltese people she shows a keen interest in the work. She tells me that she does not*

*remember much about Malta but that she has become increasingly interested in finding out more about her family's life before coming to Australia. Her older sister and her family have just returned to Malta after living in Australia for many years. I meet Joyce at the university. She is keen to tell her story and speaks about her life for about an hour and half. Joyce is one of ten children and had been the only member of the family to attend a university, having returned as a mature-aged student in her thirties. Some months later, Joyce graduates and enrolls in post-graduate studies at another university. We continue to work together in a number of capacities. I keep her informed of the project. Joyce's partner, Sam La Terra, is of Maltese and Italian background. Sam was born in Australia and is in his late thirties. He is a builder and is also interested in telling his story, though he feels that he 'does not have much to tell'. Both Joyce and Sam have worked in a variety of occupations and have owned a number of small businesses. The interview is at their house on a large allotment of land on the outskirts of Melbourne's western suburbs. About a week later I return to talk to the two La Terra children, Kevin and Linda. Kevin is completing primary school, while his sister is in her first year at the local secondary college. Despite their initial nervousness about what I am going to ask, the conversation goes well for just over an hour, though Linda speaks more confidently than her brother, which I assume is due to the age difference.*

*A few weeks later, Joyce La Terra and I travel to see her father, John Vella. I interview John in the kitchen on his small farm which is a short drive from the La Terra house. While John's English is limited, Joyce helps with the conversation, sometimes clarifying a question in Maltese for her father, while at other times filling in background about the family. The conversation with John Vella goes on for about one and a half hours. As I*

leave he shows me some of the sculptures that he has produced. On the wall hangs a portrait of him as a young adult, which was painted by a friend when John attended art school in Malta many years before. In this picture he stands proudly in a seaside landscape. A few days later, Joyce takes me to meet Sam's mother, Lily La Terra (originally Mizzi). She is now in her late sixties, but is keen to talk about her life growing up in Egypt and about coming to Australia in her adolescent years. As with John, I meet with Lily in her kitchen in a western suburb of Melbourne where we talk for about two hours.

A few months later I meet with Lily and her mother, Nellie Mizzi, who is now eighty-seven years of age and who is in a nursing home not far from where Lily lives. Together the three of us talk about Nellie's early life in Khartoum, her early migration to Egypt, and then her travels to Australia. The conversation with Nellie lasts for about one hour and fifteen minutes. Sometimes, I am left out of the conversation as Nellie and Lily disagree about different aspects of their life in Egypt.

At a later stage in the work, in order to gather more background material, I visit Joyce's sister Sylvia and her family on the island of Gozo (Malta.) I spend an afternoon in conversation with Sylvia, Joe her partner, and their three children. On that hot Maltese summer afternoon, the five of us sit around a table talking about the experience of 'returning home'. As the family says goodbye to me I walk through the afternoon heat down a quiet street on my way to the other end of the island. On my way back to the main island of Malta, I pass through villages and see Australian, American and Canadian, as well as Maltese flags flying from the roofs of houses, signifying an association with these



*lands. Some houses I pass have name plates of suburbs from Australian cities, St. Albans, Sunshine and so on. On the door of one house hangs a blind with a map of Tasmania painted on it. On the roof of another sits a ceramic kangaroo.*

## **Introducing the Zhang Family**

*Mary Zhang is of Hakka-speaking background and comes from East Timor. She has enrolled in a Chinese language class in which I am also a student. Through our developing friendship she becomes aware that I am working on this project. I talk to Mary about the possibility of telling me about her life in Timor and Australia. I have already met her father, Ming Zhang, who is eighty years old, and arrange another meeting with him to see if he is interested in talking to me. I visit Mr Zhang with a letter in Chinese outlining briefly the nature of the work. With Mary's help, Ming Zhang studies the letter carefully and tells Mary 'yes', he is willing to be involved. As a self-trained Chinese herbalist, during this meeting Mr Zhang takes my pulse and provides me with some suggestions about my ailments: 'you need more fun', he says as I am leaving. On my next visit I listen to Ming Zhang talk about his life for some two hours. In anticipation of my visit, he has prepared some extensive notes to assist his memory. Through Mary he speaks freely and at length in Hakka about his leaving China, about life in East Timor, and his movement to Australia as a refugee together with his seven children. With their permission, I tape the conversation which is in Hakka. Mary translates the story for me at a later stage. My conversation with Mary Zhang, which is held at the university where she is doing a degree in acupuncture, continues for about one and a quarter hours. While*

*she is nervous about her English, the conversation flows very well. Occasionally I see Mary at the university and help her with a few small problems which she is having with her course. One afternoon, Ming Zhang and Mary visit us. Mary practises some acupuncture on my family and I. I lie on the floor with cups on my bare back, as Mr Zhang punches me, laughing: 'more fun', he says.*

## **Introducing the Terceros Family**

*Because I have known Jose and Helena Terceros for some years, I arrange a meeting with them at short notice. The house is some distance from where I live and I anticipate that it will take me a full morning to complete the task. Instead, I return home about eight o'clock in the evening. When I arrive at the house, Jose is in the garden. Surrounded by Inca-looking statues made from wood which he carves in his spare time, he greets me warmly. We go inside for a while where he makes me some coffee. On the walls are pictures of his mother in Bolivia and his father who died many years ago. Jose is working as a policy officer in a local government agency where he is involved in supporting ethnic minority groups. I open the conversation with him on the veranda at the back of his house overlooking the garden in an inner suburb of Melbourne. He talks freely for about an hour and half before we stop to have lunch with a visiting Australian nun who is working with women in a remote part of Bolivia. Later in the afternoon Jose and I resume for a short time our discussion about his life. Later, his daughter Rosa, who is fourteen years old sits with us in the garden and tells me about her life and interests. I stay for dinner and then make my way home.*



Figure 4. Jorge Terceros' carvings which stand in his garden.

## Some General Reflections

My discussions with the members of these families made it incumbent on me to think about how I would represent the stories. In retelling these stories I have used the third person. As I have said, these stories provide me with a way of thinking about my own narrative, the problems of how we reconstruct our life stories, the place of our ethnicities in this reconstruction, and the responsibilities which we have to one another living in a community characterised by difference. I have organised the stories from a number of angles. On a general level, I have placed different parts of the stories next to one another chronologically, thereby representing them along a linear time line. This is because every one involved in the telling of the stories told their story more or less according to a traditional or linear model which we have come to associate with such narratives. However, as stated earlier, this meant that the narratives could also be read from a different angle: that is they could be read more as a constellation of reflections arranged around the story-tellers' different relationships with time and place. Besides this ordering of the material, the organising principles for retelling the specific stories have not been imposed by me, rather they have emerged from conversations with the people represented in this text. This is because all of the story-tellers used common themes such as early life, school, work, migration, and their hopes for the future, to tell their stories, even if the content varied dramatically across the narratives. This way of telling the stories also allowed me to do a 'cut and paste' with the material so that similar life experiences or moments could be placed next to one another. As I have already commented, there are always risks in retelling the stories of people whose lives come out of a very different cultural history to that of the person who has taken on an 'editorial'

role. However, I have tried to work as well as I can despite these hazards, daunting as they are. The alternative is to have sat at home and spoken only to those who look and talk like me. This would have denied me a far more interesting journey. In the earlier part of this text I have unpacked my library with a view to seeing how various theorists have tried to grapple with our ethnicities. It is to the life-stories that I now turn in order to examine how ethnicities are narrated at the everyday level.

## **Chapter Three**

### **‘This Was Something I Must Learn’**

#### **A Beginning**

Nellie Mizzi was born in the year 1908 in Khartoum in North Africa. Nellie did not come to know the Sudan very well. This is because, at two years of age, her family migrated to Alexandria in Egypt, as the doctor had told her parents that Nellie would ‘die if they did not leave this part of Africa’. By the time she was about eleven years old, both Nellie’s parents had died. She therefore had little opportunity to find out about their origins in Malta. She never even came to know whereabouts in Malta they lived. All she knew was that her parents had migrated from Malta to Khartoum at around the turn of the century. Obeying the doctor’s orders, Nellie’s parents packed their belongings and left Khartoum to settle in Alexandria. In this city, her father continued to work as a telegrapher, while her mother took care of the home. Here, life for Nellie was simple: ‘We were not rich, but just part of the lower class’. Yet despite their simple life, Nellie found Alexandria ‘a lively and happy place . . . People everywhere, singing and dancing and there was lots of noise. It was a very colourful place’.

In Egypt, there were many different schools at which families could choose to have their children educated. Nellie’s parents enrolled her in ‘a big school with the nuns’. Here the young Nellie Mizzi went about her day conversing in French and found the daily routine

of school very pleasing: 'The nuns were very good to you if you were obedient'. While at school she spoke French with teachers and friends, Nellie used Arabic in the market place and Italian at home. The three children—Nellie and her brother and sister—ensured that the Mizzi household 'was a noisy and cheerful place'. Sadly, when Nellie was nine years old, her mother died and only two years later she also lost her father. Subsequently, Nellie and her sister and brother found themselves living with another Maltese family who had 'convinced the authorities that they would take good care of us . . . He was Maltese [and] she was Italian. She was cheeky to everyone'. Living in this household in a village outside Alexandria, Nellie felt that her new female guardian did not like her at all. Despite assurances given to the authorities, she was treated like 'a slave' in this family: 'I had to leave school at the age of eleven and work in the house. Work, work, work, was all I did. They only wanted us for the money that they got for keeping us. They treated me like a slave. She used to pull my hair. She even killed her own granddaughter'. On one occasion, when she was about eighteen years old, in her desperation to leave this family Nellie went to the British Consulate, 'but they said they would put me in prison if I didn't go back'. Even though Nellie was desperately unhappy living in this situation, she stayed with this family for almost twenty years until she was nearly thirty years old. It was not until her brother, who was four years older and who was now working in an iron factory, rented a house for himself and Nellie that she was able to begin to live the life that she had always desired.

Now in her early thirties, and free of 'a life of slavery', Nellie was soon married to a man of Maltese background who had been born in Alexandria. Over the coming years she had five children. However, life was once again to become difficult as Nellie's spouse died

unexpectedly: 'He took a trip to England and he died there'. From this point on Nellie Mizzi managed to raise her children on her own until the 1950s, when she began to realise 'that changes were happening in that part of the world'. There was much talk about Arab nationalism and she started to see that 'there was no future for my children in Egypt', a country in which she had lived from the time she was two years old. Life was becoming increasingly difficult, as she was 'being told that there would be "no work" for my children and "why don't you go back to your own country"'. There 'was nothing of interest in Egypt' for Nellie once she became aware that there was no future for her children in that place. She began to think about two or three countries to which her family might migrate. She knew nothing about Australia but had 'heard that there was plenty of work there'. In the end she decided that she would send her eldest son to Australia, with a view to making arrangements for the rest of the family to come later. But the family had very few financial resources to pay for this move. While her son's wages could contribute something towards the cost of the journey, Nellie and her family were at the mercy of friends whom she approached for a loan. Despite the cynicism of those who said that the money would never be repaid, Nellie's friends entrusted her with the necessary funds to send the first members of her family to Australia. These forerunners were to assist others to come at a later stage.

On arriving in Australia, Nellie 'didn't like it'. It was 'too quiet' for her: 'There was nobody on the street'. This was very different to the life that she was used to in Alexandria, a life which 'was happy and alive and where everyone was out walking. [Here] at five or six o'clock [in the afternoon] everyone was sleeping . . . To tell you the truth, if I had had the money I was going back'. In the end, Nellie decided to stay because



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Figure 5. Nellie Mizzi with family in Alexandria (Egypt).

she 'realised that this was something I must learn'. After only a short time in the country, Nellie's son was already married and her daughter, Lily, was engaged to a man from Sicily. Nellie also realised that her children would be able to buy such things as houses here. On another level, her desire to return was dampened by events in Egypt. At this time King Faruk had divorced his spouse and married an Italian actor. Nellie 'was disgusted when Faruk ran away to Italy, as we were all sad about this [event]'. Furthermore, there was a great deal of political unrest in Egypt at this time which also made Nellie wary of returning 'home'.

Nellie had only been in Australia for three weeks when she found work in a clothing factory as a 'finisher'. She was 'never trained' but she knew how to sew well. Conditions in the factory were very good and she found people whom she could talk with in Italian and she made an effort to learn two words of English every day: 'I was happy to find English speakers because I felt that if I learnt two words every day I would learn the language'.

## **More Beginnings**

Ming Zhang was born in southern China in 1916. Ming grew up with his mother and his grandmother, as when he was about two years of age, his father, Yalin Zhang, left China for work in Timor. His maternal grandfather worked as a frying-pan maker in a local factory, and when the owner died Ming's grandfather 'took over'. His grandfather also died when Ming was three years old, after which there was only his mother, his

grandmother and himself, living in a big old house: 'There were only three people who lived in the big house when my father was away [in Timor] . . . The way of life in China at this time was very hard'. In the mornings Ming would 'get out of bed early and eat rice porridge and sweet potatoes for breakfast . . . In winter we usually stayed home and had dried food which we gathered from the farm'. It was not customary for women to be educated at this time in China, so his mother and grandmother worked the farm together. As the young Ming played in this warm, but disciplined household, he could hardly imagine that in the not too distant future he would leave China forever.

During his early years, Ming often thought about his father in a far-off land about which he knew very little, except for the fact that he often watched his mother open envelopes in which his father sent money. One day when he was about eleven years old, Ming's father returned from Timor. However, the older Zhang only stayed for a few months in the village. Little did Ming know, but Yalin Zhang had returned to claim his son and take him to Timor, where the older Zhang had established another family. Once this was arranged, Ming left with his father for Timor, not knowing how long he would be away from his mother and grandmother. He felt 'uncomfortable and sad' leaving his home. He was particularly unhappy about leaving his brother, who was about four years old at the time: 'I can remember that I used to look after him and carry him on my back. Now I think back it is very sad indeed, because he was the only person [left] to look after my mother and grandmother as my father and grandfather were away'. Ming never saw his mother or his grandmother again. It was about seventy years before he again set eyes on his brother and village in which he had been born.

In the late 1920s when the young Ming Zhang would have been about eleven years old, just about the time he was setting off for Timor, Peter Wu was born in another part of China. Peter grew up in a coastal village in southern China where most of the villagers were fishermen or merchants who traded with people overseas or with people in other provinces. Peter's father made boats and sold them to others in the fishing industry. Peter had never known his grandparents but had been told that they lived in the last years of the Qing Dynasty. His paternal grandmother had died when his father was only three years old. As a result, his father had been sent to live with relatives, so that he was not able to tell much about the lives of his paternal grandparents.

Peter Wu's mother was 'a very diligent and a thrifty person who cared for her family. She was from a middle class family'. Peter's father had been assigned to build a boat for the family of Peter's grandmother and it was here that Peter's parents met and later married. Sadly, Peter's mother died when he was only five years old. While she was sick, because of the superstition surrounding illness in China, his family was required to leave the village. When his mother became ill, Peter Wu's father was urged by the local villagers to call in the Dao monk to assist in returning the woman to health: 'This was because they believed that the Dao monk would be able to cast out demons that had taken over my mother's body. They believed that having done this my mother would recover. It was very expensive to have a Dao monk to do a service at home but because of the villagers, my father spent a lot of money'. But Peter's mother did not recover, leaving Peter, his eldest sister, who was eight years old, and a younger brother, who was only two, mainly in the care of their father. Because of the death of his mother, his maternal grandmother left to live somewhere else and the only person that Peter had to rely on was his mother's

aunt, who 'stayed behind for a little while to look after the young children'. Life was hard because not only did Peter's father have to work as a carpenter, but he was now more or less on his own looking after his children. Nevertheless, 'we were poor so we behaved very well and my father treated us very kindly'. Because Peter's father had to earn a living for the children he was not able to spend a lot of time with them: 'He had a very "hot" temper but he never beat his children, though occasionally, he [because he was lonely] would throw objects on the floor to relieve his anger'.

In this period of Peter Wu's life, his older sister took a lot of responsibility for taking care of him and his brother: 'My older sister was the one who looked after us. My relationship with her and my brother was very good as we never fought with one another'. The family encountered even more difficulties because '[i]n the first three years after my mother had died, my father was very disturbed and he also became ill'. However, at this juncture in his life, Peter's father thought about how, when he was younger, someone had told him about Jesus Christ, 'so he went to find the priest at the local church and listen to his teachings'. This contact with the priest eventually led to the older Wu and the three young children being baptised as Catholics. Three years after the death of his mother, an aunt introduced Peter's father to a person whom the older Wu later married. As with Peter's father, this woman was also a Catholic and was 'diligent and thrifty . . . As for my stepmother she did not have a happy family. Her father did not care much for her, and her brother was a gambler. [But] she led a very religious life'. At the age of eight Peter Wu was betrothed to his stepsister.

Thousands of kilometres and a decade later, Lily La Terra looked down on a busy street

of Alexandria from her upstairs bedroom. Her mother, Nellie Mizzi, had come to live in this city when she was very young. Lily was born in Egypt in the 1930s. Growing up in Alexandria, Lily was aware that her grandfather was a telegraphist who had emigrated from Malta to the Sudan some time before. She had also assumed that her maternal grandmother had also emigrated from Malta. In the family there were five children, with Lily being the third born. Life in Alexandria was lively as 'it was very noisy and there were many nationalities living there'. Since Nellie Mizzi was very religious, Lily and the other children were required to attend church regularly. Even though Lily 'never had the opportunity to see things like the pyramids . . . it was a good life [though] it wasn't easy with a big family and without a man to bring in the wages'. Lily had not had much time to come to know her father, as he left when she was young to establish another family in England. At that time in Egypt it was unusual for women to work, except in domestic service, so Lily's older brothers were obliged to make a living for the family. 'My brothers joined the army like my father but the wages only came in monthly.'

The house in which John Vella lived in the town of Birkirkara in central Malta 'no longer is standing. A road now runs where it stood'. John was born in the early 1930s at the end of a long line of generations that had lived in this village. His father was a council worker who worked on the roads and his mother spent much of the time keeping house for the family. At about the same time that John was born in Malta, Anna Yang was born in Chabarovsk. Anna's maternal grandfather was Chinese but she did not know whereabouts in China he had come from. Her paternal grandfather 'was Chinese and came from Shandong province, and later, after migrating to the Ukraine, married a Ukrainian woman who had one parent that was Chinese and one that was Ukrainian'.

Anna's mother was also 'half Russian and half Chinese . . . But I have never seen anyone from my mother's side and nobody ever mentioned anything about this side of the family to me . . . I was told that my grandfather had five brothers and that their father died when they were very young. Their mother cried so much that she became blind. Life was very hard for the family and their mother brought them up by begging, so when the children grew up, they all left the place, so as to find a better life. My grandfather left China for the Ukraine when he was fifteen years old . . . When my grandfather went to Russia he was very young, so he learnt the language very young'. But the migration of the family did not stop there, because when Anna Yang was four years old, the family emigrated to Xinjiang in north-western China. 'We moved to China when Russia was at war with Germany.' Anna's parents thought that they would be able to lead a better life in China, which was developing rapidly. Little did they know that life in the Ukraine would always be thought of as being better than what they were to experience in China. On their journey to China the family had some money with them. 'But after we crossed the Yili River we were robbed by local people and we lost everything. We lived in poverty from that time on.' In the Ukraine, Anna's father and mother worked at a confectionery factory which belonged to a commune. Her father was an accountant at the factory as 'he was capable of writing in Russian'. Sometimes he would bring home presents for the children: 'I remember that every day when he finished work he used to bring home bread, sugar, sausage and ham, as food was rationed at that time'. Anna's family had lived in a part of the Ukraine where there were many Chinese, so even though her father could not write Chinese, much of the daily conversation was held in this language. While Anna's parents had lived in this part of the world for many years, her father always regarded himself as Chinese. But what really mattered to her father 'was to get food for himself and his family'.

When the Yang family moved to Xinjiang in the late 1930s 'it was a very backward place, it was desert with a few factories, so my parents could not find work'. The family had little capital and could therefore not establish their own business enterprise. Nevertheless, Anna's father bought a horse and cart and began delivering materials for other businesses. After doing this 'for a while he sold the horse and cart and opened a small biscuits and sweets shop. My mother did not work but stayed at home and took care of the family'. At the time the family emigrated from the Ukraine, Xinjiang was controlled by the Guomintang Government. Many different cultural groups co-existed in this region, in fact 'fourteen nationalities lived there at this time'. For Anna Yang's family, Xinjiang was 'a nice place, like Australia, grasslands, sheep and cows everywhere. When the Goumintang were in power, there were many problems like gambling, drugs and war. They were not good for the people. When the Communist Party took over the government they began to build factories, schools, hospitals and roads. The changes were very great'.

## **Telling about Growing Up (Schooling)**

Anna Yang attended a Russian-speaking school. This was the 1930s and school 'began at eight in the morning and every student had to wear a school uniform, a white shirt, long skirt, white socks, black leather shoes and in winter you had to wear an overcoat . . . The school was very clean and our teachers were "White Russian" who escaped from Russia during the revolution'. Because 'it was a very expensive school', Anna left after completing only three years' education, to take up a position in a local factory at eleven.



Just a few years earlier, Peter Wu began his schooling in a government school for about two years. After this, he was enrolled in a Catholic school which was co-educational and free of charge. In this school, the hours of learning changed according to the seasons and the sunlight. 'In winter we started school earlier and had longer hours, [while] in summer we started school later and had shorter hours because of the hot weather . . . This school was run by a Father who taught us languages and arithmetic.' While the school taught Bible studies it also instructed the students on Confucian thought. 'The Father was very good to us and my family. He even cut my hair for me.' At thirteen, Peter completed his primary education and was asked by his father to take up an apprenticeship in boat building in the family business, to which he agreed. Peter's younger brother was to continue to study because he wanted to become a priest: 'But my elder sister did not take up any education because at that time the eldest daughter in the family was obliged to learn from the mother and to assist her to run the house'. This religious education was to affect Peter Wu for the rest of his life and he was never to forget the kindness that the Jesuit priests showed him. In contrast, John Vella's early experiences of school were characterised by fear and unhappiness: 'The teachers yelled at you and they didn't know how to do their job. They would say if you don't want to do your work just sleep. So I left'. At seven years of age John went home to his mother and told her that he was going to leave school. His mother looked at him for a moment and then said, 'See those peanuts—you go and sell them.'

It was only about ten years earlier, in another part of China, that Ming Zhang was being taught in a very different way to Peter Wu. Rather than the catechism, Ming was being introduced to the reading of *Ren Shou Zu Dao Chi* (human beings, hands, feet, knives

and rulers). Schools at this time were under the control of Sun Yat Sen and the Guomintang Government. Zhang enjoyed reading very much. 'My teacher told me that I was a clever boy, so the teacher hardly beat me or got angry with me . . . Besides I was a quiet person as well.' Unfortunately, young Ming's formal education was interrupted at a very early stage. 'The reason why my mother did not allow me to continue my study was because she loved me very much and was scared that I would have an accident on the way home from school . . . I once had an accident one afternoon after school, as I went with some of my classmates to play by a lake. Suddenly there was a change in the weather and dark clouds came overhead and there were strong winds and rain. When we began to make our way home I fell into the lake. Luckily I was rescued by some neighbours. But because of this tragedy my mother did not allow me to study any more, because she thought my life was more important than my education.' Ming was upset about his mother's decision, but because he had been taught to respect his parents he did not go to school any more. His mother had already had a brother drown and seemed to be quite firm in her decision. Finishing his schooling at about ten years of age, Ming spent his time helping his mother and grandmother on the farm and with housework. Sometimes he would return to his books. 'When I had spare time I was told by my mother to read my old text books. I never threw away my old school books.' This desire to learn, as well as hold on to books and papers, was something that was to stay with Ming Zhang for the rest of his life.

When Lily La Terra was about five years of age, Nellie Mizzi, her mother, enrolled her in a French-speaking school. 'I went to a saints' school, so we spoke French there.' After two or three years at this school, even though she was doing well, Lily's mother decided

to transfer her to an English-speaking school. Unlike her experience at the first school, Lily found learning very difficult at this new place because 'it was hard as I had to learn things [in English] . . . My mother was called to the school and they said to her that I could not manage. So my mother put me back into the French school, not knowing that one day we would come to Australia and we would have to learn English all over again'. Lily did well at the French-speaking school but she finished her formal education at age twelve, as 'it was not important [for girls] to go to school. For the boys it was important'. After this, Lily spent time at home helping her mother with domestic work and 'learning to cook'. When she turned thirteen, Lily enrolled in a dress-making school but 'found that they were not teaching us properly'. She left school once again, unaware that only a few years later she would be working as a machinist in a place far away.

## **Telling about Cultural Practices**

When Peter Wu turned eight years of age, he was betrothed to his stepsister. 'This [betrothal] was a general cultural practice in China at the time.' Later, when Peter was twenty years old, he married his stepsister and over the coming years had seven children, four daughters and three sons. As Peter's stepmother was a devout Catholic who had 'converted' his father to this religion in the 1920s, 'helping to resolve his unsettled state of mind', Peter and his stepsister were married in a Catholic church. Peter was very happy with his marriage. In China at this time, usually after marrying, the bride would return to her parents' home for three days. But in Peter's case, because they came from the same home, this was obviously not possible or necessary, so the young married

couple returned to their family home to live. When Peter's younger brother was born, the family waited till he was one month old and then sent relatives and friends roast meat and eggs that were dyed red. This was a common practice in China at the time and was meant to let people know that the family had a new child: 'We did not practise this with my children. This was because they were all born after the Communists took hold of power in China'. Like their parents, Peter and his spouse brought up their children as Catholics, though after 1949 there were only state schools and state-run churches, which made it hard for the Wu family to pass on their spiritual views to the children. Even though they experienced difficulties in pursuing their religious beliefs, this family continued to practise their religion assiduously: 'Most of my children are Catholic, except one son-in-law and one daughter-in-law. However, my children did not acquire a very deep understanding of the Catholic faith'.

Ming Zhang, who was living in Timor and was now in his twenties, was following the Confucian way. In his first years in Timor, Ming returned to formal education, but 'only to grade four'. In China his mother and grandmother had paid little attention to his religious education but in Timor his father introduced Ming to Confucianism. 'He taught me the rules of how to live as a human being. Some examples of these are, if you do not want to do things yourself, you cannot force anyone else to do them, and, if you want to make money from goods, you then make sure they are well made.' Having spent a number of generations in the Ukraine as Russian Orthodox, Anna Yang's family took their religious practices with them to Xinjiang, as had Ming Zhang's father to Timor. Moving to China in the mid-1930s, the family continued to practise this religion openly, as did many other Chinese who at that time had returned to Xinjiang in search of work

from different parts of the Soviet Union. However, after 1949 Anna Yang continued to practise her religion in secret with other members of the Orthodox church. While Anna attended church regularly in her early teenage years, now that she was working she was also interested in socialising after work. 'People in Xinjiang were good at singing and dancing. Although they were not rich they were warm people, very lively people and very hospitable. Life there was full of fun. We had parties all the time, today at your place, tomorrow at my place. People ate, drank, sang and danced.' At the beginning of the 1950s there were many Russian experts working in this region of China and Anna and her friends had many parties with these visitors. Life in Xinjiang was 'very busy' and Anna Yang would rise early and attend political and literary study at six in the morning. From eight in the morning until three in the afternoon, she would work in the factory, and after work the partying would begin. 'After finishing work everybody went to learn dancing. Oh, we were busy.' After 1958 the relationship between China and Russia worsened and the Russians gradually withdrew their assistance. The last one [Russian expert] left about 1962. There were not so many activities after this.'

## **Telling about Languages**

As a child at the Catholic school, Peter Wu spoke Chinese. He was to continue to do so all his life. In Anna Yang's home in remote Xinjiang, Russian was still the main language. Anna Yang felt more at ease speaking Russian, a language in which she was always more fluent than Chinese. Living in Xinjiang, where many languages were spoken, Anna also learnt to speak some other local languages. Later in her life, the

demands of the Cultural Revolution forced her to return to study to learn Chinese, as her use of Russian became politically 'suspicious'. Anna had no need for English as her life unfolded in China from the 1930s onwards. At this stage, she could not have imagined that her grandchildren would speak English as their main language. At home in Alexandria of the 1930s, Lily did not speak Arabic, nor did she speak Maltese, the language of her ancestors. Rather, as with many people of Maltese background who lived in Alexandria at the time, Italian was the language spoken in the Mizzi household. This was because 'my father's mother came from Austria and she only knew Italian'. In his early years, Ming Zhang's grandmother would carry him on her back and talk to him in Hakka. Living in Timor, Ming and his father spoke Hakka to one another to share their thoughts. This was the language that his father used to teach him the principles of Confucianism. It was a language that he used with others from his region in China who shared his company on lonely nights in Dili.

## **Telling about Working Life**

Arriving in East Timor at age eleven, Ming Zhang lived with the other family which his father had established in the time that he had been away from China. Only a few years later, when he was sixteen, Ming's father died. After a while his stepmother remarried, creating problems for the maturing Ming. 'My stepmother took all my father's possessions [gold and silver coins] and left me the house with some goods and her one-year-old daughter. At that time I did not know how to control the trading business and I became bankrupt within a few months.' Somehow the young Ming managed to survive

until he was twenty-five years old, when the Japanese invaded East Timor. Up until this time he had existed through small business initiatives. He ran 'a meatball business for a year, bought and sold coconuts and made cooking oil'. Under Japanese occupation life was very hard and it was difficult to find work. In the face of this ordeal, the Chinese community in East Timor gathered together, which meant that Ming was offered work with a Chinese family as a domestic worker. Working for this family, he had to do all the housework and also make cooking oil from coconuts. For all this hard work, Ming was paid about ten escudoes a month 'which was not enough for food . . . When I complained about this they offered to exchange food for my work but I had to also work harder . . . Under the Japanese life was very strict. If someone broke the rules his head would be chopped off. One day a man who stole a tomato from the garden lost his head'. After the war, Ming Zhang obtained work in a small business where kitchen utensils were made from sheets of steel. At a later stage in his life, Ming took over and managed this firm as a family business for the remainder of his time in Timor: 'In Timor if you didn't work, or if they didn't offer you a job, you had nothing. So you had to be smart enough or use your own talents so that you could have a good life, because most of the native Timorese owned all the land'. At the end of the war, life under Portuguese rule was also very difficult. 'Under the Portuguese you had to pay tax for every single thing that you did.' On one occasion, Ming owed the government about ten escudoes for about one week and was put into gaol where he 'had to sleep with sheep'. Even though life was difficult in Timor, Ming was 'happy because I met lots of people every day and I also got used to the way of life there. But at the same time I always missed my family in China'.

When Ming Zhang was thirty-seven years old he married a person who had been born in

East Timor, but whose parents came from the same village where he had lived as a child. Her family were trading people as well. 'My father-in-law had three wives and my wife was his first wife's daughter.' After being married for only a short time the couple had a child. However, when Ming was about forty his son became ill. Ming Zhang sought medical help but to no avail. Ming and his spouse were so devastated by this loss that he began to put his 'whole heart' into teaching himself Chinese medicine. As with the young Ming Zhang, who continued to study his text books even when he had left school, the older Ming spent much of his spare time teaching himself his new craft. It did not take long before he became well known in the local Chinese community as a healer. 'I used to see about ten people a day. I made my own medicine from herbs. I made a powerful one that I used to cover over cancerous diseases . . . the herbal tea had the strength to fight the invaders. So this was my technique to help my clients get back their lives.' Most of the people who came for Ming Zhang's help had already sought the help of western medicine and it was in this context that Ming was prepared to assist. Because he 'had no training or qualifications for this practice', Ming Zhang allowed his patients to pay whatever they could afford.

Peter Wu's father and grandfather were both boat builders. On leaving school Peter also took up training in his father's boat building business. In his early teenage years, he seemed satisfied with his choice of occupation and built up a successful small business in the 1940s. He worked with his father for about ten to thirteen hours a day, but his early years of work were interrupted by the Japanese invasion of China. 'At that time I was just sixteen years old. The village we lived in was close to Japan and Taiwan. As the Japanese army was moving through China the villagers needed to get together to form a



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Figure 6. Ming Zhang the herbalist with medical books in Timor about 1950.

volunteer civilian defence force to protect themselves and their families because the Japanese robbed the villagers and raped the women as they passed through on their way to fight the central government . . . When the Japanese landed in the village we had to stop working so that we could defend ourselves. After they left we would return to our work. At that time, life was not very hard but we were all living in fear, without any sense of security. In the first three years of the Second World War, the Japanese only passed through the village and marched to the inner part of China to fight the government forces. But in the later part of the war they were stationed in the village. I quickly got married to my stepmother's adopted daughter.' Despite the difficulties in war-torn China, the Wu business seemed to be doing quite well, even though 'at this time, inflation on the mainland was very high'. Peter and his father decided that they would do business with Taiwan because inflation there was lower than in China. There were products that the people in Taiwan needed, 'so I took up this opportunity to trade with the Taiwanese'. But in going back and forwards to Taiwan, Peter was robbed by pirates on several occasions: 'The most terrible occasion was when we and the goods were all kidnapped for a month. A month later the pirates released us and the empty ship. I was broke after this, so I went to Nanjing to try my luck'.

In Nanjing, Peter Wu looked for work and, after only a short time, he found employment in a building business. He worked there for a year making furniture for rich people. Living in this big city, Peter found 'the standard of living very high and I [had] left my family in my hometown. I sent them money and opened my business with a friend'. From this business, Peter was able to save some money over the first year. He was therefore able to bring his father and the other members of his family to Nanjing to live

with him. With two daughters and two sons born in the forthcoming years, Peter Wu worked extremely hard to provide a good living for his family. Until about 1953, his business did better than it had before the accession of the Chinese Communist Party. This was due to the large demand for materials and shipping transport needed for reconstruction after war and civil conflict. Now, aged about thirty, Peter felt that the difficult stages of his life were behind him. The hardships of childhood had now receded, while the deprivations of war had also disappeared. 'My business grew quite well after the communists took over China. At this time, I thought China had always been a changing dynasty and that communism was just another dynasty. That I wouldn't suffer anymore. I believed that what I had to do was to obey the law and be an honest merchant and a good citizen and then I could live peacefully. However, from the year 1953 onwards, there was rebellion after rebellion. They attacked the landlords, merchants, tradesmen and rich people.' As owners of a small business, the Wu family still managed to survive quite well. Even though Peter and his spouse were unable to educate their children in Catholic schools, certainly in the first years of the communist regime the family was economically well off by Chinese standards.

In the 1950s, Peter's business functioned as a private concern from his two-storey building in an industrial part of Nanjing. However, at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, he was imprisoned for 'anti-State activities' and his business was taken over by the State. 'In 1955, the Communists started the Cultural Revolution. Many educated people were being charged and put into prison. At the same time there were droughts and floods in many areas. The country became very poor. My younger brother who was overseas sent me some money. I used this money to support the priests and nuns in my

parish. They were hiding in the city in lay people's homes. In 1963 the Communists accused me of accepting money from overseas enemies and for providing information to foreigners.' As well as this, Peter was also 'accused of supporting enemies inside the country with the aim of overthrowing the government'. Peter Wu was taken to a work camp where he resided for a period of sixteen years, even though his sentence was for six years. On returning from imprisonment in the early 1980s, he was given a full pension which was equivalent to his wage and an apology for being 'wrongly convicted'. In the labour camp, Peter was questioned all the time and was treated 'very harshly'. Here he was required to write letters to highlight his crimes against the State, 'but I told them I was right. I told them if I smoked cocaine I would not ask my sons or daughters to smoke. But I would encourage them to believe in the religion that I believed in'.

The early years in Xinjiang were economically good for Anna Yang's family. Before finishing work to have children, Anna was employed in a factory making socks. At a later stage in her working life, after the Chinese revolution, Anna's language skills were found to be useful in interpreting for Russian experts and for work in a hospital for Russians. While she enjoyed this work very much, after the Sino-Soviet split in the late 1950s Anna's skills were no longer needed. By the time Anna turned sixteen, her mother and father were no longer alive. With little economic support, she decided to marry the son of a general in the army of the Qing Dynasty, with whom she was to have four children.

In the early 1930s, John Vella, now about seven years of age, spent his time selling peanuts at cafes in different towns of Malta. When he came home too early his mother

would scold him for not having sold enough. If he had not made enough money his parents would often not let him enter the house: ‘ “No money, no eat”—they would put me outside, just like a dog’. While life was hard as a seller of peanuts, young John shouldered great responsibility for his family. The eldest child of what was to become a family of eleven, he was needed to provide extra money for the feeding and education of his brothers and sisters. Up until about the age of fifteen, John continued to sell peanuts and vegetables and other items of daily need on the streets of Malta. ‘I [always] tried to bring in money for the family.’ At the beginning of the war John worked for a short time with his father ‘cleaning up rubbish which was left from destroyed buildings’. Not long after this, when John was in his twenties, a friend of the family offered him a position at an infectious diseases hospital where he was to ‘work hard’ for the next twenty-three years. Safe from the hustle and bustle of the streets, John enjoyed his job as caretaker and messenger at the hospital. Working on a small piece of land off the coast of Malta, he would deliver parcels and messages to other hospitals.

While he was well liked and respected at the hospital and approached his work diligently, John’s thoughts kept returning to the stonemason’s yard that he had visited regularly when he was selling peanuts some years before. ‘When I walked around the streets as a child I always passed the stonemason’s workshop. I was about nine years old and I used to watch the stonemasons carving the rocks. I used to say to myself, “I like this job.” ’ The stonemason would continue working with the piece of stone and would look up after a while and say to the young John Vella, ‘Why don’t you go [away]?’ Nevertheless, John would return time and again to watch this artisan at work. On one occasion, the boy brought along a pocket knife and a stone which he had picked up off the street, with

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Figure 7. John Vella the artist as a young man.

which he began to sculpture an image of Jesus. On numerous occasions the stonemason would see him struggling with this material and would offer some advice: 'I would say to him, "Is this any good?" He would say, "You must draw first." ' A number of years later, when there was a lull in the work at the hospital, John Vella would carve shapes from pieces of rock that he had picked up off the road. On one of these occasions a senior medical officer saw one of his sculptures sitting on a shelf and asked with some interest who had made it. When John said that he was the sculptor, the medical officer asked him if he wanted to go to art school. 'But I work', said John Vella, proud of his artistic production. The next morning at ten o'clock the senior medical officer picked John up from his home and took him to the art school in Valetta, the capital of Malta. There John was overwhelmed by giant sculptures that stood in the hallway: 'I was going to cry'. When his companion asked whether he liked them, he responded: 'Like it [them]? Of course I like it [them]. They're not made by people. They're made by gods'. Here John Vella the artist was introduced to the teachers and enrolled in the sculpture class. For the next five years, John went on a part-time basis to art school where he majored in sculpture. Still working at the hospital, whenever he got a spare moment he would ask people if he could draw them or make a bust of their heads. One day a new doctor at the hospital came to him and asked him to produce busts of members of his family. After this, John was treated differently at the hospital. Pleased with his work, the senior staff at the hospital provided John with a room in which he was free to do his sculpture on a private basis, when he was not required for his other duties. Here he did 'mainly religious sculptures of nuns and saints . . . Sometimes I was paid for doing this, and sometimes they gave me clothes or took me shopping to buy shoes and things for my children'. Over the five years he attended the art school, John combined his working life

with his artistic activities. Because of the high quality of his art he was considered as one of two candidates for a scholarship which would have allowed him to study in Europe. Here the decision which John had been forced to make about his education at the age of seven came back to haunt him. His lack of English, and also his limited formal education, meant that he was not selected for the award.

Nevertheless, working life in Malta continued to be of a relaxed nature, and at the hospital John worked as usual for several more years. Having started at this workplace in the 1950s, he was eligible to retire with a pension at the age of forty-four. However, with ten children, he was concerned about the future. Walking to work one day, he noticed advertisements asking for people to immigrate to Australia. This country looked interesting and possibly offered high wages and a future for his children: a future which he did not think that they would have in Malta. He already had a brother in Australia. He began to consider his future and that of his children.

## **Telling about Moving Somewhere Else**

When Ming Zhang travelled with his father from China to Timor in the late 1920s, he thought that he would one day return to live in China. It was now the end of the 1980s and life had become very difficult for his family. He had already lost two sons in Timor, one from disease and the other as a consequence of the Indonesian invasion of this island-state. Leaving East Timor after sixty years, it was a difficult moment for Ming, but the welfare of his remaining seven children was of overriding concern to him. The



older children, now in their late twenties and early thirties, had recognised that life in East Timor was always going to be difficult. As the family packed their belongings to leave this troubled island, Ming thought back to how about sixty years earlier he had waved goodbye to his grandmother and mother for the last time. Yet one by one, his children had left East Timor for Australia before him. Some had gone to Portugal first on their way to Australia, while others had left through Jakarta. Ming felt that he had no choice in this matter, as he 'had to follow the children'. He had no idea of what Australia was like. 'I often wrote letters to my relatives [in Australia] to ask about the living conditions. They wrote back to me telling me Australia is a peaceful place and has a high standard of living. That is why I am here.'

While Ming Zhang had always dreamed of returning home to China one day, Anna believed that she would always live in Xinjiang. Now in their thirties, her four children had decided to take their families to Australia. Anna felt that she had no choice in her sixties but to follow her two sons and one daughter to this distant land. It was the early 1980s and she knew nothing about Australia before leaving China but her sons had decided that life in Australia would be better for their children. Her first impression of the country was that it was 'desert like, just as in Xinjiang'. Peter Wu had similar reasons for moving to Australia. After years of being denied his freedom and suffering religious discrimination, he followed his sons and their families to Australia as a refugee. Lily La Terra knew little about this far-off country but she realised the wisdom of her mother's decision to send her and her brother to see what the country was like, as in Alexandria things seemed to be changing for the worse for her family. Lily's earliest impressions were of 'a place with wide roads and lots of gardens . . . A place where there was lots of

space'. Whereas Anna Yang, Ming Zhang and Peter Wu came to Australia in recent years, and were in their sixties and seventies, Lily arrived here when she was fifteen years of age and two or three decades before the others. Her lack of English put her at a disadvantage because she 'took about eight months to start conversations with others'.

As with Nellie Mizzi, John Vella's decision to leave Malta in the early 1970s was based on the belief that Australia offered a better life for his children. John had obtained information about Australia from advertisements showing that it 'was indeed the lucky country'. His brother had also written to him about his life in this distant land. The image of beaches, full employment and assisted passage to the antipodes, was too alluring for him to ignore. 'The [Australian] government used to advertise Australia as a place with much work. I thought, it will be good for me, it will be good for my family. Everybody will be happy.' While he was secure in his position at the hospital, 'the family was growing and there was no work, no jobs [for them in Malta]. I couldn't afford to send them to school. This is why I came to Australia.' As with many people, the decision to pack up and shift from one country to another was a difficult decision. John had worked at the hospital for twenty-three years. 'I was soon going to get a pension.' One of the senior staff at the hospital tried to persuade John that he 'would lose everything' if he left Malta. '“But you will not get your pension if you go to Australia,” he told me.' John chose to ignore this advice and the excitement of living somewhere else overwhelmed all of his doubts. Now that he had come to a final decision, he had to make a choice about whereabouts in Australia he was going to live. He had been advised by the migration authorities that there was work in the canefields in Queensland. He was even notified that he had been offered a job at a specific location in this place. John's brother wrote to

him telling him that Melbourne, where he lived, was a better place for him to come than Queensland. John quickly informed the 'migration people' that he did not want to take his family to Queensland and that he now wanted to go to Melbourne. They obliged by meeting his request.

Arriving in Australia in the late 1980s, Ming Zhang settled into a small house with his children in one of the inner suburbs of Melbourne. A number of his children had managed to gain employment in the automotive industry and in other unskilled areas of the labour market and were able to support him in his new country. After he had been here for about six years the family moved to a larger and newer house in the outer suburbs. Now approaching eighty, Ming spent his days helping around the house, continuing to study herbalism and collect and read cuttings from Chinese newspapers. Even though he liked the living conditions in Australia, he felt that it was easier to pass time in his 'homeland', China, which he had not seen for more than sixty years. Ming had been happy in China because in his hometown people 'only spoke one language . . . So that you knew exactly what they were saying and you also learnt a lot from them as well. For example, I like to talk about medical cases with people who understand Chinese medicine, but whether it is in East Timor or Australia, I rarely found such people'. Anna Yang came to a place which had a completely different way of life to that of Xinjiang. 'In Xinjiang, it was very backward, we used the stove for heating and cooking. When you lit the stove, the dust went everywhere. It's very dusty [in Xinjiang]. When you needed water you had to go into the street and take a bucket with you. Here everything is so convenient. You have gas, electricity and tap water.' Lily La Terra who, as we have seen, arrived at the age of fifteen in the late 1950s, was also positive about

her move to Australia. This was because 'you could get a job anywhere *at this time* [my italics]'.

## **Telling about Working Life Again (Somewhere Else)**

It was only a matter of weeks before Lily La Terra got her first job in Australia as a cutter in a clothing factory. The wages at that time were seven pounds for adults, which Lily received because, even though she was only fifteen, her supervisor 'told them I was twenty-one'. However, each time a new clothing pattern came out, Lily had to learn how to make it. 'I found it too hard to keep up, so they put me on the machine that made buttons.' After a short time at this factory, Lily decided to take a position at a tobacco factory, but then at seventeen she married and had to leave. Subsequently, she worked in another factory but by this time her marriage 'was on the rocks'. Now that she had her two children, of which the younger one was Sam, Lily decided to do a hair-dressing course for one year. 'I learnt one thing, that if you wanted to get ahead in life, you had to learn many things.' After graduating from the course, Lily worked for a hairdresser, but after working about twelve months she opened her own shop in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. Despite the long hours of work, she found life in Australia to be easier than in Egypt. 'Wages there [in Egypt] were monthly whereas here you got paid weekly or fortnightly. In Australia you can own a house. In Australia you could work and save [whereas] in Egypt you could [only] have a new dress or a pair of shoes once a year.' While this was the case for Lily, she experienced racism in her early years. 'When we came to Australia people would [often] tell us to go back to where we came from.'

On arriving in Australia in 1972, John Vella, who was now in his mid-forties, moved to the outer western suburbs of Melbourne, where for two years he lived in a garage at the back of his brother's house with his ten children. John's major task in these early weeks was to find work to support himself and his family. He first worked in a butcher's factory for several months but 'found this job too hard'. He also came to realise that 'here you had to work long hours and the wages were low for a big family'. In the early years, John tossed and turned about his decision to leave Malta. 'I was like the weather. If I liked my job and the money came [in] I was all right . . . [But] I wanted to go back to my country. I lost a lot of weight. I had difficulty getting a job because I was too weak to work. Working life was not like this in Malta, I thought. I was working like a donkey.' Nothing here seemed to compare with the hospital job that he had left in Malta.

After working at the butcher's factory for a while, John Vella spent the next seven years making asbestos pipes. Later, he held a position for many years as a furnace-worker, 'but I had difficulty breathing'. Because of the physical demands of this latter work, John often threatened to leave his job. But this never happened as the 'boss' would move him to an easier type of work, only to put him back at the furnace a short time later, because no one else seemed to be able or willing to put up with the terrible dirt and heat which the job entailed. Working life in Australia for John Vella was extremely hard. 'Sometimes I worked sixteen hours a day. I would go home and my wife was not home because she was working late as well.' Whereas in Malta John was able to combine his work with his family, and even his art, in Australia he 'was separated' from his family on a daily basis and permanently from his art. When he returned from work he was so tired all he wanted to do was sleep. 'When the children were a little noisy I would get

very upset . . . Big sacrifices. Yes, I made big sacrifices.' While John had thought that in migrating he would be able to fulfil his aspirations for his children, his experience of working life in Australia was not the one that he had dreamt of in Malta as he pursued his craft, sculpturing the many faces of the hospital staff. Whereas in Malta his limited English had prevented him from obtaining a scholarship to pursue his art, in Australia it meant that he was fated to stay in harsh and dirty jobs. When he arrived in Australia in the early 1970s, English language programs for prospective citizens such as the Vellas were still very basic. As he worked in front of the furnace on hot summer days, he hoped that his children's lives would be different to the one he now led.

## **Telling about Cultural Life in Australia**

In China, Peter Wu had been harassed for his identification with the Catholic Church. In Australia, he was now free to practise his religion and regularly attended the Chinese Catholic Church. Likewise, Anna Yang could now practise her religion openly. On the walls of her house she now kept Russian Orthodox icons and also attended the local Orthodox Church. On coming to Australia, Ming Zhang maintained a strong and continuing interest in Chinese medicine. While he did not 'officially' practise his craft, he studied every day and taught his daughter, Mary, about the effects of herbs on the human body. Having arrived late in life to this country, he spoke no English, but was always keen to talk about China, politics, and particularly Chinese medicine. Even though he married and lived with a Chinese Catholic for several years, until her death from illness at an early age, Ming Zhang continued to believe in Confucianism.

## **Telling about Languages in Australia**

On her arrival in Australia in the late 1950s, Lily La Terra was fluent in Italian, French and Arabic. In Australia, she married twice within a few years, and each time to an Italian. Because of these marriages, as well as the fact that Italian was her first language, in Australia she continued to speak to her family and some of her 'workmates' in this language. When she first came to Australia this language proved to be of some value in the factories where she worked, although the other languages which she spoke were of no use to her here. Even though she could get by with Italian, she soon realised that if she was going to stay in Australia she would need to learn English. It was not long before the fifteen year old Lily set about learning English. Like her mother, Nellie Mizzi, she went about this in some creative ways: 'At the factory I started to have conversations with people. I taught the supervisor Italian and she taught me English. Every week I would learn six or seven words. In those days we only had radio and I would listen, and I would hear the words that I had already learnt'. Later, when Lily became a hairdresser, as she was wielding the scissors she would ask the customers to tell her the correct way to pronounce certain words. 'Should I say it this way or this way?' she would often ask, looking for a response from the reflection of the client's face in the mirror. While Lily had always borne in her mind her connection with Malta, it was only after she came to Australia that she began to learn Maltese from others working in the clothing and textile industries. After a number of decades living in Australia, Lily La Terra now speaks, reads and writes English fluently. Sometimes she still speaks Italian when she 'gets together with her relatives'.

As we have seen, John Vella found that his lack of English created major difficulties for him in Australia. He found that every time he went for a better job they would ask him if he spoke English, with the result that he was not able to get the position. 'I lost seven years because of my [lack of] English because I was scared . . . When I saw some-one speak English I felt embarrassed. I lost my courage, I lost everything.' Coming to Australia in her 60s, Anna Yang did not have a desire to learn English. This was because 'English is a difficult language. Maybe I am too old now and do not have time to go to school. It is very much like Chinese. Even if you can read it you might not be able to write it. Russian is easier. You write it the way you say it.' Nevertheless, she always talks to her sons and daughter and her grandchildren in Chinese.



## **Chapter Four**

### **‘So We Lived a Life on the Move’**

#### **Thinking about Beginnings Again**

The Wu household of the 1950s and early 1960s was a lively and noisy place where Peter Wu's son, Matthew, used to fight with his brothers and sisters. In this house, the paternal grandparents were also living with the family. The family home was a two-storey place in Nanjing and was built by Matthew's grandfather, his father and their friends. The house was located in a residential area of a large city surrounded by some light industry. In this locality there were two large factories and many small ones. It was a densely populated area with some households also operating as workplaces. 'We slept in one big bed together. Often, the weather in Nanjing was quite cool. At that time we didn't have any heating system. We didn't have a fireplace either. When we were young, before we went to bed we warmed up our feet with hot water. Three of us made an agreement that the one with the warmest feet would sleep in the middle, so that he could share the warmth with the others. I was the one who always had the warmest feet, so I often got to sleep in the middle.'

Francis Wu also lived her early years in Nanjing. Living in a small flat with her four sisters and three brothers, as well as her grandmother and her parents, Francis slept on the floor with her sisters. Francis' parents were both lecturers at a university, but when

she was two years of age her father was arrested for his 'anti-communist activities'. This was about 1957 and it was, she said, part of the 'anti-right purge of intellectuals'. Her father was about thirty years of age at the time. Her grandparents had been 'middle class' and had lived in 'a city which did not have much worth mentioning'. Her paternal grandfather had been very rich but lost all his wealth after the communists came to power. Francis did not know three of her grandparents as they had died before her birth or when she was very young. However, her maternal grandmother lived with the family for many years and took care of the daily life of the eight children, while her mother was working to provide for the family. Even though her grandmother was very busy she loved to read stories to her grandchildren: 'She told me many stories. She was a traditional housewife who passed onto us the values which she held'. Life was difficult in Francis' early years as the family struggled to survive. 'There were many natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, drought and so on.' As the young Francis 'played rice bags, jumping cross and other games', little did she know that only two decades later she would have a daughter, Anne, who would be brought up in another country and 'would have a great variety of toys including electronic ones'.

While Matthew and Francis were growing up in Nanjing in the 1950s and early 1960s, both struggling without a father, Albert Marshall used to sit in his room which was on the third floor of his house looking down on other children in a street in Malta. 'I was born in 1947 in a small village called Attard. My mother was a bit different. She's a staunch Catholic and I think she belongs to that school of thought. She found comfort in confessing with one particular priest who happened to be practising in the village where I was born. Then this priest was given a job by the central authorities in different towns

and villages. So believe it or not, my mother moved house to wherever this priest went. I could never relate to the physical environment any time before I was sixteen years old.' Albert's mother made the decisions on this matter and Albert's father did not seem to protest, 'so we lived a life on the move to make my mother happy'. Albert's paternal grandfather was English and had been posted to Malta in the NAAFI, a support unit for the British army. Albert Marshall senior met Albert's grandmother in Malta and never returned to England. As a child, Albert would visit the grandfather and would listen to the perfect English that he had spoken: 'It was very different from the English we were taught at our school. It was always pleasant to listen to the sound of his English'. This grandfather was born in Hampton in England: 'I spent a lot of time with my English grandfather and I was also given the same name as him'.

On his mother's side of the family, there is another 'fascinating' story. Albert's grandfather was in the merchant navy. He spent ten months overseas every year and would come home for the remaining two months. Unlike Albert's other grandfather he was Maltese, as was his grandmother on this side of the family. Albert's maternal grandmother 'was a typical Maltese woman who was always taking care of the house to the highest standard'. She was always a 'pitiful sight as she was a lonely person because my grandfather was always away at sea'. Albert's paternal grandmother was a generous person, 'perhaps the most generous woman I have known'. As Albert's paternal grandfather was earning an English salary, his grandmother gave her grandchildren money. Albert used to spend his holidays at her place. Many years later, when Albert became a well-known television producer, he came to know his grandmother's generosity even more closely for 'she offered her house for a controversial television

series . . . We really got to know my grandmother during that period of time, because she used to take care of us. She tried to understand how the film work was done. This is why I know her very well.' Surrounded by a large family, Albert's childhood was 'poor' but full of warmth. Crowded into the small houses in which they lived, Albert, his two brothers and three sisters shared many experiences. The money which John Marshall brought into the family provided for only a basic living but Albert's parents worked hard to give their children a good life.

In his early years, Albert dreamt of becoming a priest and would often imagine himself in that role. When he was studying in secondary school at the minor seminary, the family lived for a time in the suburb of Msida. The whole neighbourhood knew that Albert was going to become a priest. 'I remember when we used to live in a depressed part of town in Msida. My room was at the very top of the building. I used to sit there and study Latin and Greek and I use to peek out of my window. The area in which we lived was very rough and I grew up close to the wine shop and when the kids caught sight of me studying through the window, they used to call my name and insult me, because I was always inside studying while they were having a good time with the girls. They used to call out to me "come down and we'll teach you how to love women". This gave me a guilt complex and I remember I used to go to church and confess as if I had committed a grave sin.' In these moments, Albert would experience a deep sense of isolation that was to prepare him well for his later travels. Like most young people his age, this experience always posed a dilemma for him. Sometimes he would think to himself, 'Should I go with the kids [to learn to love women] or should I become a priest?' Despite these moments of doubt, Albert attended church every Saturday and Sunday, and

continued with his studies at the seminary until moving on to university.

Jane Marshall used to walk with her father, Vincent Micallef, and her brothers by the sea every night near where she lived in Sleima in Malta. Her mother, Tonina, did not go to the beach but stayed home and prepared the house for their return. This was 'not because she played the traditional role of Maltese women, but because she had a phobia about swimming, as she had had an accident when she was little'. Jane had three brothers and two sisters and lived in a household in which the father 'was kind but strict'. The house was a small one in which the basic comforts of life were provided. The father was a police officer who often 'came home very stressed from stopping fights . . . Dad wanted his rest because at that time he was a police officer and he insisted that he have his afternoon nap because he was often on night duty. When he was sleeping we had to be very quiet but that was still a wonderful time in my life. He insisted that we learn how to swim at a very early age and I remember that we could all swim by the age of three'. Even at this early stage, the actor began to take shape in the life of young Jane. 'We loved going to the beach. We used to go out in the evenings and in the mornings and come home for lunch and go back in the afternoons. But if my father was sleeping, I knew I had to be very quiet. If I wasn't, Dad would say, "OK you can come upstairs and sleep." I hated that because I wanted to play. I used to invent games. I was very creative and I either played alone or with my brothers or sisters. We were all very creative. We used to play some sort of festival. I was always the Buddha because I could never sing. But these were wonderful times because we really knew how to play.'

In the Malta of the 1950s and 1960s Jane's family was relatively poor. In later years she

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Figure 8. A street in Msida (Malta) that Albert Marshall would have walked down many times.

realised 'how much pressure and stress my father was under. My parents had little money, but they always kept us well fed and well dressed, but it was very hard for them in those days'. The house had only two bedrooms and Jane often had to share a bed with her sisters. 'I used to sleep at the foot of the bed and sometimes I would cause problems because I would roll over. Mum always brought us a cup of tea in the morning before we got out of bed. I can still taste that tea. It was beautiful.' Jane's mother, Tonina, used to help a rich person who was a friend of the family with her housekeeping. In return this individual used to give the children presents such as shoes.

Jane Marshall was close to her maternal grandfather—'Oh, he was a darling'. A tall, slim person, he used to be a footballer, a goal keeper, and in his later years, after he retired, he would go to the football at Gzira every Saturday and then walk a considerable distance to see his grandchildren at Sliema. When he got to the Micallef house he would give the children small presents and amuse them with such tricks as putting cherries in his ears and making them disappear. He would tell them all sorts of stories and fairy tales to excite their imagination, but what was 'fascinating' for Jane was that her mother would often tell them the same stories 'word for word'. Jane's maternal grandmother was 'a very sweet person' who seemed to worry a lot when the Micallef children visited her place.

Walking down the narrow alley ways to visit her paternal grandfather at his cobbler's shop in Valetta, Jane would see large ships sitting in the harbour. Whenever she visited this grandfather she would always study the portrait of him that hung on the wall. The young Jane would wonder how this shoemaker had aged so much and what had

happened to his legs which were now 'twisted'. Jane's paternal grandmother 'was a very free person' whom Jane resembled in many ways. Jane came to know this grandmother well as 'she lived till she was about eighty and had beautiful white hair' which the young granddaughter would often comb.

Zhu Sheng was born in Xinjiang in 1949 into a family of 'intellectuals' in the decade before Jane Marshall had been born in Malta. Zhu's father was a teacher and his mother 'had an education too'. Zhu grew up in the city of Yining, a place surrounded by rivers and lakes and 'where the scenery was beautiful'. An educated mother was at this time considered unusual, but she stayed home and raised the family. As a child, Zhu would observe his father going off each day to teach but this was not always to be the case. 'About 1953 my father became sick with rheumatism and backache, so he stopped working. We had to then live on valuables left by my grandfather.' The neighbourhood in which the young Zhu grew up was 'quite poor' with a few families that 'were doing well because they worked for the government'. Zhu's parents would often tell him about the family's history, so that he came to know that his great-grandfather came to Xinjiang from Tianjing during the Qing Dynasty. 'At that time General Zou Zontang led his troops to Xinjiang to develop the territory for the Emperor. It was about one hundred years ago. My great-grandfather came with these troops and he never went back to Tianjing again. He settled down in the city of Yining and opened a winery, making spirits from grains.' Zhu's parents also told him how this business was passed onto his grandfather and how the winery had grown into a large business. 'I was told that there were many people who came to drink [at this winery] especially Kazaks and Mongols who came with their camels and brought grains like sorghum, corn, maize in exchange for spirits, because



people of these nationalities love drinking. They came every summer.'

Li Li Sheng was born in Xinjiang in 1952. 'My family was quite rich at the time as we had our own farm with sheep and chickens and we grew our own vegetables.' The farm was located about sixty kilometres away from the city of Yining. Li Li's father had told her little about his life, but her mother, Anna Yang, had once told her of how she had travelled from the Soviet Union at the age of four to live in Xinjiang. Li Li lived on the farm for only the first few years of her life, as the family moved to the city because her mother 'wanted the children to have some education'. After the family moved to Yining, their standard of living began to decline. 'We had a very poor life. We only had enough food to eat, but no money for new clothes, life worsened every day.' Here Li Li saw her parents working hard all the time, but was 'confused as to why the family could not live better'. The household was strict and the parents wanted the children to have more education than they had received. Li Li's parents, as they were both literate, 'hoped that the children would become someone important such as a university graduate . . . but they did not understand the schooling system. As long as we were reading or writing they were happy'.

Only a few years after Li Li was born in China, Joyce La Terra was born as the sixth child in a family that was to have ten children. Born in 1961, in her father, John Vella's home village of Birkirkara, Joyce spent only the first two years of her life in Malta, but later in life was able to recall 'picking up fruit that had fallen to the ground'. At this time, Birkirkara was a place that was associated with 'being well-off . . . If you came from Birkirkara you were seen to be a snob. But we weren't rich by any means. My father was

an orderly at a hospital and my mother worked as a kitchen-hand at the same place. That's how they met.' Later in life, despite the fact that John Vella was reluctant to talk about it, Joyce came to recognise that her father 'grew up under some difficulty'. Sam La Terra spent a great deal of time with his grandmother, Nellie Mizzi, when he was growing up in Melbourne's inner suburbs as his mother, Lily La Terra, often worked long hours to support the family. Even though his grandmother and mother identified themselves as Maltese, Sam always spoke Italian at home. Sam's father was born in Italy, and after migrating to Australia he met and married Lily, but left the family when Sam was two. Nevertheless, as he was growing up, Sam always called himself an Italian. In the Melbourne of the 1960s, the young Sam thought little about Egypt, or Malta, or Italy either, for that matter. He had little desire to find out about his family's past, but set his sights on getting a job as soon as possible.

On his father's side, Jose Terceros' grandfather was a peanut farmer. 'He used to take peanuts from one town to another. But on one of these journeys he was robbed and shot dead. My mother's father was a tailor in Oruro. You know, in Bolivia I never thought about my family's history. But I always identified with the Indians. The flag was not important to me. Nationalism is not important. But since coming to Australia, questions about being an indigenous person of Bolivia have become important to me. I always got upset when people talk about me as having "mixed blood". '

## Thinking about Schooling Again

Rising early, Matthew Wu would eat a bowl of rice, leave for school, return home for lunch and then go back to school. Unlike his father, Peter Wu, Matthew did not learn about the crucifixion at school. It was the early 1960s and during his six years of primary education, he studied the Chinese language, arithmetic, general knowledge and the doctrine of communism, 'especially emphasising how good communism was, and how, without Chairman Mao and communism, life would be hell'. During his five years of secondary school, Matthew studied Chinese language, mathematics, science, geography and politics, which consisted largely of the thoughts of Karl Marx and the history of communism. English was taught from his second year at secondary school. While all seemed to be going smoothly for him at school, his education was interrupted by the advent of the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. 'When I started my secondary schooling, the Cultural Revolution broke out. We did not have a normal schooling. What we did at school was to criticise the teachers, the educated people. We were being appointed to work on farmlands all over China. We marched in the streets and criticised the enemies of Chairman Mao, such as foreigners.' Like others his age, Matthew was also involved in writing 'big word' posters. 'Nobody would like you if you got good academic results. Those who could write essays that criticised educated people would have a better chance of becoming a member of the Communist Party and would therefore get positions in the government. Nobody liked to study well. From 1966 to 1977, students did not need to go through examinations and did not receive assessments. They were just promoted to the next level automatically.' School would finish at about two-thirty in the afternoon but Matthew and some of his friends were placed in groups to do homework and revision

together for an hour after school every night. One of these groups would meet at the Wu house because 'it was quite big'. After finishing their study, the group would play 'poker or hide and seek. In the evening, as there was no television, radio or electronic media at the time, we spent our time chatting with members of the family, playing cards or reading books'.

Matthew's parents wanted him to pursue his education but he found out that working hard in the academic area only lead to becoming a teacher, 'so [he] was not keen on it'. Nevertheless, even if Matthew had wanted to continue with his education there were a number of barriers that he had to confront. One worry was that during the 1960s everyone who graduated from secondary school was required to work either on farmlands or in factories. 'There wasn't any chance for me to enter tertiary education . . . as students had to work in an allotted area and not according to their own desire or will . . . Coincidentally, I was allotted to work as a boat builder in a marine factory.' The main work which Matthew was required to do was to repair old fishing boats. To pursue an academic career 'a person had to be a good worker. On top of that, the background of the family also affected the chance of entering into university. Those who did not have a good family background had no chance of entering. This meant that before the Communists came to power, if your parents or grandparents were landlords, capitalists, merchants, rich or religious you were blacklisted. No matter how well you performed in your work, or how good your academic results were, you did not have any chance of gaining entry'.

At nine years of age, Francis Wu began her formal education. The young Francis 'loved

studying' which meant that she often received high marks both in primary and secondary school. She was always admired by the teachers, and as with Li Li Sheng, Zhu Sheng, and Matthew Wu, the last of whom she was later to marry, the Cultural Revolution interrupted her progress at school. 'When I was in grade two the Cultural Revolution started. Most of us did not pay attention to study. We spent most of our time protesting and writing "big word posters".' Nevertheless, during the turmoil of the mid-1960s Francis managed to finish five years of secondary school. Her father had now been away for many years and she therefore had no idea what he expected of her in terms of a career or education. On the other hand, her mother wanted her to become a doctor. Francis wanted to continue her education at tertiary level: 'even my teacher hoped that I could study at university.' Unfortunately, no university places were allocated to Francis' school, and regardless of her wishes and the teacher's high aspirations for her, Francis was assigned to work in a rubber factory. This process of placing young people on farmlands or in work places further affected her, when her sister fell seriously ill at the same time as this relative was to be sent to the remote province of Xinjiang! Francis' family was extremely upset at the thought of her sister being sent so far away but were relieved when, as a result of the illness, she was posted to a place closer to home.

In the Marshall household, the parents never insisted that their children should continue to high levels of education. Albert's mother wanted her son to become a priest and he wanted to fulfil this wish: 'Well, you know, having a priest or a doctor or a lawyer in the family was always a huge prestige'. Albert attended an all-boys' school (the Archbishop's minor seminary) and saw himself as 'a scholar'. The school offered a classical education involving an intensive study of Greek and Latin. When Albert's

parents attended school in the 1930s, tuition was in English, while in many schools Maltese was a forbidden language. A number of years later when Albert was at school, English was still used as the main language of tuition. With what seemed like a natural ability with languages, Albert did sufficiently well to gain entry to the only university in Malta. It was here that the wish to become a priest was replaced by the desire to write and become a theatre and television producer of plays and music programs, just like the personalities he used to meet on those cold Maltese winter nights waiting for his father at the radio station where John Marshall used to earn his living. On some hot summer nights in Malta, John would take Albert to the radio studios where he worked as a recording engineer. While his father organised programs on air, the young Albert would 'play battle games on paper during the idle periods between one program and another'. It was the atmosphere of the radio station that particularly caught Albert's imagination. This experience was to be a valuable part of his education. Many years later after returning to Malta from his long stay abroad in Australia, and having been appointed the most senior officer in Maltese broadcasting, namely the general manager of the national public broadcasting station, he would occasionally think back to those moments where he pretended to be a radio announcer, as his father was working, not taking much notice of young Albert.

At the university, Albert's key area of study was to be English which 'opened new horizons' for the would-be classical scholar: 'I read everything but the prescribed texts, and that is when I became militantly involved in the language problem in Malta, because as we led up to the 1960s we had to do something about developing a public movement in our literature. At this time we used Maltese language to create our new work because

even the academic system was old, cobwebbed, and all the prescribed texts for Maltese were systematically chosen to be the products of a school of thought which wasn't relevant anymore'. This important literary movement provided a place where the knowledge obtained in his isolation in the attic was now to be used to forge new thinking in Maltese culture: 'It was a literary movement which questioned the fact that Maltese literature had pivoted around the themes of religion and nation, and which was seething with Italian influences'. The task for Albert and Jane and others involved in this literary uprising was to develop Maltese literature in its own right and 'to produce something more relevant to our society'.

Vincent and Tonina Micallef had desired a good education for their children. They wanted them all to have good careers. Jane Marshall's sister, who had done well in her schooling, led the way in education in the Micallef family, thereby raising the expectations that the parents had for those children who followed. Even though Jane did not feel that she was 'as bright' as her older sister, she 'was a success too'. In her second year of high school she won a scholarship that allowed her to visit Greece and Turkey. Besides, her interest in theatre flowed over into her life at school, where she was very happy. Although she was popular at school she was 'never among the intelligent group'. Her primary school experiences were varied while her years at the secondary girls' school were to provide her with 'happy memories'. This was partly because 'theatre came to life at the [secondary] school'. Here Jane was serious about her work, an attitude which she did not extend to mathematics! Of particular interest were the classes in drama. After all, acting had been a big part of her life from her early years onwards: 'My uncle, who was a priest, used to take me to the local theatre productions. I remember

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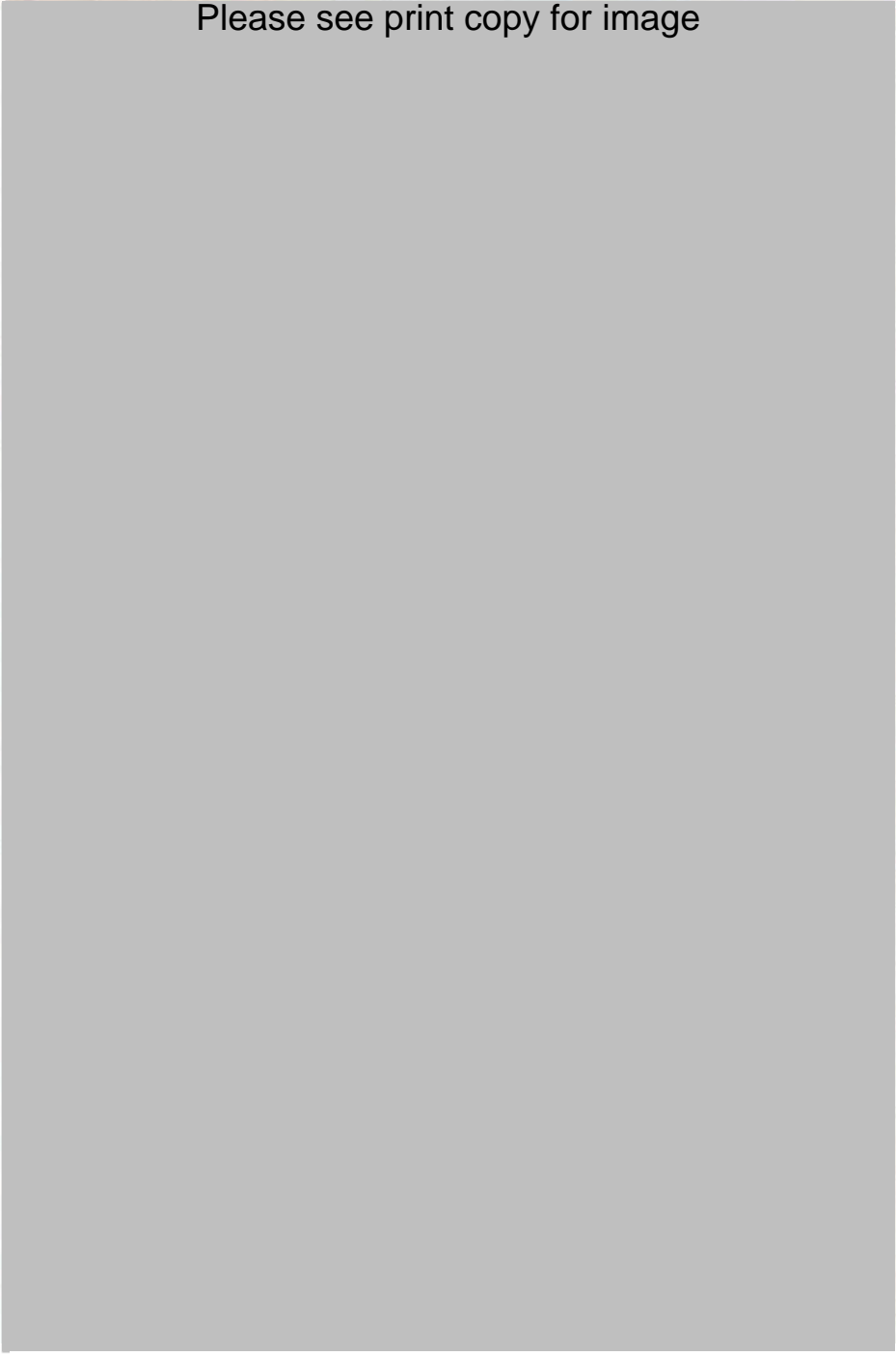


Figure 9. The University of Malta.



standing on the roof of the house and performing plays for my family'. However, in her later years at school Jane 'did not advance' as well as she could have. While one of her older sisters had gone on to university, Jane gained employment in a jewellery factory where she worked 'like a slave . . . That's why I didn't look for other work [after this job]. Firstly, because I was doing a lot of theatre and radio. But I was also getting paid peanuts, but that was my choice, and in those days, it was later that you expected to work. You weren't really pushed. If you could get work and get something for the family that is what you did'. Jane's interest in theatre was always supported by her parents, 'except when I failed a couple of subjects at school because my acting was taking up too much time'. But as she got older her interest in the theatre continued to expand. From about the age of sixteen, she used to go out to rehearse every day and auditioned for her first part in one of the plays which Albert Marshall was producing. After working for a while, Jane, together with Albert, whom she had met through the theatre, left for England where her acting career 'really began to take shape'. It was now the early 1970s.

As with Ming Zhang's father, Zhu Sheng's father was a person who had been well versed in Confucianism. His education had involved a study of The Four Books (*The Great Learning, The Doctrine of the Mean, The Analects of Confucius, and Mencius and The Hundred Surnames*). At the time of his father's schooling, someone with a secondary school education was viewed as very knowledgeable, and the older Sheng was looked upon with some respect within his community: 'My father treated us very strictly and because he had been to school he was good at guiding us. He taught us many skills and to be patient.' This left a 'deep impression' on young Zhu. Zhu's mother, on the other hand, often 'wished that iron could turn into steel at once. I was naughty so I got smacked very often'.

In the 1950s when Zhu was attending school in this part of China 'not many people realised the importance of study. In those days many people in China started work after only completing primary school . . . Some of them even got married or started work without even finishing primary school'. It was the first decade after the coming of the 'New China' and there were plenty of job opportunities. But Zhu's parents recognised that 'from the 1960s schooling became important as good jobs required good qualifications'. Zhu attended the local school where his father was the teacher. Because he was happy to be taught by his father he did 'quite well', and after graduating he was sent to study at a local Normal School without sitting the examination. Four students were sent to this school from Zhu's class, but after two years Zhu Sheng, now in his late teens, could not summon up his father's enthusiasm for teaching: 'so I quit and went back to the secondary school'. Back at secondary school, Zhu studied a foreign language, mathematics, geography and history, 'which were the common subjects in Chinese schools'. But this was 1966 and the Cultural Revolution was beginning and 'we had already run wild and I didn't learn much'. Nevertheless, amidst this turmoil, Zhu liked Chinese as a subject, and was particularly interested in 'learning about the geography of China and other parts of the world'. Li Li Sheng's schooling was also interrupted by the Cultural Revolution. 'We learnt nothing at school apart from Chairman Mao's *Little Red Book* and spent time working in factories or with farmers.' Etched on Li Li's mind at this time was the slogan: 'Learn from workers and peasants'.

About twelve years after Zhu Sheng attended school in Xinjiang, Joyce La Terra was now six years old and was beginning her formal education at a local state school in the western suburbs of Melbourne. It was the early 1960s and Joyce did not make any

friends at this school. This was because she 'spoke no English, but only Maltese, [and] there were not many other students of Maltese background at the school'. After a year she transferred to another school where she 'made lots of friends, many of them from Maltese background'. Unlike her father, John Vella, Joyce did very well in her education until her second year of secondary school. In her first year of her secondary education, the family moved from the industrial suburb in which John Vella and his ten children lived to a farm even further out of Melbourne. This meant that where she had felt 'happy' at the primary school, the new secondary school seemed to lack the stability that the conscientious young Joyce was seeking. 'I was an obedient student. I did all my work. I loved English and I loved writing . . . [though] I didn't have many aspirations, [but] all the kids [in my class] were misbehaving, so I just wanted to leave. The Principal came to see my parents and said, "But she is my best student".' With Joyce making the decision to leave at the end of the second year of secondary school, her father began to think that his decision to migrate may not have been worth it and that none of his children would achieve a high level of education. All his other children, although they were to do well later in life, had left school at an early age. As Joyce was below the compulsory age for finishing school, she had to seek special permission to leave and was required to do the third year of secondary school by correspondence. Sitting at her desk in her room alone for the next twelve months Joyce successfully completed this year of study.

On finishing second form, Joyce managed to get work in a range of jobs. After working for a number of years for other people, and also in her own and Sam's businesses, she saw an advertisement in a local newspaper advertising a 'bridging university program'

for mature-aged students who had not completed their secondary education. Excited at the prospect of gaining a university degree, she enrolled in the course and continued her studies for a number of years. This decision caused some resistance in Joyce's family who could not understand why she 'wanted to return to study. Sometimes they suggested that I thought that I was going to be too good for them or that I would get an inflated ego or something. And anyway they asked me what I would do with an arts degree'.

Sam La Terra had enjoyed school at first but after six months in a local Catholic school in the inner suburbs of Melbourne, he became ill and missed the rest of the year: 'This put me behind and I never caught up. All the other kids used to know their ABCs, but I didn't know anything . . . I hated school and [at fourteen] found a job at a piggery'. It was 1968 and Sam quickly got a job working on his sister's farm on the fringe of Melbourne's western suburbs. Just a few years before Joyce and Sam attended schools in the outer western suburbs of Melbourne, Jose Terceros was sitting at his desk in his school in Cochabamba in Bolivia. Jose, being Ketchuan, felt that he 'was seen to be of lower class'. Moreover he felt that the school did not recognise that his family were 'indigenous' people in Bolivia. Nevertheless, Jose always did well at school until he was about fifteen years old, when his parents separated. He began 'to lose interest in school because this event was a very sad one'. After this, Jose left school and moved to Santa Cruz where he began his working life in restaurants.

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Figure 10. One of the schools which the young Jose Terceros attended in Bolivia.

## **Thinking about Working Life Again**

The experiences which Albert Marshall gained as a theatre director at the University of Malta gave him the basis for entry into a professional career in theatre and television. During his twenties, Albert produced and directed many fine plays and also became involved in television and radio productions. From here on, he began to gain a public profile for his media work in Malta and not long after was appointed to the assistant manager's position at Maltese Television in the programs area. For a while this experience was exciting for Albert, as he was able to actively involve himself in the production and directing of theatre and television projects, as well as contribute to the broader creative life which was developing in Malta in the late 1970s.

The effects of the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s fell heavily on Zhu Sheng, Li Li Sheng, Francis Wu and Matthew Wu, as they moved through school and on to work. Their interrupted schooling, as well as the lack of recognised political status and contacts, meant that all of them had little choice in further education, or the types of jobs to which they were to be assigned. After leaving school, Zhu Sheng wanted to work as a driver because he liked outdoor work, but Zhu's parents did not like the idea, as they thought that it would be 'too risky and not safe'. A driver's job was regarded as prestigious in China in the 1960s and 1970s, but it required some connections with 'important' people with whom Zhu's father had little contact. So in 1969 Zhu obtained work in a collective where he 'enjoyed' repairing vehicles. A bit later, Li Li Sheng finished 'junior high school' in 1973 at the age of sixteen. She wanted to join the army: 'but my family didn't have the connections for me to get in'. Instead, Li Li gained

employment as a cashier, and later was able to get better pay working in a factory where she was paid according to her individual output. After leaving school, Francis Wu, who was younger than Zhu and Li Li, found herself examining the quality of rubber in a large factory. Francis was not happy about this, as the 'working environment was bad' and 'the factory was far away from my home. It took me one and a half hours just to travel to work'. She also found that the knowledge she had gained at school was not useful in this work.

It was the mid-1960s now and Joyce La Terra had, so she thought, finished her formal education. She obtained work on a chicken farm checking eggs. However, her dissatisfaction with school had been nothing compared with her dislike of the work that she was now doing. From here, she moved onto waitressing which she seemed to enjoy, and then at the age of eighteen, two years younger than when her parents married, she married Sam La Terra who had been introduced to her through family members. Sam had also left school at an age below the compulsory age of schooling. At only fourteen, he began his first job on a pig farm. Here he 'worked seven days a week [with] no holidays'. The farm happened to belong to his sister and her husband and the young Sam 'just turned up and said, "I'm working here" '. Sam's sister also left school at fifteen years of age and married at sixteen years of age. Sam La Terra received a sympathetic ear to his plea to enter the world of work and it was from here that he moved onto a range of other jobs. He enjoyed his working life at the piggery, but after four years decided that he 'wasn't earning enough', so he obtained some work in a lead factory. After working on the farm he found this work uninteresting, as 'I was stuck in a corner counting and cleaning batteries all day'. As with his schooling, Sam left this job at short notice and

gained work in an abattoir where he worked for seven years. He liked this job best of all because it allowed him to finish early in the afternoon: 'If you worked hard you could complete the daily requirements in a few hours . . . Top money and early finish' were the rewards here. At a later stage in their lives, Sam and Joyce set up small businesses, such as a childminding centre and a pet shop. Yearning to get back to working with his hands—'I was always good with my hands'—Sam became a builder and worked constructing houses all over Victoria.

With experience working in a variety of jobs in Santa Cruz, the capital of Bolivia, Jose Terceros, still only eighteen years old, returned home to complete his national service; this was expected of a young male in Bolivia in the early 1970s. After completing this service, he became involved with the Textile Workers Union in Bolivia. Jose had always had a 'sense of social justice' and at the age of only twenty-four, he became general secretary of his union and was sent to international conferences in other countries to represent these workers. As general secretary, he was outspoken on issues to do with working conditions for weavers and was also involved in establishing co-operatives for workers so that they could purchase their own land. As a trained boat builder in China of the 1980s, Matthew Wu was able to use his skills in making furniture for a small inner city business in Nanjing for a number of years. Zhu and Li Li Sheng worked as unskilled labourers for a number of years before migrating to Australia.



## Thinking about Languages Again

As a young boy in his village in the north of Bolivia, Jose Terceros would tell other children in the school yard that they should speak in Ketchuan. He was always aware that this was the language of his ancestors, the language of the culture into which his mother had been born. Growing up in the Cambra region, Jose heard Spanish and Ketchuan being spoken on a daily basis both inside and outside his home. However, as his schooling was in Spanish, this was to become his strongest language, though, after he immigrated to Australia he became fully fluent in English. Working as a community worker for the Spanish-speaking community in the inner suburbs of Melbourne, he was able to keep his Spanish language alive. Arriving in Australia and being a long way from home, Jose 'really began to think' about his own cultural background—'I began to recognise that my family were indigenous to Bolivia'. As a native Bolivian, he became confused later about what language he should teach his children. 'I have a bit of a conflict between the languages. My children do not speak Spanish but they could also learn Polish. Why should I not teach my children Ketchuan? But then I think how useful is this going to be for them? Ketchuan is a dying language.' Nevertheless, as he was raising his three children he began to teach them Spanish because he realised that it would be much easier to concentrate on two languages, not three. In teaching his children Spanish, Jose Terceros nonetheless wanted them 'to be proud of themselves as Australians who have a father who came from Bolivia and a mother who is Polish and English. I hope they have no conflict'.

Jane Marshall and Albert Marshall regarded English in the same way that Jose viewed

Spanish. When Jane and Albert were at school in the 1960s, students could still be punished for using Maltese. At this time, Jane 'related to it and accepted it and I was grateful that we were learning English. But what upset me and what upset lots of other students was that we were not even able to talk to each other in Maltese'. Two decades later, living in Australia in the 1980s, Jane still felt 'very comfortable with Maltese, even artistically, particularly when I'm doing a piece of theatre. I feel that I can create more if I'm doing something in Maltese'. On the other hand, despite the fact that English was the standard language in Maltese education, and was the language she used to communicate in Australia with many friends and at work, Jane did not feel as confident in speaking English as when she was speaking Maltese: 'If I'm relaxed, I think I speak well, and if I am uneasy, I tend to stutter, not in both languages, just English. I often find that some of the people at work are sort of listening to me in a sort of inquisitive way. I can't really explain it. Maybe I'm imagining it because I'm self conscious. I can never relax when we are socialising with staff at the school where I work . . . because I can't really understand all their expressions or, you know, I cannot relate to it, if they say something very quickly and I don't get it. Even when reading poetry this happens. If I read poetry in Maltese and a piece of poetry in English, I can relate to it [the Maltese piece] more and I feel like I can create'.

Albert Marshall felt that using Maltese always kept him 'sane'. 'It's simply a question of sanity. When I want to tap into my artistic resources, I find that Maltese is my only communication instrument which I can use, not English. But then, of course in my everyday life, going to work, communicating with my kids, going to university, I have to rely on my English.' When Albert was at the height of his early career in Malta in the

late 1970s, language was a central aspect of his work. But when he came to Australia, Albert had to realise that he 'needed new [language] tools'. However, with this move, Albert Marshall never seemed to have 'enough time' to acquire these 'new tools': 'This is because I have a family to take care of, to cater for, and part of Maltese culture was lost once we moved into a new house and borrowed money from the bank. Jane and I, like most Maltese, felt duty bound to get rid of that bloody debt as soon as possible. Now that meant we had to compromise for a while. I believe that this then developed into an identity crisis'. Living in the Marshall household in the western part of Melbourne was, at times, like living in the original home. Albert wrote poetry, created theatre, radio and television programs for the Maltese-Australian community, and had a steady stream of visitors through the house who conversed in Maltese.

Sam La Terra had spoken Italian as his first language in his home. In later years he could not remember when he first spoke English. It is also of some interest that even though his grandmother and mother saw themselves as at least partly Maltese, Sam always identified himself as Italian, as a 'wog'. Ironically, his sister had married someone of Maltese background, and when Sam began working at the piggery, he became involved in conversations with the other family members using Maltese. Over the four years he worked on this farm his Italian began to disappear, as it became less useful than Maltese. As with his mother who learnt Maltese from her colleagues at work, Sam also became fluent in Maltese as he went about his business on the farm. In her early years in Australia, Maltese was the language which Joyce La Terra mostly heard her parents speaking to one another in the few hours they had together after a long hard day's work. In the Vella household, John Vella would speak to his children in both Maltese and

English while the children talked to each other in English. Even though, as Joyce progressed through school, her English became stronger than her Maltese, she continued to speak to her father in Maltese and came to see this language as being 'part of her'. Realising in her thirties how important Maltese was to her, she would also often 'try and read Maltese', but it took her 'a long time to decipher the signs on the page . . . But I can't write Maltese. I try my best to make sense of it'.

After immigrating to Australia in the 1980s and 1990s, their lack of English meant that Francis Wu and Li Li Sheng experienced many difficulties with life in Australia. Inability to speak the language increased Li Li's sense of isolation in the Australian suburbs, and for Francis it also meant that she could not use her skills in the workplace or 'assist her children with their homework'. While Chinese continued to be spoken in the Wu family in Australia, Francis sometimes regretted that she had not learnt any English. 'It is probably our language problem that we can't communicate with neighbours. Here, no one talks to each other in the neighbourhood.' Li Li's and Zhu Sheng's sons were both attending the Chinese language school on Saturdays as 'they are Chinese, so surely they need to learn the Chinese language'.

## **Thinking about Cultural Life Again**

It was the visits of her uncle, the priest, which created Jane Marshall's early interest in the theatre. This uncle 'had a love of theatre' and took the young Jane to see the amateur plays produced in the local area. On returning from these excursions with her uncle, Jane

and her friends from the wine shop next door would go to a little back room 'where everything smelled of wine'. The children would burn cork to paint their faces so that they could perform for the adults, who sat drinking. With their costumes made from paper, they would also go up on to the roof of the Micallef house and place a blanket over the clothesline for a curtain. There, they performed for each other and sometimes for the whole family. But Jane's enjoyment of acting was not confined to these moments: 'We used to make plays all the time because summer time in Malta is very beautiful. We used to sit on the steps and we would dance in the street'. Ironically, television, a medium that would make Jane well known throughout Malta in her twenties, did not appear in the Micallef household until she was completing her secondary schooling. As she performed on the rooftop, at about eight or nine years old, Jane could scarcely have foreseen that just over a decade later this experience would be useful in the wider world of theatre in Malta.

In the mid-1960s, politics in Malta became increasingly complex. What happened during this turbulent time in Maltese politics impacted strongly on Albert Marshall. In this period the Labour Party 'declared war on the Church because Don Mintoff, leader of this party believed that it was the right time to open the minds of the people . . . but when Mintoff did this he lost a lot of support because of the Church's huge influence in Malta. It was a tough period'. At this stage of his life, Albert aligned himself with the Church against Don Mintoff. 'I was the son of working-class parents who leaned towards Labour before the anti-Church movement was declared. When this happened my parents, like most people in Malta at the time, turned fiercely against the Labour Party.' On the other hand, because Jane's father supported the opposition movement he was unable to go to

church. 'My mother used to be so embarrassed, you know . . . because there was this family living opposite us that was a Nationalist supporter [pro-Church party in Government) and they used to stare at my dad who just stared back.' While Jane always maintained her labourite orientation, it was at university that Albert became involved in the youth movement and it was here that he began to develop his vision for Maltese society.

As a child Matthew Wu always looked forward to Chinese New Year celebrations, which would last for some days. Matthew would wear new clothes and receive 'lucky money' and 'red packets'. Apart from this celebration, as a young person growing up in China his social life was very limited. 'Music and paintings were all about communism and the Cultural Revolution . . . as we were not allowed to listen to any other music or appreciate any other type of art. We did not have the chance to attend concerts or painting exhibitions. We had to report to the central authorities about what we planned to do that day and every evening we had to tell them what we had done. We were not allowed to have our own social life or activities. All the songs we sang were censored . . .' For Matthew and his young friends, the only recreational activity permitted—other than singing the praises of Chairman Mao—was sport. As with Albert Marshall's family some thousands of kilometres away, religion was also important to the Wu family. Matthew Wu was carried by his grandmother to Mass every morning until he was six years old. Up until about 1962, Matthew and other members of his family were able to practise their religion freely, but after this he 'did not go to church but we prayed together and held Mass secretly at home with close relatives and friends'. Unlike Peter Wu's betrothal to his stepsister some forty years before, the younger Wu was introduced to Francis Wu,

then Francis Ho, by a priest who was a friend of his father. After about a year's acquaintance, Matthew and Francis were married. He was twenty-six and she was twenty-three. The couple 'got married at home because at the time we were not allowed to take our marriage sacrament in the church, so we invited the priest to come to our home to do the service for us'.

While his father 'was away' for many years, Matthew Wu continued to practise as a Catholic. However, because he was educated under the communist regime this affected his values. Matthew had very little contact with his father, Peter, over the years that the older Wu was in the labour camp. Consequently, it was difficult for Matthew to approach his religion in the same way that his father had practised it throughout his life. 'My father had been unable to pass on his values to us . . . He was only allowed to visit us several times within these years. My mother did not understand the catechism very well, so she did not teach us the Catholic values. After my father was released from jail he helped us to brush up on our catechism. By the time he came home I had already started working.'

On taking up the position in the jewellery factory, it seemed that Jane Marshall's formal education had come to an end. But it was through her passion for acting that her life was to become interwoven with the larger cultural changes occurring in Malta in the 1960s and 1970s. About the time that Jane had begun to work at the jewellery factory, Albert Marshall was already working hard in theatre. At this time, Albert was keen to oppose foreign domination of Malta's cultural life. 'In Malta the arts were dominated by a colonial mentality bestowed on the people by cultural colonialism.' For Albert Marshall and his friends, the task was now one of cultural change: 'We wanted a literary revolution by Maltese writers and intellectuals'.

It was in this attempt to give a voice to Maltese artistic life that Jane and Albert's lives and careers were to interconnect. Jane's career direction took a dramatic turn during this time, even though she 'didn't think that she was making a big contribution to this movement'. Nevertheless, when she was about sixteen, Jane was given a non-speaking part in the play *Oedipus Rex* which Albert was directing. Looking for a person who could fill a certain part in his play, Albert mentioned to Jane's sister, a close collaborator of Albert's at the time, that he was having difficulty finding someone who could fill such a role. Jane was recommended for the part by her sister, and, not long after, found herself auditioning, successfully, for the play. The girl on the roof was now destined to perform to a larger audience. In leaving Malta for England to work in the theatre, Albert and Jane Marshall believed that 'it was only possible to succeed in Malta in this field if one had had the experience of having worked in London's west theatre scene'. Having experienced a 'nomadic life' as a child in Malta, this was the first time that Albert had been outside his country of birth. For Jane, this opportunity moved her along a life path from which there would be no turning back.

## **Thinking about Shifting Again**

It was with a view to improving their children's educational opportunities that Li Li Sheng and Zhu Sheng decided to make the four-day journey from Xinjiang to Beijing from which, taking their leave from China, they would embark for a distant country of which they knew very little. While Li Li and Zhu had never migrated before, even within the borders of China, the memory of migration was one which formed part of their



stories. This is because their respective families had in the past come from other places to live in Xinjiang, and could each recall and relate something of these journeys. Albert Marshall's story is similarly one in which the memory of migration is central. After all, his second name was brought to Malta by his grandfather from England. His personal experiences of shifting within Malta as a young child also shaped his idea of himself as the 'migrant'. Besides, by the time Albert and Jane decided to move to Australia they had already lived in England for a number of years.

The decision to leave Malta in January 1981 was prompted by a growing dissatisfaction with working conditions in that country. Albert, in particular, was feeling that he could no longer practise his art as director in the area of television the way he had always wished: 'Eventually there was point where I said, "I have to give this up", and tapping into my experience of being a nomad as a child, I said, "Off we go. We have to get out of this place." Jane said to me, "Are you sure about this?" She said, "If you are going, I'm coming with you. Where are you going?" '. Canada seemed the most likely prospect for migration as Albert and Jane both had relatives in this country. But one of Albert's sisters, who was living in Australia, was keen for him to come there. She had even made contact with the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC), which had shown some interest in Albert doing some work for them, particularly since he was the inaugural principal of the National School of Drama in Malta. Having officially applied for migration to both Canada and Australia, the Marshalls waited for a response. They heard from the Australian Embassy first. The choice was made. Australia was their destination. Within three months of making the decision to migrate, Albert and Jane and their two children, Mark and Kristina, were embarking on a journey that would change their lives

forever. Up until now, Jane had given little thought to Australia: 'I remember when this actually happened, Albert used to say, "Oh, how about we go and live in Australia." He used to make a sort of joke about it. He wasn't really serious and I never took it seriously and I'm sorry about this, because I used to hate the sound of the word "Australia", because my picture of Australia was from some ex-migrants who, when they came back home, brought a very negative image of Maltese migrants'. Jane did not even realise that the temperature in Australia was going to be different from what it was when she left Malta: 'When we left Malta the temperature dropped down to four degrees. It was the middle of winter, and it was January '81 and it was bitterly cold. I remember I was wearing this very warm woollen dress and high tight boots. But I didn't even realise that these clothes would be unsuitable for the hot Australian summer in which we arrived. I didn't even think about changing my clothes until I got there'.

For Matthew and Francis Wu, the lack of religious freedom in China, as well as the prospect of better life opportunities in Australia, led to an interest in coming to Australia to study English. Matthew had heard a great deal about this country from his friends who had visited it in the recent past. He obtained a brochure from the Australian High Commission before making his final decision. In his first few months in Australia, Matthew felt very lonely as he 'missed friends and family'. Things were to improve later with the arrival of the rest of his family. Even though he felt isolated on arrival, Matthew found Australia to be 'a lovely place. It had a clean environment, the air was fresh. I could buy anything I liked as long as I had the money, whereas in Nanjing I needed to have a ticket to buy anything and I often needed to queue for more than half an hour'. Arriving in Australia with her spouse in the early 1990s, Francis felt more secure in

Australia than in China, but she also missed her family and friends: 'I still feel lonely because of the language and my other relatives are still in China'. Jose Terceros had also thought carefully about leaving his relatives. Jose worked hard in the trade unions in Bolivia to better the lives of others. Nevertheless, his desire to see 'a great distant land' seemed to haunt him: I thought Australia was a place that was still in the process of being populated. I did not know about the cities. I was very surprised when I arrived here'. Jose did not tell his family that he was going to Australia: 'I told my family that I was going to Peru because I thought they would think I was crazy'. It was only after he arrived in Australia in late 1973 that he let his family know that he was in this country. At first he thought that he would stay only a short time, the two years required for those who had obtained an assisted passage. 'My family also thought that I would be back in two years, but this was not to be the case.'

Li Li Sheng and her family 'knew absolutely nothing' about Australia. 'We had been told that capitalist societies were horrible [because] the landlords and the capitalists exploited the workers cruelly and beat them, so I was scared. I did not want to come [to Australia].'

Li Li was also 'scared of people with blue eyes and blonde hair'. However, Li Li's mother, Anna Yang, had told her that she had once spoken to people who had lived in Australia and they had said that it was 'a very good place.' In China Li Li's brothers were unemployed and, given this situation, she wondered about her children's future in Xinjiang. 'I finally decided to come, and my mother said, "If we go, we all go together".' Zhu Sheng was disappointed about the way people related to one another in China and thought that the opportunity to come to Australia offered the family the possibility of a better life. 'At the beginning of the 1980s, there were not many Chinese people who had

the opportunity to go abroad.' Zhu had heard that the few people who had gone from Xinjiang to Australia had written back to say 'that life was good there'. Unlike many others who eventually made the decision to leave their homes and come to Australia, Zhu knew something about this country because he 'had studied about it at school . . . Because I liked geography at school, I knew something about Australia. I looked forward to seeing the vast grasslands, the sheep, the cows . . . My grandmother had lived in the countryside. She had horses and I liked them very much. Now we had the opportunity to go, and as we were not well off in China, I thought to myself, both of us are hard-working people, we might be better off in Australia. I thought let's try our luck, let's go!' Arriving in Australia in the early 1980s, Li Li was confused and unsure of her decision to leave her original home because she, 'missed China very much, especially in the first year. I really did want to go back'.

Both Albert and Jane Marshall were stunned on their arrival in Australia by the temperature of forty-two degrees, and by their first taste of Australian English, which, even though they 'were used to the worst swearing possible in Malta, found this version of English harsh and offensive'. Though coming from an education system in which English was the main language, the way in which Australians spoke, particularly other Maltese who had been here for years, was distasteful to them. For Albert, although he 'was not a snob, it was a big shock to hear a Maltese from a remote village [in Malta], and who had resided in Australia for the past twenty years, just literally guttering his English by always using four letter words'. Jane was similarly 'shocked because this kind of language was used every day in Australia'.

## Thinking about Being Somewhere Else Again

Matthew Wu had found that the quality of life in Australia was much better than that which he experienced in Nanjing. 'I can buy my own car and house here in Australia. My building skills have also been very useful to me. I have already learnt a lot because I have been working in five different places . . . The only similarity between the two places is that [both here and in Nanjing] I go to work early in the mornings and finish late at night. In Nanjing when we first arrived at the factory we read the newspaper, drank some coffee and discussed the weather before we started working. Usually, after work in the evenings we did not cook our own dinner. We would buy food from the shops to take home or we would go out with friends to eat. In Australia, we work non-stop from morning till night and after work we still have to cook our own dinner. After dinner we stay home and watch television here.'

Having arrived in Australia about a decade before, Zhu and Li Li Sheng found a house in one of the outer northern suburbs of Melbourne. While they lived close to the rest of the family, they had little contact with non-Chinese background people. For the next ten years life was occupied with shift-work, caring for their children and being with other members of their family. They even assisted Li Li's mother, Anna Yang, settle in Australia, first by all living in the same house and later by helping the parents purchase their own property. Life here was not as easy as Li Li had expected. She and her brothers had obtained work in factories. At her workplace, she did do some English training for about two hours a week, but only for a short period of time.

While Li Li was very close to her mother and brothers, and saw them regularly, like Francis Wu, she found her life outside the family a lonely one. 'In China, people have long lunch breaks so you can go home for lunch or even take a nap. You chat with your neighbour even when you go to throw out the garbage. But here, it is so quiet and lonely . . . In China, after dinner, you go out to walk around, go to the movies, or go and see friends and chat with each other. Here, after dinner you have nowhere to go.' Sometimes, Zhu felt the same as Li Li: 'We have been here for ten years, but our English is still not good. After I came to Australia I missed my family too. For more than thirty years I lived with them in the same place, but when I think about the situation [lack of work and poor standard of living] in China, I don't want to go back'. Li Li felt that she carried the burden in the family as she was often responsible for things such as community activities, children's education, homework, paying the bills—'All of these are left to me. So I really need to learn English'. Li Li and Zhu sometimes did 'things like Australians, such as celebrating Christmas or New Year'. They also placed a lot of emphasis on raising their children 'in the Chinese way'. Zhu Sheng was always telling his children that 'a Chinese should be like this or that'. In Australia Zhu maintained his devotion to family matters: 'We Chinese place great emphasis on the importance of family. Before children get married they are still too young to understand the world, so it is to their benefit to stay with their parents'. Li Li also believed that family members had a responsibility for one another. 'Here, as soon as children grow up, they will leave their parents to be independent. But in Chinese culture, as long as they are studying or single, they are still kids, they should stay home with their parents. Even after they get married, they cannot, and should not, abandon their parents. It is the children's responsibility to look after their parents once they are old.'

On his arrival in Australia, Albert Marshall quickly established links with the Victorian College of the Arts: 'We wanted to become successful . . . We came to Australia to be stars'. With the wealth of directing experience which he had gained in Malta and England, the opportunity to work at the College gave him a real chance of very quickly achieving the goals he had set for himself in migrating to Australia. This was certainly not an opportunity that people like John Vella had been given on his arrival in the country some decade or so before the Marshall's had arrived here. Unfortunately, despite the very real talent that Albert, the once would-be priest, had brought with him, this opportunity did not lead to anything substantial. 'When I was doing a production, I was given experienced graduates with whom to work. They were very mature and knew the theatre very well. I felt challenged.' In his trial role as director, Albert Marshall sat down with the head of department and decided that it would be best to direct a difficult play, *Dimetos*, written by the South African writer Athol Fugard. He 'attacked the play so savagely that I found myself experimenting with nudity. I shocked the College with my work . . . After three months the College authorities said, "This bastard is either a philistine or he simply doesn't understand what we're on about in Australia, or he is very relevant, let's use him" '. Yet, whatever the feelings of the people at the College, Albert decided that things were not working for him at this place: 'Yes it's my fault, I opted out'. But both Albert and Jane continued to wait for the telephone to ring offering them work in the theatre. However, as time passed, Albert took up a position in the post office as a mail officer, while Jane too worked at Australia Post as a public relations officer. Later Jane joined the Education Department as a teacher's aide which came to be her main form of work in Australia. Albert stayed for a number of years at Australia Post where he moved into communication work, but later took up tertiary studies on a part-

time basis. After post-graduate work he moved into a temporary university lecturing position in which he was able to use the experience he had gained in theatre and public communications.

The 'lack of opportunity' in the Australian television and theatre for Jane and Albert often led them to dream about what they might have become had they stayed in Malta. After all, before leaving Malta in the late 1970s, both Albert and Jane were public figures. While these dreams of home were sometimes frustrating, they also provided the stimulus for them, together with a number of other Maltese people, to establish a Maltese theatre group in Australia. Through this organisation Albert and Jane were able to perform just as they had in Malta in the 1960s and 1970s. As a founder of the group, Albert would direct and write, while Jane played a number of roles that resembled those that had made her well known on Maltese television. Albert was also able to present his poetry and play-writing in Maltese, sometimes in front of thousands of people from the Maltese community. The only difference was that in Malta the broad public would have been watching, while in Australia it was people from a community that after three generations were still sometimes dreaming of 'home'.

Leading a different sort of life surrounded by farm animals in the western suburbs of Melbourne, the Vella family began to go about their life independently in the new country. Joyce La Terra found herself in a strict household which her father ran 'as if he was still in Birkirkara'. This was a household where girls were treated differently to the boys. In the first years in Australia, Joyce and the other Vella children attended church every Sunday. But 'as time passed the expectations changed' with the formal religious



commitment becoming less serious for the younger members of the family than it might have been had they remained in Malta. Given the restrictions that were placed on Joyce by her parents, it was 'not surprising' that she would meet her future partner through family introductions. Later, when Joyce and Sam La Terra decided to marry, they began to plan a small ceremony. However, expectations were such in the two families that they ended up having the sort of wedding that they would have had if they were still in Malta, or Italy, or Egypt. 'We didn't want a big wedding but we had to have a traditional big wedding.' This was an interesting outcome because Joyce had always been an outspoken child in the Vella family and had often battled with her father over many of the traditional expectations that he had placed on her.

The young Joyce rejected much of what she saw as 'being Maltese', but in her early thirties, as her parents grew older and talked about Malta, Joyce began to think more about her Maltese heritage. 'They talked about their families, their brothers and sisters. They gave me a bit more information about Malta than they had ever done before.' However, even though this was so, it was when her sister 'reluctantly' returned to Malta that Joyce's desire to know more about her family's life in this country became even stronger. She often wondered how her family had lived over the generations in a house called 'Tajein' (the garden in Maltese). At this stage in her adult life, Joyce began to read about Malta and regularly kept contact with her sister who lived on the island of Gozo in the village of Nadur. 'I think that this connection has enhanced my self-esteem. You know who you are and you feel good about it.'

Drawing on his industrial experience in Bolivia, Jose Terceros obtained work in

factories. It was 1973 and Jose, who spoke very little English, was living in a boarding-house in one of the inner suburbs of Melbourne. At this time, he did not seem to worry about discrimination; but 'the price I paid for coming to Australia was to be lonely. I didn't like waking up by myself'. To deal with this loneliness Jose 'would go out all the time'. On one of these occasions, he met someone in the army who talked him into enlisting: 'I didn't think that I would be accepted but I was impressed by the Australian officer who interviewed me. I was surprised that I was accepted. The best experiences I had in Australia were in the army'. Unlike Albert Marshall who found that he could not establish rapport with the artistic community in Australia, Jose felt 'settled' in the four years he spent in the army. It was in this organisation that he 'came to know what it was to be an "Australian"', such as 'being fair'. Even so, Jose's inability to control his fighting presented some problems for him. On one occasion, he was standing in a hotel and the person next to him said, 'Why don't you go back to where you came from'. Jose asked, 'And where's that?' The reply was 'Vietnam': 'I was nearly discharged but they stuck by me.'

After four years in the army, Jose was still confused about whether to stay in Australia or return to Bolivia. 'I was confused as I now felt that the army was not for me. So I went back to Bolivia.' Jose dreamed of having a pig farm in his home town. He looked at some farms but realised that they were too far from the city. 'I realised that I didn't know much about pigs anyway.' Not sure about to which country he really belonged, Jose returned to Australia where he had already spent five more years than he 'had originally intended to stay'. On his return he did 'the usual jobs that migrants do', but he had wanted to do more.

With no family ties in his new country, and being a good deal younger than people like John Vella when he settled in Australia, Jose enrolled in a course in agricultural studies in pursuit of his dream of becoming a farmer, a choice derived from his childhood experiences in rural Bolivia. He spent one year completing courses on animal husbandry, soils and pastures. He realised that his English was still not 'good enough' to further his prospects of work in Australia so with a view to improving his English, he enrolled in a local school in English and biology to complete his secondary education. It was the mid-1980s, and instead of completing his agricultural studies, Jose Terceros, now in his early thirties, began a Bachelor of Arts course in multicultural studies at one of the tertiary institutions in Melbourne. By this time, he was married with two children. He had met Helena Terceros and saw his 'origins very differently'. The idea of returning to Bolivia had now begun to fade. Jose started work as a migrant liaison officer in the trade union movement. This work reminded him of his early working days when he was organising the weavers in Bolivia. Later, he moved from this position to that of an 'ethnic liaison officer' in a local government office. In Australia, Francis Wu, continued to see herself as Chinese. Limited English, as well as her experience of racism in the workplace, made her feel that she was not really a citizen of this country. Together with her spouse Matthew, Francis also attended the Chinese Catholic Church which made her feel better about the chances of maintaining her religious faith: 'Here in Australia I can go to any church I like with my family. Even until recently, we could not go to church openly in Nanjing'.

## **Chapter Five**

### **‘I Just Came on a Trip with My Parents’**

#### **Reflecting on Beginnings Once More**

Mark Marshall was born on 12 January, 1973 in a town called Guadamanga in Malta. This was a town near where his mother, Jane, grew up in Sliema. Kristina, Mark’s sister, was born in the same town as her brother just a few years later in 1976. As a child, Mark always enjoyed visiting Tonina Micallef, his maternal grandmother, who ‘spent most of her time at home’. Vincent, his maternal grandfather, was a pensioner but had several odd jobs and was still actively employed when Mark left Malta: ‘I know that he was a police officer and a security guard. He was always doing something to do with law and order. Also, he was always fishing’. Mark Marshall also liked visiting his other grandfather, John Marshall, who was a radio recording technician, and his grandmother, Mary Marshall, who looked a lot like his father, Albert. In those early years he particularly enjoyed hearing the stories that both his grandmothers used to tell him about working in the ‘victory’ kitchens during the war. Mark’s great-grandfather, he had been told, had moved from England to Malta and had married a Maltese person called Tona. However, he came to know the great-grandparents on his mother’s side better because he spent time with them as a child: ‘I was a small child but I remember them. I must have been about five or six but I recall my great-grandfather’s funeral’. Kristina was only four when she left Malta in the early 1980s; and before that, she spent much of her early childhood at the seaside.

In Mark's early years, the Marshalls lived at the bottom floor of a block of flats in Guadamanja. When he was two or three years old, Mark was constantly surrounded by many uncles and aunts as well as his grandparents, who were always 'teaching him about life . . . They're probably the memories I treasure most . . .' As a child, the young Mark learnt to speak Maltese and English well. 'People used to say that I began to speak in other languages early.' Kristina Marshall spent many long hours in her maternal grandparents' house. As a young child she would climb the 'three steps that led into the sitting-room' of the house where her grandmother Tonina would sit and embroider. Here she could smell her grandmother's cooking, while her grandfather, Vincent, would sit at the table and prepare for his fishing excursions. After living in Australia for a few years Kristina Marshall returned to Malta for a visit and found the setting 'identical' to the one she had experienced growing up in that country. Because Mark was older he would enjoy going to the beach with his relatives: 'Yeah, I spent a great deal of time at the beach with my uncles and aunts and my grandfather fishing all the time . . . I loved it. I didn't want to be anywhere else'. When he returned home from these swimming and fishing trips Mark, now about five or six, was able to 'sit there and talk to them [relatives] about anything and they would talk to me, as well as take me around from place to place with them. They never shied away from helping me to know more about things . . . I remember, for instance, that uncle Mario would take me to climb a cliff, so that we could chip fossils out of the rocks'. Kristina also went for walks with her grandfather, Vincent, in her pusher. Sometimes her parents would take her for a walk along the seafront in Sliema from where you can still see the coast of Malta stretch around towards the capital, Valetta. But these events would only last until she was four years old when her parents decided leave Malta for Australia.

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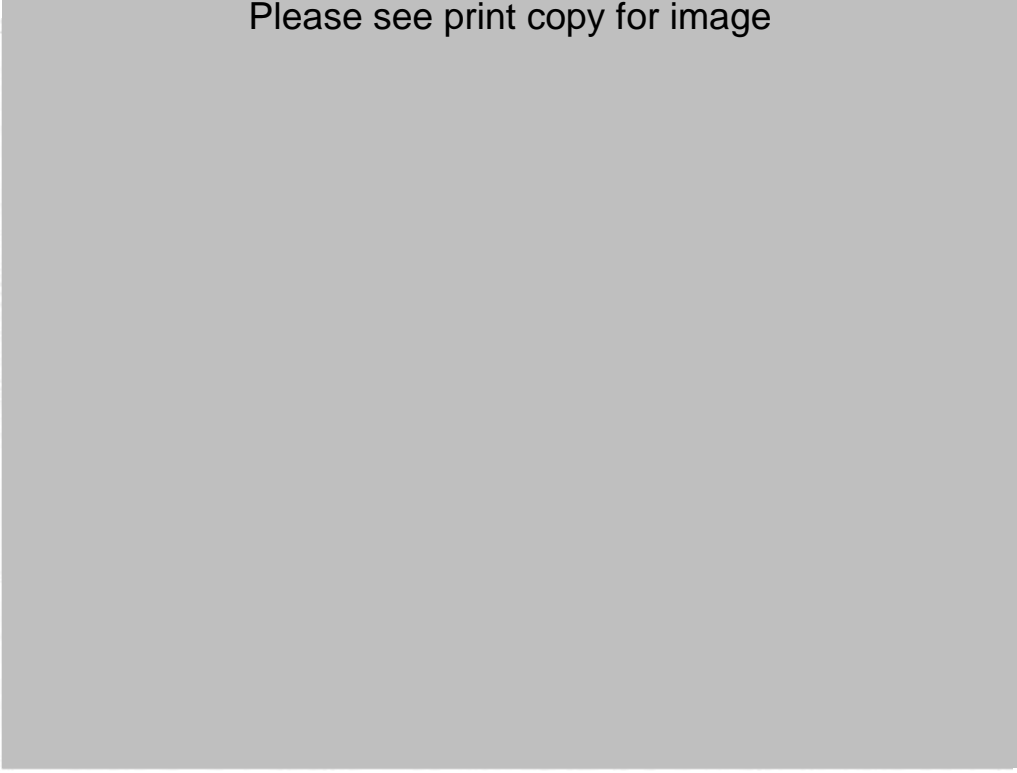


Figure 11. An image of Malta that Mark Marshall would have carried with him on his migration to Australia.

Growing up in Xinjiang just a couple of years later, Ivan Sheng would be taken to the local cinema two or three times a week. There he would see Chinese films and occasionally western films such as *Sea Wolves*, which had been translated into Chinese. 'There were many other Chinese movies that I saw but I can't remember their names.' The young Ivan also enjoyed Chinese New Year very much because he 'would light fire crackers and watch the performers'. On these occasions 'people were dressed up as mythical creatures. It was more like a theatrical parade with actors going down the street.' Mary, the daughter of Ming Zhang, was born as the last of nine children in Dili, East Timor in 1972. She lived in 'a place where there were lots of Chinese people'. While she sometimes played with local Timorese children, much of her childhood was spent playing with her brothers and sisters or other Hakka-speaking children.

As Linda and Kevin La Terra grew up in the 1980s they heard stories of how their parents had lived very simple and sometimes materially difficult childhoods. Kevin knew that 'they just played with a pile of rocks . . . [Whereas] we have television and computers'. Linda also recognised that her mother's life had been a stricter one than hers. 'Mum's dad was very strict. Mum would ask him for a peanut and he would only give her a bit and she would be grateful for that bit.' As Linda was growing up she would also hear stories from her grandmother, Lily La Terra, about Egypt. She came to know that her grandmother and great-grandmother, Nellie Mizzi, had lived their early years in Egypt and that they had moved from Alexandria to Australia. Through the stories told to her by Lily, she imagined a place 'with lots of old houses with big gates'. At times, she pictured some of the people who lived in the neighbourhood in the Alexandria of the 1930s. Linda knew little about her paternal grandfather but came to know John Vella, her mother's father, very well.

Only slightly younger than Linda, growing up in the inner suburbs of Melbourne in the late 1980s and 1990s, Rosa Terceros used to enjoy listening to her father, Jose, telling her stories: 'My father told me lots of stories like the one about his mother cooking corn and how he used to plait his sister's hair. He told me about the river that was near his house where he grew up . . . Dad's got ponchos and other things from Bolivia'. These stories and artefacts from Jose Terceros' earlier life ensured that South America was an important place for Rosa. It was a place that she often dreamt that she would one day visit. While Rosa's knowledge of Bolivia came from stories, music, family pictures and wall-hangings, she would also hear about this country occasionally as she watched television. 'I have always been excited when I see shows which tell us about South America.' However, while Rosa was also interested in her mother's history, she did not know much about Poland as her 'mother lived most of her life in England'. She knew that her maternal grandparents who had left Poland for England had 'lived through the war and had been treated badly by other people'. Rosa was always proud to have parents from different countries.

## **Reflecting on Moving Places Once More**

In the warmth of his grandparents' household, from which he could hear the sea, Mark could never have imagined that in the coming years he would leave Malta for a land of which he knew very little. Even in his early years he had heard of Australia, because when he visited his paternal grandparents, John and Mary Marshall, he would always ask about the 'strange artefacts hanging on the walls, such as pictures of kangaroos and



boomerangs, and all that kind of stuff'. At the age of seven, Mark was old enough to realise that his family was preparing for a long journey. Yet on that cold winter morning on which Mark Marshall and the family were packing all their belongings, he was not excited about leaving for Australia: 'I don't think I was excited because I wasn't happy leaving my uncles and aunts and grandparents . . . I remember my uncle Mario looking quite sad . . . "Don't worry", he said, "when you go outside to play in the dust in Australia, you'll find gold in the rolled up bottoms of your jeans" '. Even though young Mark was not looking forward to his future journey, he 'was interested in brushing dust off his pants and finding gold'. On landing in Australia, just like other members of the family Mark found it 'incredibly hot'. While Malta was often hot, 'it was forty degrees and there were flies everywhere'. Mark also noticed the difference in the way English was spoken in Australia. 'Well, when I first arrived, I found it quite strange the way these people spoke, but I guess all I was really trying to do was to adjust to it myself and speak that way because we were taught proper Queen's English.' Travelling in the car from the airport to the place where they were staying Mark 'got bored', as it seemed to take a long time to go places in Australia. 'I'd never been in a car for that long before.' Kristina, though younger, was also 'surprised by the extent to which people swore'. Kristina found that the landscape was very different because there was no beach just around the corner as in Malta.

Ivan Sheng left China at about the same age as Mark Marshall had left Malta. With his parents, Li Li and Zhu Sheng, Ivan travelled by train to Beijing and then to Hong Kong, where the family spent a number of days waiting for the flight that would take them to Australia. It was a difficult trip for Ivan Sheng, 'because in China there are a lot more

people than here'. Ivan also could not imagine the place to which he was travelling. 'I didn't think about Australia before I came here. I just came on a trip with my parents.'

Despite his initial concerns on arriving in Australia about the heat and long distances between places, Mark Marshall found the country very interesting. In Malta his extended family had provided him with a great deal of attention and support in his early years, whereas in Australia, despite the fact that his aunt was very supportive, 'it wasn't nearly the same living here'. But Australia was new and exciting, and remained so for Mark even into his early twenties. He found that he 'could always occupy' himself in his new home. By the time he was twenty-one, he had come to see Australia 'as a beautiful place and a real land of opportunity, in which, if you knuckle down, and no matter what nationality you are, you have a chance of success.'

## **Reflecting on Schooling Once More**

At seven years of age, Mary Zhang would walk down dirt roads to the local school in a part of Dili where large numbers of Chinese-speaking people lived. But this was the time of the Indonesian occupation and, on starting school, she found herself having to speak Indonesian rather than Hakka or Timorese. Mary felt 'all right at school', though she would often get into trouble for speaking Hakka to her friends. At age twelve she left school and began work with her father, Ming, who operated a small business manufacturing metal items and working as a Chinese herbalist. While the formal aspects of Mary's schooling were interrupted at this early stage of her life, she continued her

education with her father by listening to the many stories he told: 'The story of the dragon was the one I remember the best. My father was always talking about China as I worked with him in our business'. But Ming also taught her more than these stories. Sitting alongside him as he made utensils or saw a patient, Mary would listen attentively to the stories of illness and healing. Later, when she settled in Australia, supported by her older brothers and sisters, she returned to school to complete the years of secondary school which she had missed in Timor.

Mark Marshall had only attended a few years of primary school in Malta before leaving for Australia. This school was 'more towards the well-off type of school and was located in historic buildings'. It was well attended and was very strict. Everyone feared the teachers and, just as with his parents and his grandparents, Mark's lessons were in English, while, unlike his relatives, communication with other students tended to be in Maltese. His mother, Jane, was punished for speaking Maltese when she was at school, but it was now the late 1970s, and Mark and his friends were not similarly treated for speaking Maltese. Living in his maternal grandparents' house together with his aunts and uncles, Mark felt that he was expected to do well at school. This was because, for instance, one of his 'uncles spoke five languages and had a number of degrees, while others had completed teaching qualifications . . . These were all my mother's brothers and sisters, whereas in my father's family there's nowhere near the [same level of] education'. When Mark enrolled in grade three in an Australian school, he found that he had already done the work in Malta. 'I had just started grade three in Malta but here they put me in grade four.' Even though all the schools that Mark attended in Australia 'were middle-of-the-road schools', he found that his education in this country was 'more

flexible, more modern, no more corporal punishment'. Living in Australia gave him an understanding of 'what it meant to be successful'. After completing his secondary education in a local private Catholic school, Mark went on to do a degree in electronic engineering at an established tertiary institution. Sometimes, like his parents, he wondered how life might have been different had he stayed in Malta. He did not think that he had 'dropped back in Australia', but he often imagined that 'life would be slightly better' if he had remained in the original home.

Kristina Marshall attended three primary schools while her family settled in Australia. She had very little difficulty making friends at school, 'though some of my friends used to tease me about the lunch I would bring. This is because some of the Australian kids didn't know what the traditional Maltese lunch was like'. At school, Kristina 'did not like sport [but] enjoyed writing very much'. Albert provided his daughter with a great deal of assistance with her school work, which also helped her to enjoy school. Just as her mother had done three decades before in Malta, Kristina attended an all-girls' school that was run by nuns. She did well academically and 'never got into trouble'. After completing her secondary education, she entered the same university as her brother. Her interest in writing, obviously influenced by her parents, led her to complete an arts degree, with a major focus on literature. Not long after entering university, Kristina had already become a director of a magazine that was publishing the works of a theatre group with which she was involved. At the age of eighteen and living in Australia in the mid-1990s, she seemed to be sure of where she was going with her studies and future work. 'In Malta I used to go and see my mother act and then soon after I came to Australia, I think I was only six, I acted in an Australian movie called *Next of Kin*. It was a flashback

of another role . . . It's always been in me, so that's why I always thought I would get into the performing arts, but now I've sort of followed in my dad's footsteps, going into directing, producing and writing, like he does.'

Like Kristina Marshall, Linda La Terra enjoyed her primary school education. Entering secondary school in 1993, Linda 'was good in all subjects' but particularly liked humanities because 'you get to read and write essays . . .' Kevin La Terra also enjoyed school but at the upper levels of his primary education had already started to show an interest in working with wood, as had his father in his work as a builder. Linda was aware that her parents had both left school at an early age, but in contrast to Joyce or Sam La Terra, at the age of fourteen, Linda already had ambitions 'to do year twelve and to have a break and then go to university'. However, at the lower levels of secondary school she saw her chances as being only 'average; as I am only doing OK'. Out of school, Linda mixed with 'everybody' not just people of Maltese background. 'We go to the pictures and everything. One of my friends comes from Chile.' As with her father, despite the fact that Linda was born in Australia, 'everybody calls me "a wog", even though half the school is Maltese . . . This is said in a friendly way'. Some time later when she finished year nine, Linda decided that she wanted to leave school and take up a hairdressing apprenticeship. Her mother, Joyce La Terra, expressed similar disappointment to that which her own father showed towards Joyce's decision many years before, when as a young girl she came home from school and told him that she did not want to continue with an education—'This is not a good idea'. But as with her mother, Linda's decision was made.

Ivan Sheng attended school in Xinjiang until he was in grade two. On arriving in Australia he found himself in grade three where the teacher 'was good to him because I didn't speak any English at all'. From year seven onwards, Ivan's English improved greatly and he took up reading various books on science and history, as well as recreational works. At school Ivan was very interested in the sciences, particularly physics, and intended going to university, thereby fulfilling the aspirations of his parents, Zhu and Li Li. 'My parents want me to go to university. It would be a disgrace if I did not go.' While Ivan was interested in science, he achieved better results in the humanities. Nevertheless, he was very aware that to get into university was going to be a difficult task, although his parents had told him that it would be even more difficult had he remained in China.

As with Linda La Terra, at school Rosa Terceros made many friends from many different backgrounds: 'They are Scottish, Italian, Filipino, Filo girls'. Now in the middle of secondary school, she began to think more seriously about what she would do when she left. Like her father, she thought that she 'would like to join the army or be a pilot. Maybe, if I do well in Japanese, I might go to Queensland to find work in tourism'. However, as she progressed through school the idea of being a pilot began to fade, 'because everyone says that I have to do really well'. At seven years of age Anne Wu did not have any set idea of what she wanted to do later in her life. She was happy to go to school and be picked up by her grandfather, Peter Wu, every day.

It was in Timor that Mary Zhang's working life began to form into something more than just a wish. Ever since she was young, Mary would assist her father with his patients.

She would listen to their stories of illness and also watch as her father looked at the patients' tongues or hands or feet or even their ears. As Mary had left school at a very early age in Timor her life chances did not look promising. But her father's interest in teaching her traditional Chinese medicine as she helped him in a full-time capacity with his work, gave her a pathway that she would pursue formally in Australia in the 1990s. In Australia, Mary continued to listen to her father's teachings. The knowledge that her father had passed on to her about Chinese medicine now provided her with a base for entering the first formally recognised course in acupuncture in an Australian university. She would now be able one day to continue the work of her father, but with the formal recognition that Ming Zhang could never obtain in his lifetime.

## **Reflecting on Languages Once More**

Growing up in Timor in the early 1970s, Mary spoke to her father and brothers and sisters in Hakka. When she turned six, Ming Zhang enrolled his daughter in an 'unofficial school', so that she could formally learn Hakka—'Remember we were not allowed to speak our language at school in Timor.' By attending these classes for a number of years, Mary was able to read and write in the language in which her father read about traditional Chinese medicine. When she arrived in Australia aged fifteen, Mary could read and write Hakka fluently. When she later enrolled in tertiary studies in acupuncture, she found that she also needed to learn Mandarin because much of the material for the study of Chinese medicine was in this language. As the characters in Hakka were the same as those in Mandarin, she had little difficulty in reading or writing

Mandarin, but she did have to work hard with the pronunciation of words, as there were significant differences between the two languages in the way they were spoken. Over the next three years Mary successfully completed a number of units in Mandarin. While she found the learning of this language interesting, she had arrived in Australia knowing little English and had been obliged to make a considerable effort to attain a reasonable level of fluency in it. By the time she got to university her English was very good, but at the tertiary level she found that she still needed some help with the difficult medical and scientific terminology of English.

Attending a local school in Australia, Mark Marshall made many friends from southern Italian background. With these friends he spoke English, but he did have a Maltese friend with whom he had become 'very close' in the final years of school: 'I talk to him in Maltese and he talks to me in Maltese and we both love the language. To us it is important, it is hard to define why it is important but it is'. Because Mark had already begun school in Malta he had also had a good grasp of English. On the other hand, arriving in Australia at a younger age, his sister Kristina Marshall had not heard much English: 'I know this because my parents told me that they used to speak to me in Maltese and that I used to speak Maltese fluently. I didn't speak English as well, so I think that we used to speak to each other in Maltese'. As with other members of her family, Kristina also found a change in 'the style, the words they used' to speak English in Australia. Even though at twenty-one years of age Mark had now spent the greater part of his life in Australia, he was still interested in such things as Maltese music, 'not from the music appreciation point of view, but because it does help to preserve Maltese language and promote Maltese culture in general [in Australia] . . . So that's why I'm



interested in it. I look at it as a positive thing when my dad and his friends bring out a tape of music'. At times, Albert gave Mark newspaper cuttings from the *Maltese Herald*, the paper for the Maltese community in Australia, but Mark 'was not interested in reading these but never really knew why'. This lack of interest in the articles did not reflect his attitude to the Maltese language, because 'I like it, I don't want to lose it, but then again, I don't study it, I guess, because it's not useful from the point of view of the short-term goal which is getting an engineering job. But you know, I would hate to lose it, because if ever I should go back to Malta, I want to be fluent. I want to be able to communicate with the people on their level'.

While Mark recognised that by keeping his Maltese he might one day be able to return to Malta, this was not the only reason that he continued to speak, at least sometimes, to his parents in Maltese. Mark often felt that as long as he lived, he wanted to have something that he 'could show that had made me . . . I guess, it's very hard to say, but I really don't want to lose it, you know . . .' As with his parents, Mark saw Maltese as being central to his sense of self. Even though he only used it with his parents, some relatives, and among friends, he felt that its real value lay in the fact that 'speaking two languages was something that stays with you forever'. Growing older, Mark often thought about how having two languages made him feel that he was really neither Australian or Maltese, but a product of his experiences in the two countries: 'It means that I have been brought up as a Maltese person. I've lived my formative and very important part of my life in Malta, so it would be silly of me to deny that, but yet I have lived another very important part of my life in Australia, and I guess that the end product, which is myself, is definitely Maltese-Australian, has influences from Malta'. Mark was

interested in seeing Maltese passed on to the next generation. Just like Mark, Kristina also saw Maltese as being important to the way she viewed herself. 'When relatives come here for [special] occasions, Maltese is always spoken. I'm glad that I can understand them and it's just another language that I understand so fluently.' This interest in Maltese was also reinforced by the fact that Kristina would listen to Maltese radio when her mother Jane had it turned on. Also, in the Marshall household, Kristina would often pick up a Maltese paper that was floating around although she 'wouldn't pick up a Maltese book', in spite of having learnt to write Maltese in order to keep in touch with her grandparents Vincent and Tonina, and other relatives still living in Malta.

As she grew up, Rosa Terceros became interested in learning Spanish. By time she was in the early years of secondary school, she was able to speak to friends in this language at functions of the Bolivian community, and to converse with her father in a limited way at home. In her household Chinese was the only language which Anne Wu heard. Nevertheless at school she seemed to be progressing quite well in the lower levels of primary school. As they got older, Linda and Kevin La Terra also became interested in their family's history. Linda wanted to 'know more about both Malta and Egypt'. At family functions Linda would hear Maltese spoken among the adults, though she understood only a few words. In her grandfather, John Vella's kitchen on his farm she would listen attentively when he, now approaching seventy, and her mother Joyce debated some family matter. Though many of her friends spoke Maltese at home, Linda spoke no Maltese at all: 'Sometimes they [grandparents] forget and speak to me in Maltese'. By the time Kevin was in the final years of primary school he became interested in learning Maltese. In the early years of secondary school, Linda developed

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Figure 12. Joyce, Linda and Kevin La Terra.

more of an interest in learning Italian, not because her family had a history in Italy, but because she thought Italian was 'easy' and because 'I want to go to Italy because they have good clothes'.

Ivan Sheng could not speak English when he arrived in Australia in the mid-1980s aged eight. As time went on his English improved, but he continued to study Chinese on Saturday mornings at the local Chinese community school. Ivan saw Chinese as 'important because I might go back to China to visit one day. I would like to see things that I saw when I was young such as Chinese New Year, my aunt and my other grandmother. I would also like to visit the mountains'. Ivan also felt that his Chinese might help him get employment later in life.

## **Reflecting on Cultural Life Once More**

Unlike his father at about the same age of twenty-one year Mark Marshall attended church on an irregular basis. This was also true of his sister Kristina and Kevin and Linda La Terra. In Australia, Mary Zhang still saw herself as drawing on both Catholicism and also Confucianism as she had done in Timor: 'I am a bit of both'. Nonetheless, in accordance with Confucian custom, pictures of her mother, despite the fact that she had been Catholic, were kept in a cupboard and brought out once a year for ceremonial purposes.

Neither Kristina nor Mark maintained strong links with the Maltese community through

things such as festas. Mark felt this was because their parents 'were not interested in this type of tradition, so there's not a great sense of Malta in that way'. What was a particular issue for Kristina was that in some ways her life seemed more controlled than what she imagined her mother's life to be in Malta at the same age. This was because in Malta, 'it's supposed to be a lot safer than here. Her parents would not have worried about her spending time out of the house'. Nevertheless, at nineteen years of age and living in Australia, Kristina had a great deal of 'freedom to speak up' about matters she thought were important. She often wondered whether her grandparents living in Malta in the 1930s and 1940s would have had the same opportunities: 'I don't know whether my grandparents at my age then would have felt this freedom.' Both Mark and Kristina enjoyed this part of their lives in Australia, but they always listened attentively when their parents reminisced about Malta generally, the current economic situation in that country, and what their father thought life was like in Malta now.

Although in China Ivan Sheng would go to the cinema a number of times each week, in Australia his family did not attend many social functions. Li Li and Zhu Sheng had little English, and were therefore restricted from many of the activities that they may have attended had they stayed in Xinjiang. This meant that Ivan's social activities remained more or less within a family setting. His friendships seemed confined to two or three English-speaking friends at school. While in Australia the Sheng parents had tried to raise their two boys with a knowledge of 'Chinese values', Ivan found in his adolescent years that he did not understand why Chinese families regarded age and wisdom as synonymous. 'Most Asians, especially Chinese and Japanese, have to respect their elders because they have life experience and wisdom. This sometimes gets a bit irritating

because some things [they say] just don't make sense.' Ivan came to see that his life in Australia was more comfortable than that which his parents had lived in Xinjiang. 'In China, when they were my age, they had to work doing many chores around the house. They would have to get water or wood. Here we have the advantage of ducted heating and water from taps.' At school in year seven, Rosa chose to do a project on Bolivia. Her image of that place, which she hoped one day to visit and which she often thought about because her grandmother still lives there, 'has dirt roads and houses made of mud . . . Someone is sitting on the door-step and a llama is walking down the road'. Even though she had lived all her life in Australia, at fourteen Rosa was still very interested in her parents' backgrounds as this helped her 'to think about her life in Australia'. When she had time she also read widely, particularly popular adolescent fiction. Like many other children her age, she liked 'techno music' but she was not interested in 'heavy metal'. Some nights she would sit reading on the couch while her father played his favourite Bolivian music. Like her father, Rosa was interested in sport, particularly rowing and running. She was considered to be 'an all-rounder'. Growing up in Australia, Rosa Terceros was 'just like any other girl my age. I don't see myself as different, just a normal person even though other people say you're this and you're that . . . I mix with a variety of friends. I have friends from all sorts of backgrounds'.

## **Chapter Six**

### **‘It is an Unattainable Dream to Go Back’**

For Ming Zhang, the living conditions in Australia are ‘the best’ that he has experienced, but when ‘you are talking about how to pass time, I think my homeland, China, is the best. This is because in my hometown people only speak one language . . .’ Ming had wanted all his children to be educated so that they could have a good life. Unfortunately, of his seven children, only one, Mary, completed secondary school and went on to university. The others ‘had missed out on their opportunities to study’ as they had come to Australia much later in their lives than had Ming Zhang’s youngest child. Ming’s knowledge of Chinese medicine was so important to him that he hoped that someone would help him bring to Australia the medicines that he had spent many years making. ‘I want some expert to analyse them because I believe that the medicines could help cure many diseases which cannot be cured by Western medicine.’ Ming had spent over thirty years working on his herbal medicine and did not want his efforts to be wasted. Since leaving China as a young boy, he had never forgotten his old village, as well as the time he spent there with his mother and his grandmother. Mary is pleased to be living in Australia: ‘It has given me the opportunity to formally study what my father began teaching me’. After graduating, Mary hopes to establish herself in her own practice as an acupuncturist and herbalist. She also likes living here because all her brothers and sisters are here too, away from the turmoil in East Timor. Each night Ming and Mary talk about Chinese medicine and their herb garden; as Ming, the herbalist, wants to share his

knowledge so that others might not experience the grief that he did some forty or so years before, when he lost his first child.

Living in Australia for just under a decade, Anna Yang does not have many expectations of her own children as 'they are already grown up and can't speak English. I only wish that my grandchildren will study hard, go to university and get some knowledge. I am sure that their life will be different from mine. We were born and grew up in a poor country. We went through many hardships. They were born at a good time and in a good country. They will never experience what we experienced. But when they grow up, I will tell them about our past so that they can understand how lucky they are'. Anna had very little memory of her life in the Soviet Union. 'I can't remember too much about Russia, I was too young. In China life there was not easy, too many political movements, one after another . . . I think Australia is my home.' Anna's daughter, Li Li, sees herself as being Chinese even after a decade of living in Australia, but this sometimes depends on the situation: 'Most of the time we regard ourselves as Chinese. If we watch television and see a Russian fighting an Australian, we hope that Australia will win. But if it is a Chinese with an Australian, we hope the Chinese will win. When Australia is in conflict with another country we certainly support Australia'. Unlike her mother, Anna, Li Li does not see Australia as offering her a 'better life' than China, but hopes that it will give her children a [good] future. 'Everything we do now is for our children. For them we are prepared to endure all hardship, so long as they can do well at school and have a better life than us. I hope that they will obtain a good understanding of the Australian lifestyle, the legal system, taxation system, so that they will not be the same as us, knowing nothing about these matters.' Zhu Sheng also expects his sons to complete a university



qualification and is prepared to support them if they want to study further: 'I don't want to see them work as labourers, just like us'. Ivan Sheng sees himself as Chinese-Australian and is interested in knowing about his past, even though he did not think that this interest would affect his chances of success in Australia. For Ivan success could be measured by both wealth and knowledge. At nineteen, Ivan managed to achieve his and his parents' wishes by gaining entry to a business studies course at a university.

Peter Wu believes that 'a good country should treat its people democratically. It should give its people freedom of speech, freedom of religion. I am very happy in Australia. At least Australia has freedom of religion'. Even though he intends to stay in this country, Peter still sees himself as Chinese because, 'I came from China'. However, every day he takes his granddaughter, Anne, to the local Catholic school where he makes gestures with his hands to communicate with the nuns and priests. He hopes that he 'can live in Australia for the rest of my [his] life'. Peter's son Matthew recognises that Australia 'is a vast island with rich resources, which has a lot of potential to develop into a better country than it is already now'. Matthew does not see his future as being linked with China. After all, he wants one day to operate his 'own business and to be a boss so that I no longer have to work for others'. While Peter Wu has come to see himself as an 'Australian-Chinese', his daughter-in-law, Francis Wu, continues to see herself as Chinese. Limited English, as well as her experience of racism in the workplace, makes her feel that she is not really a citizen of this country. Francis wishes that 'we could all be treated equally'.

In her late eighties, Nellie Mizzi still feels that her home is primarily in Alexandria, in

Egypt. She realises that because of the social and political upheavals of the 1950s in that country, she 'lost it all. No friends, nothing. Some went to Italy, some to Malta. Here is where I belong. I am working day by day to die here . . . As a life, I like it better [here]. In the end it was not good for us in Alexandria'. In Australia, Nellie was able to work and to pay her own way. In her efforts to send her family to this country without assisted passage, she had to borrow from friends. After a short time in Australia, Nellie was delighted to have enough money to repay the people who had lent her the fare for the family to leave Egypt. She was able to do this in front of those people who had opposed the loan and who had said that 'I wouldn't pay it back'. After living in Australia for a number of decades, Nellie Mizzi realises that it is in this country that she will finish her life. Even though she felt lonely here in her first years and found Australia 'too quiet', some forty or so years later she sees this country 'as having been home to all her family'.

Her daughter Lily La Terra also regards Australia as 'a good country'. Even though she 'only came here because we had to [leave Egypt]', she also regards this country as her home. Moreover she has no desire to visit Malta because 'we were never seen as Maltese by those who came to Egypt from Malta' though if she had the resources she would like to visit Egypt and Malta to see those things that she had heard about, but never had the opportunity to visit. 'If we had more jobs [for the young] Australia would be a good country. When I came here it was a very good country'. John Vella felt that he had made considerable sacrifices in coming to Australia, but in making this journey he hoped to improve the quality of life for his family. In the time he spent in Australia, he did everything possible to turn this wish into a reality, even to the point of not passing on his artistic knowledge to his children. 'I was scared to teach my children sculpture because

I thought that they would leave school.' As with many others who have made similar journeys John Vella sometimes imagines how different his and his family's life would have been had he remained permanently in Malta. 'If I had stayed in Malta I would have been an artist or a teacher of art. All the other students I studied with are now teachers [of art].' Despite these dreams of what might have been, he recognises that Australia has given his children 'a future . . . When I went back [to visit Malta] after thirty years, when I saw my sister and friends I felt sad, crook inside. These people had nothing like we have here . . . After thirty years this country has offered a future for my kids. This is why it is my country'. In the first few years after his arrival, he felt ambivalent about staying in Australia. His feelings 'changed like the weather'. Now, some decades later, his sense of home has settled: 'I am Maltese if someone asks, but I am really an Australian. My country did not give me or my family a future. My country is Malta but this country [Australia] has made my life better. Yes, this is my home. I'll die here. I love this country not for money but from the heart'.

Nellie's grandson and Lily's son, Sam La Terra, now refers to himself as 'Australian'. However, he also believes that this is not his real nationality, because 'deep down, I know I'm a "wog"'. Sometimes, I get the feeling that my workmates are not mucking around [when they call me "a wog"]'. I'm darker than what they are. I still feel that I am a "wog" because my father was Sicilian and my mother was Maltese . . . I reckon if you're born here you should be able to call yourself an Australian'. Regardless of his experiences of feeling like an outsider in a country in which he was born, Sam realises that his life has been a much easier one than his mother's. He also wants his children to have a better life than he has had. 'I've still got to work hard now that I'm getting older,

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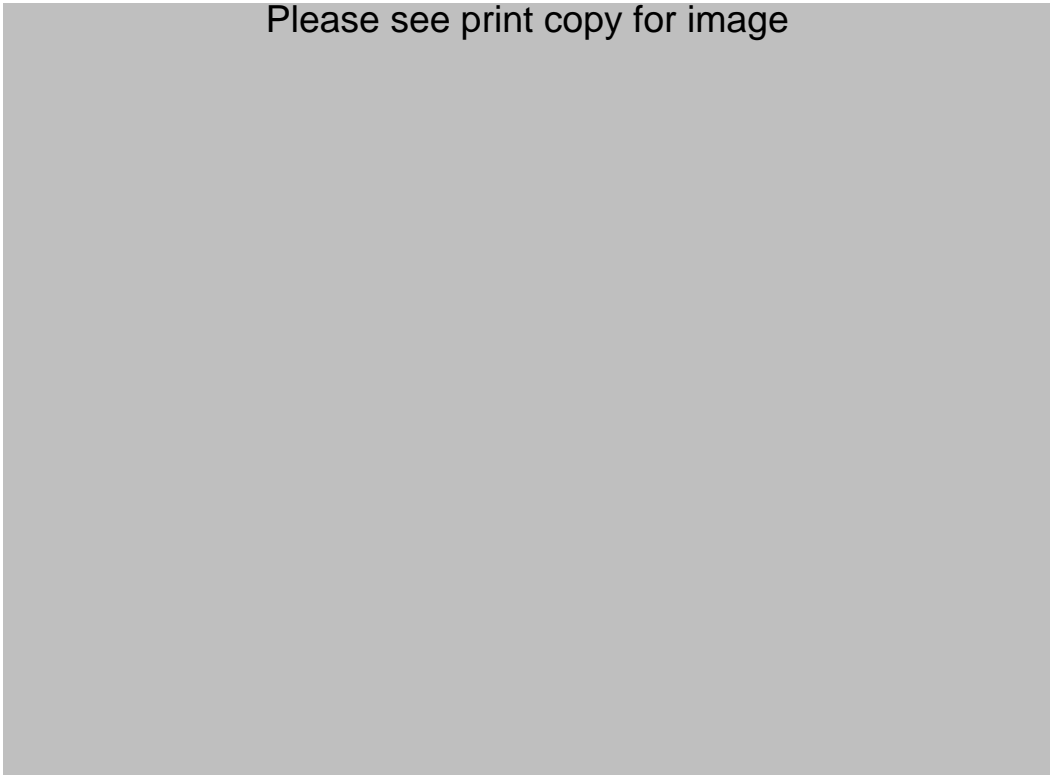


Figure 13. An image of home. A picture of John Vella in Malta before migration.

so I don't want them to work as hard. I want them to finish year twelve.' In his late thirties, Sam is still interested in getting to know his father, who left the family when Sam was only two. 'I met my real father at a cousin's wedding when I was fifteen. Every now and then I would get the urge to visit him. Last year I got the urge to visit him again. I just knocked on the door. He said, "Yeah". I said, "Don't you know who I am?" One day I was walking down the street and he saw me and pulled up and introduced me to my brother [his son from his later marriage after he left Lily]. He said, "This is your brother".'

Joyce La Terra has now successfully completed a degree at a local university and begun to think much more about her 'identity'. In her mid-thirties, she has been reading about Malta and is 'proud' that she has a connection with that country. Even though she left Malta at the age of two and has not visited it since, she regards herself as Maltese because, 'that's where my parents came from. That's my bloodline . . . I think that when my sister went back to Malta, it was then that I started thinking about it'. Even though she now sees herself as being 'culturally' Maltese, whereas she had always wanted to be 'Australian', Joyce still sees herself as 'a citizen of Australia . . . I have contributed in that I have paid my taxes and I have never been in trouble or anything like that. I feel that I am an Australian citizen, but culture-wise, as far as identity is concerned, I am more Maltese . . . [Being] a citizen means contributing economically and in other ways and you get something in return. I don't see it as the same as identity'. Joyce believes that 'you need to have some background about where you've come from to understand who you are today' but she feels that she 'belongs' in Australia. 'I would love to visit Malta but I have no allusions. This is my home, but Malta is still part of me . . . The

image is more beautiful than the reality.' Near the completion of this study Joyce La Terra visited Malta for the first time since she was two years old. She found it interesting to see the country she had dreamed about for so long but realised that she now 'belonged' in Australia. Linda and Kevin La Terra do not know much about Malta or Egypt, but are interested in these countries. For both, the place of birth is the real factor 'in making us who we are. It's where you're born. But if you migrated at an early age it is possible to change [your ethnic identity]'. Interestingly, Linda and Kevin regard their mother as Maltese, but not their cousins, who had been born in Australia, but who have shifted to Malta. They see these relatives as being 'Australian'. Kevin feels a stronger link with Malta than with Egypt as 'I hear it all the time, "Malta", "Malta", "Malta" '. For Linda, Malta 'is a place that is rocky and bare . . . I think that it would be more boring there because our [relatives] have sent us videos, [so I know what it is like in Malta]'.

Jose Terceros keeps his 'memories of home alive' by playing Bolivian music, by the daily sight of his mother's photograph sitting on the piano, his Bolivian wall hangings and the wooden carvings in his garden. 'I always had a dream of going back [to Bolivia].' As I was in the final stages of writing this piece Jose's mother passed away and he returned to Bolivia and spent some time with his brothers and their families. But this did not change his earlier thoughts when he said: 'Once I had my family and some standing in the community, I realised that it would be very difficult returning. This is my place, my adoptive country. When you come from a different country you have a dream that you might go back but not in the same way. You know I might spend my final days there'. Jose, now in his forties, would like to investigate his family history in Bolivia. 'I want to find out more about my family and pass that on to my children. I think that it is

important to find out more about your ancestors . . . In order to fulfil the dream of going back to Bolivia I would like to do something which would make a final bridge. That is, make links with my family . . . I would also like to improve myself. I would like to get better qualifications in Australia.' Having been born in Australia, Rosa Terceros sees this country as her home, but Bolivia, and to a lesser extent England and Poland, are of interest to her. In Australia she attends a range of Bolivian community activities but, while she does not mind being involved, she finds them 'a bit boring'. Rosa regards herself as being 'bits of everything, bits of my mum, bits of my dad, and bits of Australia'. She never imagines herself as living in another country, but in the future would like to live in a house close to her mother, father and brothers.

Jane Marshall identifies herself as being 'Maltese-Australian'. After all, her experience of migration placed her in situations that she would never have encountered had she stayed in Malta 'because Malta is so restricted . . . When we parted from Malta we were naive'. Albert Marshall feels that his 'identity has always been in the suitcase'. Even though he and Jane have done materially well in Australia and have been 'enriched' by the experience, Albert is 'busting with energy' to go and continue where he left off in Malta. Both Jane and Albert have always felt a lack of belonging in Australia. They have had a happy life here but have greatly missed Malta, not simply because the family was in Malta, but because of 'images' of home which never seemed to go away. These images derive from their perceptions of themselves as creative workers. In this role in Australia, Jane and Albert had continued to make a contribution to the arts. But they always felt that in this country they were on the fringe of the arts as they were working only in Maltese theatre. It was this lack of opportunity to pursue their artistic life more broadly

that prompted the desire to return home. 'If we are in a theatrical environment in Australia, we feel that we have to justify our theatrical existence because we don't belong to the mainstream. If Jane was at an audition right now, she would be typecast. She'd become part of the run-of-the mill commercial theatre, you know. If she wanted to do radio drama she would be typecast too. But that is not what Jane is interested in . . . If we really want to be happy in the twenty or thirty years remaining in life that we can potentially enjoy, we feel that we can be happier if we go back and stay in Malta.' While Jane also feels this lack of affinity, particularly as it relates to her identity as an actor, she holds a more ambivalent view than Albert of returning: 'If I was on my own, if I didn't have children, that's OK. But even though we would be living in Malta doing what we want to do, the children will not be living with us. Although they would love to visit Malta, I don't think that we would be totally happy [without them]'. Whatever their differences about the idea of returning to Malta, Albert and Jane acknowledge that they would not be going back as the same people or to the same situation that they left in the early 1980s. Albert feels that '[o]nce you are enjoying or condemned to the status of migrant, you are a lost child. So it is an unattainable dream to go back and be happy back home because you will always take part of Australia going back'.

Like his parents, Mark Marshall also recognises that Malta is still part of him. But he knows that he does not need to 'see any loyalty' to either Malta or Australia. While he intends to visit Malta in the future, his decision about whether he will return to the original home remains an open question. Mark has already visited Malta as a young adult and found the country 'astoundingly familiar'. On this visit he 'loved every minute of it and was very sad when leaving it again'. Ten years on from the last visit, Mark is now



preparing for another trip in the coming year. He is going to visit a family that he has missed: 'I expect to share many memories and lots of rebonding and things like that'. Mark is also interested in looking at the economic situation in Malta, believing that this is now better than in Australia. But for Mark, his future destinations could be anywhere. In his case it is necessary to 'remember the open-mindedness'. Kristina Marshall is more analytical about her relationship with Malta: 'I always have a dream in which I am going back to Malta. I haven't been there since 1985, although I'd love to go back and see what it's like. If I absolutely adore it, I will definitely consider moving there. I miss my family [in Malta] very much; that's why it's a dream. I haven't seen them in a long time.' These dreams revolve around family members. They were not about Malta as such, but 'my mum's side of the family were there and I just really miss them'. This dream of returning led to Kristina writing to her cousin in Malta who was about the same age. 'I decided to write [to him] because at that stage I was having these dreams, so I just picked up the pen and wrote to him, and he wrote back . . .' Even though these thoughts of returning are powerful, Kristina is not 'nostalgic' for Malta, as she does not want to go and live there. 'It's just at those times that I miss my family very much, I do feel sad, and I just want to get on a plane and go and see them, but I feel that has a great deal to do with the actual people, not Malta so much.' Nevertheless, Kristina maintains her dual citizenship. While she lived 'the Australian way', she was not always viewed as being an Australian: 'If I was to say that I'm Australian, people look at me and say, "But you look European", and then I have to explain, "Yes, my mother is Maltese and so is my father and I was born in Malta," and then they say, "So you're Maltese?"'

While Albert Marshall saw the 'migrant' as a 'lost child' and believed that it was never

possible to return to the 'same place' that a person left as a 'migrant', he was offered a position as a manager of a radio station in Malta and a lecturer at the University of Malta. While he and Jane realised that this would create difficulties for their family life, the desire to return to their creative life in the original home was too strong. Not knowing whether the decision was the right or wrong one, after more than a decade in Australia Jane and Albert packed their belongings and returned to live in Malta. Mark and Kristina stayed in Australia. Albert is now a general manager in Malta's Public Broadcasting Services while Jane is slowly re-entering Malta's television and theatre scene. Also, Albert has an official position keeping open links between the University of Malta and a university in Australia. Albert recently returned to Australia for a short time to attend Mark Marshall's wedding.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **‘Not Simply “Journeys of the Mind” ’**

At the outset, I made it clear that I regarded this account as being as much about me, the ‘Autobiographical’, I and my thoughts on ethnicities, as it is about the individuals and families whose narratives are retold here. More likely, it is really about our interactions. Clearly, there was a range of theoretical starting points for my work, which I discussed in the opening chapters. Having engaged with the narratives of others through my ‘editorship’ of the ‘life stories’, I now return to my own narrative, my own story, and my thinking about our identifications around ethnicities.

In listening to and working with the life stories, as with Butler (1990; see also Butler 1997a) on the issue of gender identities, I wanted to consider the way ethnicities are ‘not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts’ (3). However, whereas Butler explores the process of identification using complicated psychoanalytic insights, I wanted to explore the same matter from the ground up; from the stories that people tell about themselves. As such I was not interested in inner motives, nor the relationship between the unconscious and the representations that appear in the consciousness of the story tellers, except perhaps my own. Rather I am concerned with seeing how ethnicity as a social category is worked with by the very people who are designated ‘ethnic’ or ‘ethnic minority’ or ‘immigrant’, and how I read, so to speak, these representations. My interactions with the different narrators highlight

the fact that ethnicities cannot be reduced to a simple set of categories. The narratives in this text show that there is no normative ethnicities as such. In some cases, for example John Vella, Ming Zhang, Albert Marshall, Jane Marshall and Jose Terceros, the ethnicities that were being expressed took as their point of reference memories of the original home. In Albert Marshall's story for instance Malta was always present, as it was with Jane Marshall's narrative. Other performances, such as those of Ming Zhang and Lily La Terra, also saw the original home as a focal point for the narrating of the self, but did so via another place or set of memories. Despite having left China at the age of eleven and not having returned until he was well into his seventies, Ming Zhang told his story in such a way that China and being Chinese seemed to always figure as a form of home, but the narrative was constructed through the prism of his life in Timor. In the case of Lily La Terra, Malta and being Maltese were also key points of reference in her story telling, even though Lily had never seen Malta. Her image of it was constructed from the vantage point of her experiences in Alexandria and later Australia.

Differences in the way in which the original homeland was incorporated into the narratives were also evident among some of the stories told by younger members of the families. For instance, a Malta in which images of the sea were dominant figured strongly in Mark Marshall's sense of self. Kristina Marshall also dreamt of Malta but it was the memories of close relatives in the original home that circumscribed her identification with Malta. For Ivan Sheng, China as the original home provided a pivotal point in his life story, but it did not seem to play as strong a role in his identifications as the original home did for say Mark and Kristina. On the other hand, in Kevin and Linda La Terra's stories Malta or Alexandria were points of interest but were not key features

in their narratives. 'Malta', 'Malta', 'Malta' was something which was etched on their minds and something in which they were interested, but was not present in much of the stories they told about themselves, though Linda did comment on the fact that she was identified by others as being 'Maltese' [from Malta], mainly in a positive way (though at a later stage Linda experienced an explicit form of racism from a member of staff at a training college which she attended on leaving school).

From the way I heard the stories we can also see that dramatic differences in self identification can exist even in one family both within and across generations. For instance, Sam La Terra had little interest in Malta or Alexandria, whereas his partner Joyce La Terra and Sam's mother, Lily La Terra, both maintained a strong identification with the original home, though they did so in different ways. Consequently, the story tellers' relationships with the original homes are not open to easy interpretation, because there were a variety of ways in which the participants expressed their connections with another place. It may well be, as Stuart Hall informs us, that our 'cinematic narratives' arise from an 'endless desire to return to "lost origins", to be again with the mother, to go back to the beginning' (1990: 236), but this was not the case in all the stories. For some such as Albert and Jane Marshall the desire to return was always present, while in other stories, like Sam La Terra's it never existed. In others, as with Joyce La Terra's narrative, there was a realisation that it was just a dream, a moment of nostalgia. For people such as Li Li Sheng the desire to return was repressed in order to obtain some future gain, an education for her sons.

Thinking about the stories in this text, it is also obvious that there was a multiplicity of

levels at which I heard the stories. At one level, the accounts, as they are represented here, draw on what may be described as traditional models of self-telling. Despite the fact that I was interested to see how life stories might be told differently from different cultural perspectives, as stated, all the individuals concerned told their stories in a linear way, starting with their early years and moving through a sequence of events in some kind of notional order. This may have to some extent been a result of the way in which I established the conversations or it may have been due to the fact that all of us who took part in the research are in some way unable to detach ourselves from the narratives of modernity. More specifically, Nellie Mizzi expressed her life story in a chronological way, beginning her story with images from early years in Alexandria, then talking about her time bringing up children, later remembering the years in Australia. Jose Terceros also began his narration with details of his life in Bolivia, moved on to talking about his journey to Australia and then finished with what he would like to do in the future. His daughter Rosa told her story in a similar way, starting with growing up, family life, reflections on present-day concerns such as schooling and then considered future possibilities. Likewise, Anna Yang told her life story in a chronological way beginning with her reflections on her early years in the Soviet Union through to her current experiences in Australia. In thinking about these constructions I agree with Keya Ganguly (1992) when she suggests that 'recollections of the past serve as an active ideological terrain on which people represent themselves to themselves' (1992: 46). I also agree with Geertz that 'the "plain man" [and woman] (Geertz cited in Ganguly 1992: 46) devises his [her] own methods for contesting dominant meanings and logics of identification' (46). While it may be the case that the post-modern condition (Lyotard 1984) means that our identities are not stable and are fragmentary, my view of the

narratives in this text on ethnicities and identification suggest that at the level of everyday life people are using memory to place themselves in and respond to the dramatic changes in the world around them; in the act of telling the story they are bringing a coherent self, a set of stable identifications into existence. I felt that the narrations of the self in this text, even if they only partially revolve around ethnic affiliations, provide alternative identifications to those which attempt to position us as nothing more than a surface image or as Lyotard (Lyotard cited in Elliot 1996: 95) informs us as ' [a] self [which] does not amount to much . . . [and] is located at "nodal points" of specific communication circuits . . .' Moreover, while these identifications are in many senses fictions and are 'socially constituted in specifiable contexts' (Butler 1990: 10), I see them, including those that form around our ethnicities, as meaningful and substantive identifications, which enable individuals to negotiate the world around them with real effects outside the 'journeys of the mind'. In cutting up the stories in order to place common aspects in the different pieces next to one another, I realise that I ran the risk of giving the impression that our life-narratives can be simply manipulated by textual strategies. However, despite this intervention on my part, the tendency of the stories towards some form of order and coherence support the insights arising from Ganguly's research which suggests that the 'recollections have taken on a special import because they represent the only set of discursive understandings that can be appropriated and fixed: disambiguating the past permits people to make sense of the uncertainties in the present' (Ganguly 1992: 31). For John Vella, for instance, his life story provided a way of legitimising his decision to move to Australia, despite the fact that he had encountered major hardships in this process, while for Ming Zhang, his story provided a means of keeping the conversation about Chinese medicine alive in a place where he had

little contact with people outside his family.

Yet, despite this attempt to historicise their pasts, in many of the stories there is, operating simultaneously, what some theorists have described as 'different kinds of transformation, the complex "play of dependencies", links and redistributions . . . ' (Young 1991: 76). This is no more apparent than in the case of Ming Zhang, who kept newspaper cuttings from the country which he left as a young boy in the hope that he would one day return to the original home. The cuttings piled high signified a life-time of endless and circular desire to return to the village that he remembered so well. His study and practice of Chinese medicine ensured that he was always able to tell his story through his imagined relationship with China; by the desire to return to his early life with his mother and grandmother; to a place where others could talk to him about his knowledge of Chinese medicine. For Albert and Jane Marshall the idea of the 'creative life' was always central to their notions of selfhood. While migration had added something positive to the lives of each of these people and their families, their stories were characterised by a sense of frustration because each of these people had moved place at a crucial time in their creative careers, or not acquired certain skills when they should have, or had to work or perform in other capacities than the ones they would have wished for. In the case of Albert and Jane Marshall, their narratives at one level were dominated by the experiences of moving from one point to another, both in terms of time and place, in a single direction, but inside this reasonably stable story of the self was a recurring image of their lost artistic selves, which Albert and Jane felt could only be meaningfully regained in the original home, in and through the original language. Similarly, their children, Mark and Kristina returned time and again in their narrations to



recollections of family warmth, images of the sea and 'happy moments' in Malta. John Vella also told his story, because of his decision to come to Australia, through the prism of his self-image as lost artist, a passionate ambition unfulfilled. Like the house in which he now lives, where his carefully sculptured busts stare out from every corner, his life story is full of the same images. Likewise, while on the surface Peter Wu told his story in a traditional way, from early experiences through to the present, at another level his sense of self revolved around his religious faith. His religious identity, his Catholicism, was the core from which the story of all other aspects of his life were told. For this person in his seventies, it was the attachment to his memories of the stories that the Jesuit fathers had told him when he was a young boy that gave all parts of his life narrative a meaning and a direction. So, while a number of theorists have attempted to offer a less stable and non-linear way of thinking about how we become who we are by offering, instead, a 'differentiated analysis' (Young 1991), many of the people who took part in this work moved back and forth between different levels in their stories; between linear narratives and 'clusters of transformations' in a two-way street.

While it may be that for some our 'cinematic narratives' arise from the desire to return to something past, and are somewhat 'imaginary' reconstructions, the stories in this text show that it is also true that the material conditions and experiences of everyday life largely determine the shape that we give the stories that we tell about ourselves. Even though John Vella tells his story seventy years on, and therefore the story can be described as a type of 'fiction', it is clear that his lived experience of losing a career and artistic opportunities in Malta, as well as spending many years in front of the iron furnace, powerfully shaped his narrative as he told it in his early seventies. These stories

or 'performances' were not free floating, but corresponded to memories of changes in everyday life, to matters arising in the 'real world' in the past. For instance, in telling his life story from his current vantage point, John Vella told of how when he was content with his life or his work in Australia, as he was at the time of our meeting, he defined himself as an 'Australian'. At other times when he recalled that life had seemed hard in his new country, such as when he faced the heat of the iron furnace on a daily basis, Malta or his art, being 'Maltese', or being an artist, became attached to those moments in his story-telling. Likewise, in the case of Zhu and Li Li Sheng, and Lily La Terra, and a number of others whose stories are retold in this text, a central feature of their narratives was the hard working conditions which they endured in making their lives in a new land. It is from this perspective that we can see some major differences across the stories in the individuals' ability to construct the narratives in the way that they might have desired. For instance, though John Vella and Albert Marshall came from the same original home, and both worked in the creative sphere, they left at different points in time and occupied very different social positions in both countries. Consequently, while neither could ever fulfil their artistic aspirations in Australia, Albert's age, education and facility with English meant that he was able, to some extent, to recreate his relationships with the original home, and the new home, as well as his artistic self, in more satisfying ways than John Vella could ever imagine, even to the point where the former returned to Malta at a very senior level in the Maltese broadcasting community; thereby ensuring that Albert's narrative diverged even more from that of John's story. Unlike Albert, however much he wanted to return 'home', once having left Malta, John Vella, because of his material circumstances, had no choice but to remain in Australia, though by the end of our conversation he felt that he had made the right decision in this matter.

Similarly, in the cases of Li Li Sheng and Francis Wu, nostalgia for the original home and the original ethnicity sometimes were associated with memories of unhappy moments, such as when encountering isolation or racism, in everyday life in Australia. In contrast, Mark and Kristina Marshall were able to tell their life stories around the real possibilities that they could return to Malta and lead productive lives there or stay in Australia, or move between both. In this sense, because of their social position and parents' direct relationship with Malta, there were more options available for Mark and Kristina in constructing their connectedness with the original home, the new home, and the future, than there were for some of the others, even those of similar age such as Linda and Kevin La Terra, for whom a return to the original home of the family was not a real possibility. This difference in the power or desire to determine such things as the relationship with the original home or other identifications, or the stories we tell about ourselves, was also obvious in the way in which Ming Zhang could never fulfil his wish to return to China because in Timor he was never able to achieve a formal recognition of his knowledge as healer or the material well-being that would have made his return possible. In contrast, his daughter Mary, having studied formally in Chinese medicine in Australia was able to reconstruct, through a formal learning of Chinese medicine, a relationship with China which meant that she may well spend considerable periods of time in that country working and studying in the future. When John Vella narrated his self using images from the time he worked at the iron furnace or Sam La Terra spoke about his unhappiness at school or Jane Marshall remembered the pleasure of performing as a child on the rooftop in Malta, they were all recalling some event or moment outside of them but these events were interpreted in and through the discourses which were available to them at the time the stories were told to me. However, the social contexts in

which each of the narrators lived differed within and across the families, thereby setting the limits on the way in which the individuals were able to choose how they narrated the self or selves. In this sense, the 'lived reality', though it might be open to different interpretations, continued to inform the ways in which the various participants thought about their social selves; that is, the way in which they told the stories of their ethnicities and any other identifications to which they had become attached.

Here we get into a rather complex debate about the relationship between the material world and discursive constructions such as the idea of the self or identifications or ethnicities. It may well be the case as Butler (1990) informs us that identities are asserted through discourses which are 'historically specific organisations of language, . . . [which] present themselves in the plural, [are] coexisting within temporal frames, and [are always] instituting unpredictable and inadvertent converges from which specific modalities of discursive possibilities are engendered' (145). To put it more simply, Butler, as with Nicholas Rose (1996), sees our identities or identifications as nothing more than being constituted through very complex processes of discourse—'Indeed, to understand identity as a practice, and as a signifying practice, is to understand culturally intelligible subjects as the resulting effects of a rule bound discourse that inserts itself in the pervasive and mundane signifying acts of linguistic life' (1990: 145)—though, it must be conceded that Butler, unlike Rose, is suggesting that we have some agency in this process. However, while such views assist us in thinking beyond the explanations which represent our identifications as simply a reflection of our position in the material world or as a result of misrecognition or *méconnaissance* of such a position, I cannot help but agree with Watts, particularly when I consider the life narratives in this text,

when he suggests that an 'important point made by the post-empiricists is that the meaning of social power hinges on the power to mean' (1993/94:121). However, in thinking about the stories of the people in this text it is worth considering the view that 'there is a sense of something missing in much of the Foucauldian style of analysis which has something to do with the sense that discourses run themselves, are their own *deux ex machinas* and can therefore sustain a self-referencing set of explanations' (Watts 1993-94: 125). To put it another way theorists such as Rose dismiss the fact that in narrating the self we do relate to something that is outside of us, something that social theorists used to refer to as the 'real conditions of existence' or as a 'lived reality'. It may well be the case that our identifications, such as those to do with our ethnicities, may be described as fictions or more accurately as what Butler refers to '[a]s a shifting and contextual phenomenon . . . [which] does not denote a substantive being, but a relative point of convergence among culturally and historically specific sets of relations' (Butler 1990: 10). However, in considering the personal testimonies which I have retold, the point made by Stuart Hall seems relevant when he says that our narratives (of displacement) 'have certain conditions of existence, real histories in the contemporary world, which are not only exclusively psychological, not simply "journeys of the mind"' (Hall 1987: 45). As I have, for instance, commented, while Albert Marshall and John Vella both saw Malta as the original home, the differences in the level of education, occupational status, English and Maltese, among other things, meant that they had different relationships with the past and used different images and symbols to form a coherent self narrative. From listening to the many stories which I have retold in this text, I would suggest that it may well be the case that we need to think about the nature of identifications, as they revolve around our ethnicities, as being somewhere between

the idea that 'the truth is not out there, transcendent and elsewhere, but here in the activities and strivings of social life' (Morris 1997: 373) and the view that while 'reality is never as real as we have constructed it, it's not quite as unreal as we imagine it' (Hall cited by Grossberg 1996: 169).

Another important point that arises from a consideration of the narratives in this text relates to the way in which the individuals simultaneously juggled different identifications with one another. The idea that there was a repertoire of performances within each story may well be worth considering; or it may be possible to use the notion of 'ensemble' to talk about the ways in which ethnicities interact with other components involved in power relations such as class, race, gender, and so on. When we look at narratives of people such as Ming Zhang, Anna Yang, Lily La Terra, Jane Marshall, Mary Zhang, Ivan Sheng or any of the others who told their stories, it is clear that there are a number of voices operating within each story. In the case of Ming Zhang, for instance, the idea of being Chinese, or being a herbalist, or being a father, sometimes were juxtaposed with one another in his story, while at other moments, one of these images jostled with another for dominance in the narrative. Sometimes these identifications became fused such as his idea of 'Chineseness' and being a herbalist could at times not be easily separated. Similarly his daughter, Mary, sometimes used her Timorese-Chinese ethnicity as the pivotal theme of her narrative, at other times her status as practitioner of Chinese medicine became the central piece in the story. We can see the same process at work in John Vella's performance, in which the roles of artist, Maltese, Australian, and father, competed for space throughout his narration of the self. Likewise, Lily La Terra employed notions of mother, worker, business person, Maltese, single parent and so on

to express her self identity. In some instances, such as that of Sam La Terra or his children Linda and Kevin, ethnic identifications were used as a way of explaining what they were not rather than asserting a particular social position. Sam for instance, saw his Maltese background as largely irrelevant to his daily life, except for moments of racism, as did Linda and Kevin who seemed to be concerned with their current situations in Australia rather than their relationship with another place.

In thinking about how we might define the identifications of the story tellers with their ethnicities, it would seem that the use of the term hybrid, even though used in different ways by various theorists, is inadequate for describing the shifts that are constantly occurring in the production of the self. For example, Said's use of the term, which infers that people may have a foot in two different but clearly defined identities at the one time, is too rigid to account for the creative ways that people engage with the self, which often involves the simultaneous unravelling of a variety of threads, so that the narratives proceed at a number of different levels around a set of shifting representations. On the other hand, even though Bhabha's use of the notion of hybrid, because it is more fluid than Said's, does give us a way of thinking about how people negotiate ethnicities, it still conveys the idea that people from minority groups are always 'in-between', always in the 'third space', never fully one nor the other, thereby in effect placing their identities in a cultural limbo, simultaneously contesting and reinventing stable notions of identity. In contrast, from a reading of the personal testimonies presented here, I suggest that representations of the self are always in transit across the whole spectrum of experience, though they often find a location at which to settle for a moment. In many instances the teller of the story may well be 'in-between', being 'here' and 'there' at the same moment,

but at other times he or she firmly locates themselves within one of the images, such as being Maltese, or Chinese, or Bolivian, or Australian in a way that is authentically connected to the original home, or to the new home. When I heard Albert Marshall present some of his songs and poems in Maltese at a concert in Melbourne, there was one about being 'in-between' cultures yet it was sung as if he had never left 'home'; there was no 'in-between' at this moment in his performance. On the other hand there were times where Albert thought about living in Australia forever because this is where his son or daughter would probably stay and had also been a place where he had taken refuge at a difficult time in his life. However, there were also times when Albert wanted to be both in the original home and in the new country all in the one moment. When Ming Zhang spoke about his herbal remedies he was firmly locating himself in a place that was in his past and to which he could never fully return. At these moments in the story-telling there was no hybridity rather there was a clear cut identification with the original home. On the other hand, Linda and Kevin La Terra did not regard themselves as 'in-between' at all, though Linda did allude to the fact that she was sometimes identified as an outsider. In his sixties and now regarding himself as Australian John Vella's identifications seemed to settle. In telling the story of the self Malta was part of him but he did not see himself as being 'in-between', as he knew he was in Australia to stay. At this moment he firmly located himself in this place but he did so in Maltese. He did not seek to mimic what he thought it was to be Australian. He simply saw no contradiction between, say, speaking Maltese and being a full citizen of the country where he had made a contribution and where he would live out the remainder of his life with most of the members of his family.



If notions such as hybrid or 'in-between', while offering ways for talking about identifications as they come into being around our ethnicities, are still not able to describe the competing performances within each story, it is also worth, in light of the narratives in this text, revisiting the notion of diaspora. As Clifford informs us 'the language of diaspora is increasingly invoked by peoples who feel (maintain, revive, invent) a connection with a prior home' (1997: 255). For Clifford this connection 'must be strong enough to resist erasure through normalising processes of forgetting, assimilating, and distancing' (255). Certainly, this connecting with the original home, as we have seen, was evident in a number of the narratives. While Albert Marshall and Jane Marshall made their way in Australia, through such things as Maltese radio, newspapers and community activities they recreated a part of Malta in their own home and helped to sustain a vital sense of community across a number of suburbs in Melbourne's west. Also they kept links with their families and friends in Malta and maintained an awareness of the political and social developments occurring in that country. While their performances highlight the nature of diasporic identities, it was apparent that others who shared their original homeland were only partially or were not at all involved in the construction of a 'counter-history' (see Gilroy 1993) around their ethnicities. Joyce La Terra, for instance, nor her children Linda and Kevin saw themselves as being part of a Maltese diaspora. Joyce had come to recognise the way in which Malta had become a point of reference for her self-identity in her thirties, particularly as a result of her sister returning to that country, but she did not seek to take this identification onto the level that Jane and Albert had achieved. Likewise, while Ming Zhang maintained a strong relationship with China through his connection with Chinese medicine, he had few links into what might be described as the Chinese diaspora, though his own journey to Timor and later to

Australia had been part of the journey which many Chinese had taken, and which might have created the basis for some form of diasporic identification as explored in the works of a number of theorists. While writers such as Gilroy (1993) are not interested in recovering 'hermetically sealed and culturally absolute racial traditions that would be content forever to invoke the pre-modern as anti-modern', there is a tendency in some writing to use notions such as diasporic identities as a blanket category. The narratives in this text indicate that an essential aspect of diasporic identities is the act of identification itself. Moreover, my reading of the narratives in this text show that the idea of diasporic identities can actually be exclusionary in that they do not relate to the experiences of someone like Sam La Terra who was not at all interested in the original home but still experienced racism in his daily life in Australia. This is not to discount the significance of concepts such as diaspora as a 'traveling [*sic*] term' (Clifford 1997: 244) in thinking about the effects of large movements of people over a considerably short space of time. However, the concept of diasporic identities does not take account of the experience of those who do not choose to or are not linked into a sub-community based on ethnic identifications, even if they do come from somewhere else and do relate in some ways to the original home. The term diaspora may well work as a descriptive term for the extensive settlements that the Chinese established in places like Timor or parts of Australia, particularly in the 1800s, or even for the Maltese community in the eastern cities of Australia today. Nevertheless, it needs to be thought about more carefully when used to make sense of the way communities 'maintain structured travel circuits, linking members "at home" and "away" ' (Clifford 1997: 253). This is because on the basis of the stories that I have retold, I would agree with Clifford when he says that there is often 'a slippage . . . between invocations of Diaspora theories, diasporic discourses, and distinct historical experiences of Diaspora' (1997: 244).

Not only were the performances in this text on ethnicity and identification a reflective act, a striving for a coherent self, but they, as with the 'middle class professional Indians' in Ganguly's (1992) research are 'calling up' as well as 'call[ing] into question, referential notions of cultural authenticity and stable identity—even, and perhaps especially, without the "conscious intent" of subjects' (Ganguly 1992: 46). For instance, the stories from the three Chinese background families mean that even if I had wanted to I could not talk about any essential Chinese self. The story told by Anna Yang, who identified herself as 'Chinese', was constructed through the original home in the former Soviet Union and through the Russian language. For her daughter Li Li Sheng and her partner Zhu Sheng, it was life in the remote province of Xinjiang that provided the context for their identification with China and 'Chineseness'. For Ming Zhang images of China sustained him in his 'travels' in Timor and in his later years in Australia. His relationship with China or 'Chineseness' was constructed through the prism of his experience of life in Timor and particularly through his work in Chinese medicine. On the other hand, Peter Wu's relationship was constructed through a life long involvement with Catholicism. In listening to the life stories of the Chinese families I could not imagine any more difference in the symbols and images used if I was comparing the narratives of people across ethnicities. In these life stories we see images of the former Soviet Union, the Jesuit priests, life in Xinjiang or Nanjing, and the different effects of these lineages in Australia, all resisting a homogenous notion of being Chinese or Chinese-Australian or Australian from Chinese background. Even the forms of the Chinese language used by the members of these families differed dramatically across the three families as a result of region, migration experience, generation or a range of other factors that can influence the way in which languages are maintained and used in new

contexts. Looking at the Maltese background families we can see that there were also dramatic differences in education, use of language and relationship with English across the two families and within different sections of the families. For instance, both Joyce La Terra's and Lily La Terra's relationships with Malta, 'Malteseness' and Maltese language as they unfolded in Australia were distant ones. In contrast, Albert and Jane Marshall's identification with Malta involved such things as a high level of proficiency in the Maltese language, an interest which was also taken up by Mark and Kristina Marshall.

Not only do the life stories in this text resist a return to bounded and authentic ideas of ethnicity in the homeland, they also show that in the process of becoming the individuals and families were also negotiating 'Australianess' in a variety of ways. As we have seen Nellie Mizzi came to Australia in her fifties in order to offer her family a safe life as opposed to the one they may well have experienced had they stayed in Alexandria. While she had been unhappy in the first years in her new country, in her early eighties she told of how Australia had been good to her and how this would be a place where she would finish her life. We have also seen how in his narrative John Vella's attitude to his new home had fluctuated as a consequence of his memories of changes in daily life and that by the end of his story he saw himself as an 'Australian'. In expressing these sentiments he saw no contradiction between things such as his lack of English, his attachment to Malta and his identifying as an Australian. Likewise, Joyce La Terra, who by the end of her story-telling took a different position to her father, felt that deep inside she was Maltese but simultaneously expressed the view that she was still a 'real citizen' of Australia who paid her taxes and took a real interest in contemporary Australian affairs.

As we have seen, the stories of Li Li Sheng, Zhu Sheng, Francis Wu and Matthew Wu all told of the moments of loss, unhappiness and isolation in Australia. Regardless of this all these people saw Australia as their long-term home and viewed themselves as Australians of Chinese background, even if they were doing so in and through the language of Chinese. While these individuals felt that working life in Australia was difficult they all saw that this country offered their families a future; for members of the Wu family this meant that they would be free of religious persecution while for Li Li and Zhu it was the possibility of a good education for their children that mattered. As with many others, Li Li and Zhu did not see it as necessary to reject their association with China, as evidenced by the fact that when China was competing at the Olympics they would support it. However, such support did not detract from the fact that they saw themselves as being in Australia to stay. Of the individuals who took part in this work only Albert and Jane Marshall returned to the original home on a possible long-term basis, but because they were in constant contact with Australia and also because their adult children had decided to stay in this country, their sense of self had changed forever. Australia would now always occupy a central but distant place in their future stories. Whereas when Albert and Jane lived in Australia, images of Malta continued to interrupt their life stories, now that they had returned to the original home, it was memories of Australia that would create pauses in the flow of their story-telling. Despite the fact that Jose Terceros had moved back to Bolivia and then back to Australia there seemed to be little conflict for him in doing things such as speaking Spanish to his children and seeing himself as a substantive citizen of Australia. No matter how they described themselves all of the people's stories in this text were now intricately linked with some form of 'Australianess'; an identification that did not revolve around certain narrow prerequisites

such as only speaking English but involved a shifting set of emotions, perspectives, and relationships, which moved beyond superficial patriotisms.

This now brings us back to thinking about how we might describe identifications as they form around ethnicities that are constituted in between the 'out there' and the 'in here', between the material world and journeys of the mind. We have looked at notions, such as hybrid, diasporic, in-between and so on. While these terms provide us with a way of talking about identifications in decentred and fluid ways, they also, as stated earlier, pose the risk of becoming stable or one-dimensional categories to describe the complex processes in which people negotiate their self identities. This is partly because, even it is not the intention of the authors, there is a tendency to stress ethnicities to the exclusion of other notions that we might also use to construct the stories of the self. Moreover, implicit in the use of these key terms is the idea that narratives of displacement are always going to lead to identifications that are in-between or hybrid or an 'endless desire to return to "lost origins"'. But as we have seen, the personal testimonies here show that there was a range of other possibilities for identification, which involved a much more shifting set of performances. So, even though these terms are useful, we need to consider whether there are some other ways of describing the way our ethnicities inform the production of the self. Here I am attracted to the notion of 'amoebic identities' which seems to be a more appropriate term for thinking about a self which is constantly being 'remade, reshaped as a mobilely situated set of relations in a fluid context . . . ameoba-like, struggling to win some space for itself in its local situation. The subject itself has become a site of struggle, an ongoing site of articulation with its own history, determination and effects' (Grossberg 1996b: 166).

Another issue which arises from my reading of the life texts concerns the way in which ethnicities are or are not reproduced over time. It is sometimes assumed in much of the literature in this area that generational change often brings with it a weakening of ethnic identifications, in other words that interest in the original identity or home of the family dissolves as generations unfold. However, in some of the families whose stories were retold in this text, it was apparent that there was no weakening of attachment to the 'original home'. For example, Joyce La Terra, who had not seen Malta since she was two years of age, believed that being Maltese was central to her sense of self, but this had only emerged in her mid-life after her sister had returned to Malta to live. Her father, on the other hand, who had told us that he alternated between 'feeling Maltese' and 'feeling Australian', was now—in his sixties—more firmly identifying himself as Australian. It is also interesting to consider how some images of the original home are passed on to the second generation and others are not. In the Terceros household, Rosa had a choice of two different histories from other places on which to draw for her own performance. Yet despite the interest of Rosa in both her parents' histories, it was to Bolivia that her imagination most often wandered. In contrast to their mother, as we have seen, Kevin and Linda La Terra seemed to occupy a middle ground by remaining interested in Malta but not seeing it as having a defining role in the way they told their life stories. Mark and Kristina Marshall, on the other hand, though older than the La Terra children, were passionately interested in 'things Maltese'. The difference, at least in part, may have been because Mark and Kristina had been born in Malta and had maintained meaningful attachments there. Moreover, as we have also seen, their parents, Albert and Jane, who were always ambivalent about their migration, kept Malta alive for the children through songs, poems, radio, television and a host of other activities. In this household Maltese

was spoken daily, so that all members of the Marshall family were competent in the language. Moreover, we can recall that while Joyce and the others in the La Terra family also acknowledged their 'Malteseness', Sam La Terra had never seen Malta and Joyce had left when she was still very young, though she did visit for a short time near the completion of this research. Consequently, Sam and Joyce were unable to impart the same vivid images of the 'home country' to their children. From this it may well be stated that simple models which attempt to map cultural maintenance issues would have great difficulty in capturing the very complex processes at work in the way in which our ethnicities are negotiated in different contexts over time.

As we have seen, one of the key issues raised by the literature on ethnicities was whether it is possible to make connections between different histories or cultural stories. It will be recalled that some theorists argued that it was not possible to forge such links, while others proposed that while we might not share specific cultural genealogies, we are all involved in symbol forming work. My involvement with the life stories in this text support the latter contention. Here, as with Said, I must be careful not to simplify the stories by emptying them of their specific content or their differences; to reduce them to mere reflections of my own world view. However, it seemed to me that the stories could be linked because all the narrators did draw on similar symbols and images to construct the stories. For instance, the notion of school was one that everybody employed in the construction of their stories. All participants had some experience of formal education which involved a classroom with other children their age, a teacher and some form of instruction around such things as language learning. Nevertheless, it is also true that the participants employed very culturally-specific images of schooling. For instance, John



Vella's images and experiences of 'school' certainly differed, both in content and context, from that of Ming Zhang's. For example, the teacher would have spoken to Ming in Hakka, his native language, whereas John Vella was forced to learn in the language of the British Empire. Ming's education would have, for instance, been shaped by Confucianism, while John Vella's would have been underpinned by British colonialism. The schooling of both these people would have differed greatly from the very academic one which Jane or Albert Marshall were to have some decades later. It may well be the case that Peter Wu's education with the Jesuits had more in common with Jose's, or even Rosa Terceros', or his granddaughter Anne Wu's, schooling which took place in other countries many decades later, than with that of Ming Zhang's, who shared the same original home. This is because Catholicism was central to both Peter's, Jose's, Rosa's and Anne's education and not Ming's. From this it is clear that even if the notion of 'school' is a common one for all of the people in this text, we need to be careful in using such symbols to explore ethnic identifications. Nevertheless, I feel that it is possible to some extent to link the stories because the schooling systems in which all these people found themselves were constructed as part of what some theorists regard as the modernising narratives (see, for example, Bauman 1991), or a consequence of the Europeanising conquest (Chakrabarty 1992). The real task becomes, however, to try to trace how these universalising systems converged with the local cultural forms in each of the specific times and places, and to use these insights, as I have tried to do in this text, as a point of reference for the linking of stories which emerge out of very different social and cultural contexts.

Early in this work I commented on the fact that a number of writers (see, for example,

Rose 1996) viewed our social identities as nothing more than the effects of 'governmentality'; that is they suggest that we choose our identities within the boundaries established by discourses which are constructed by powerful forces outside of our control. It may well be the case as Butler (1997a) says '[i]f the terms by which "existence" is formulated, sustained, and withdrawn are the active and productive vocabulary of power, then to persist in one's being means to be given over from the start to social terms that are never fully one's own' (28). Connected with this are those views that have emerged in recent years and which see the end of the subject and pose the question of: 'What comes after the subject?' One theorist summarising the trends in this complex field says: 'Indeed, one can already discern the outline of the dominant motif: the subject as catastrophe site, accompanied by a rapidly ossifying consensus: the dynamism of the subject has finally exhausted itself and is now fated to disappear through a terminal decline' (Doel 1995: 226). A reading of some strands in contemporary social theory indicates that debates around the notion of the subject are indeed complex and difficult. It may well be, as the Foucauldians inform us, that the subject is finished or at least 'is curtailed through a series of constraints: the machinic arrangements which construct and animate it . . .' (Doel 1995: 227; see also Deleuze and Guattari in Doel 1995: 228).

While I am interested in the views of writers such as Pile and Thrift, who seek 'to take apart the cotton-wooled security surrounding maps of the subject, to release the co-ordinates of subjectivity from static, uniform, transparent notions of place and being, which seemingly inform the way the subject is thought of' (1995: 5), the personal testimonies in this text highlight the fact that the self is still a category which, even

unconsciously, is employed by 'ordinary people', which also includes myself, to make sense of their lives and to rationalise the experience of marginality (see Ganguly 1991) and sometimes offer a 'counter-narrative' (see Gilroy 1993). However, while a simple interpretation of this would suggest that these people have not recognised that the self is just a nostalgic social category or a *méconnaissance*, it is clear that the stories moved beyond foundationalist views of identity which limit the possibilities for making connections within and across our ethnicities. They point to the idea that our ethnicities, even if it is only my understanding of them, are much more open-ended categories than those accounts that presume 'a presocial ontology of persons' (Butler 1990: 3). Such an alternative reading of ethnic identification signifies that there is a mismatch between what different forms of governance countenance in terms of social identities and the way in which identifications are negotiated at the level of the everyday. That is, the citizen is being 'hailed' in certain ways, in this case around ethnic identity, but is 'hailing' back in a way that indicates that the initial 'call' has been often misplaced. I would suggest that it is in the spaces created by this mismatch that the opportunity for making connections across different cultural histories can be best realised. For, as Butler (1997a) says, 'the inaugurative scene of interpellation [or being hailed through social categories such as ethnicity] is one in which a certain failure to be constituted becomes the condition of possibility for constituting oneself' (197). Moreover, as she says:

The power imposed upon one is the power that animates one's emergence, and there appears to be no escaping this ambivalence. Indeed, there appears to be no "one" without ambivalence, which is to say that the fictive redoubling necessary to become a self rules out the possibility of strict identity. (Butler 1997a:198)

If we accept that the life stories in this text are not reducible to the creation of 'strict identities' then it is also necessary to think about how we might reconfigure political life within a society in which ethnic and cultural differences are central. That is any shift towards a notion of racial or ethnic identity which is 'unfixed', 'hybridised' or 'porous' (see Giroux 1993) and one which is 'positional', 'conditional' and 'conjunctural', raises questions about how a post-multicultural politics can be constructed in Australia at the end of the twentieth century.

## **Chapter Eight**

### **‘... A Bit Like a Homecoming’**

In moving from a discussion of ethnicities to the formal political responses to difference, I am risking bringing the narratives into the workings of a ‘prescribed multiculturalism’ (see Alund and Schierup 1991) which actually ‘produces the subjects [it] subsequently come[s] to represent’ (Foucault cited in Butler 1991: 2). Ironically I would be therefore returning to a set of stable identifications which my listening to the life stories has led me to reject. However, as Zygmunt Bauman suggests ‘the problem of the postmodern [*sic*] world is not how to globalise superior culture, but how to secure communication and mutual understanding between cultures’ (Bauman cited in Bennett 1998: 102), which is, of course, my major concern here. The question, however, is how is this to be achieved? For Bauman (1991) all forms of governance must be rejected because they have a tendency towards totalitarianism. Moreover, while the work of Hall on new ethnicities and Butler’s brilliant but complex work on gender identity, as well as her study of the psychic life of power, stimulated my thinking in this writing, they do not provide an idea of what their thoughts actually mean for us at the day-to-day level of policy work. It is one thing to argue for non-strict definitions of the self, but it is another to think about how these identifications are to be worked with in terms of governance. Here I agree with Bennett (1998: 37 -38), arguing against Bauman, when he says:

[T]here are a multitude of day-to-day issues pertaining to the administration

of culture and, indeed, to the use of cultural resources in a wide range of government and governmental programs whose resolution bears consequentially on all our ways of life. Only by recognising that culture is ordinary in this sense will it be possible for both theory and practice to take account of the fact that, like any other area of activity, its actual futures will be determined, in significant measure, by the ways in which such practical questions of cultural policy are routinely posed and resolved. (Bennett 1998: 37 - 38)

I believe that at the present moment in Australia we find ourselves at a crucial juncture in protecting those basic programs and services that have contributed to the improvement of the life of many people from ethnic minority background, but have also benefitted inter-group relations and communication across all communities. Nevertheless, as Bennett (1998) says, '[t]here is still a good way to go before satisfactory frameworks, customs and procedures will have been devised that prove capable of managing the complex and highly different forms of cultural diversity which characterise the relations between Anglo-Celtic, multicultural and indigenous populations of Australia' (104). While I could take issue with the way in which Bennett has, without qualification, squeezed us all into three main ethnicities, thereby denying a much more diverse set of realities which is highlighted by the personal testimonies in this text, I, like him, am interested in exploring the shape of a reconfigured multiculturalism; what I and others would refer to as a critical multiculturalism or possibly a form of multicultural citizenship or post-multiculturalism (see, for example, Castles 1996; Bottomley 1996, Jakubowicz *et al.* 1994). While Bauman (1991: 8) may well be sceptical of the

sovereignty of the modern state which he sees as 'the power to define and to make the definitions stick . . . [a] dream of legislative reason' (20), I believe that, at least in the short term, given the 'moral panics' which have recently been fabricated around issues of ethnicities and races in Australia (see, for example, Sheehan 1998) we have no choice but to offer alternative visions to the ones which are based on an obsessive concern with sameness, as if we cannot be Australians unless we fulfil some narrow requirements of citizenship including foregoing using other languages in the public domain.

In opposition to the 'fantasies of white supremacy' (see Hage 1998), we need to think about what a future multiculturalism or a post-multiculturalism might look like. However, as one researcher (Vasta 1996) has recently commented, 'the Australian version of multiculturalism contains a number of contradictions and problems which are not easily resolvable and which require continuous debate, analysis and development' (46). According to Jakubowicz, early versions of multiculturalism focused on the containment of difference as 'the four-dimensional space of ethnic Australia was compressed and re-arranged to become a tighter, even more self-reinforcing cage within which the possibilities of critique, of differences, were eroded, blocked, prohibited and controlled' (1984: 44). Moreover, as I have illustrated earlier in this work, while this tendency to reduce all social differences to simple categories of ethnicity did not completely disappear from some later forms of multiculturalism, by the late 1980s, the central theme was the idea of addressing major inequalities across ethnic minority groups, culminating in the publication of *A National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* (see Office of Multicultural Affairs 1989). While there was still an element of managing difference in such policy developments, the approach taken here was to look

at ways in which ethnic minority groups were confronting major structural impediments to their lives in Australia. Central to this policy was the idea that we needed a way to address issues of ethnicity as they revolved around the notion of rights and obligations and not celebratory pluralisms.

Recognising the complexity of ethnic identifications, as evident in the narratives of the self which I have retold, a post-multicultural strategy will need to move beyond simple and stable social categories and forms of representation, while highlighting specific genealogies of disadvantage and representation as they unfold around our ethnicities. In this process, it will be important to further examine the way in which a number of factors emerge and struggle with one another to determine the shifting identifications of groups and sub-groups in the community at any one time. While we have moved some of the way in this direction, we need to do much more in this regard. Here I am not arguing for the development of 'post-modern identity' positions which, as some theorists have commented, endlessly celebrate 'the openness or permeability of cultural boundaries, the impurity of cultural poetics always already infected by other cultures, and the multiply-constituted nature of subjectivity' (Chicago Cultural Studies Group 1994: 121). This is because 'this runs the risk of effacing real difference and losing the subject into a global matrix of symbolic exchange' (121). However, from the stories of the self which are retold in this work, I am arguing for a notion of ethnicities that 'comes out of very specific historical formations, out of very specific histories and cultural repertoires of enunciation' (Hall in Chen 1996: 502).

Consequently, a starting point for a post-multicultural strategy is the need to explore how



we might connect up specific identifications, such as those expressed by the people whose stories are retold in this text, with our larger social institutions and processes. Or as Habermas says: 'A correctly understood theory of rights requires a politics of recognition that protects the integrity of the individual in the life contexts in which his or her identity is formed' (Habermas 1994: 113; also Habermas in Vasta 1996: 72).

In recent times there has been a proliferation of writing on the subject of how to govern, and particularly, looking at how governance constructs us in the 'name of truth' (see Wright 1998; Rose 1990; du Gay 1996). One trend in much of this material is the idea that governmentality is not confined simply to institutions associated with the state since the distinction between public and private institutions has become blurred. As one writer comments:

'Governmentality' only partly refers to what governments do. It has to do with a certain way of striving to reach social and political ends by acting in an increasingly calculated manner upon the forces, activities and relations of individuals that constitute a population; the matter of defining a singular population itself is a matter of the utmost delicacy and one calling for the combined efforts of armies and lawyers, linguists and folklorists. 'Governmentality' crosses over the sacred line that has hitherto insistently marked off the state from civil society. (Watts 1993-94: 142)

My task here, sharing a concern with Bottomley (1996), and others, about what comes next, is to examine how a post-multicultural strategy is going to deal with the changing

landscape in which there is a replacement of a multiculturalism which 'forced a degree of generalised reflexivity' by policy initiatives 'more acceptable to economic rationalists' (Bottomley 1996: 6). I would argue that it is not possible, nor necessarily desirable to simply return to the social democratic responses that were dominant in the post-Second World War period, even if we are still able to wrestle something out of the social welfare models which dominated that period (see Hall in Terry 1997).

Recognising the need for an alternative agenda to the dominant trends in governing, many theorists have been working with notions such as citizenship, radical democracy and civic responsibility. Mouffe for instance argues that the real challenge for those thinking about democracy 'is to formulate its project in a properly secular way, without messianic hopes but with real "enthusiasm", in the Kantian sense of the awareness of limits' (1996: 25). Others have attempted to examine '[w]hat it would take to revive social citizenship in the face of the new contractualism' (Fraser and Gordon 1994: 72). For these latter researchers, the 'urgent task is to re-imagine civil citizenship in a less property-centred more solidary form' (72). In their view, this re-imagination would mean reclaiming 'the moral and conceptual ground for social rights that had been conceptualised by property and contract' (72). In opposition to a '[r]ule-bound, paternalistic morality' to which individuals and groups are required to submit, Yeatman argues that it is possible for moral judgements to be made by individuals which take account of 'their interdependencies and entailments that follow from them' (1994: 52). Commenting further, Yeatman informs us that, '[n]ecessarily, judgements of this kind need to be informed by principles which have some genuine relationship to the democratically-oriented collective conscience of the particular community to which

these individuals belong' (52). Clearly, a central component of the discussion of (multicultural) citizenship is to do with the role of our central institutions in the creation of 'a more individualised and/or decentralized [*sic*] capacity for judgement' (52). Thinking about such issues from a different angle, Hall and Held argue that 'a "contemporary politics of citizenship" must take into account the role which the social movements have played in expanding claims to rights entitlements to new areas' (1990: 176; see also Giroux 1993). For these latter theorists, this means 'it [a politics of citizenship] must come to terms with the problems posed by "difference" in the deeper sense: for example, the diverse communities to which we belong, the complex interplay of identity and identification in modern society, and the differentiated ways in which people now participate in social life'. In the Australian context, a number of writers have also taken up the issue of citizenship in a similar way. Some of these theorists argue for a citizenship that is 'measured by intensity, commitment, openness and not by area' (Davidson 1996: 121). Others, as we have seen, have focused on the issue of 'multicultural citizenship' (see, for example, Castles 1994; Jayasuriya 1993) which they equate with the idea of substantive citizenship.

My purpose here is not to revisit the debates on citizenship, but to look at the extent to which alternative versions of this concept might provide us with some ideas for developing a post-multicultural agenda. However, once again, the problem with much of the material on citizenship is that it remains at a theoretical level and avoids the task of providing any fine-grained studies of how our central institutions might work democratically in multicultural contexts, while at the same time recognising the effects of such things as globalisation on the status of the nation-state. Interestingly, even though

much of the material on citizenship pays tribute to the specific and the local, it remains too general, too philosophical, and too Euro-centric in its analysis to offer any substantive approaches for those concerned with the creation of a post-multicultural strategy of the sort with which I am concerned here. It may be an important contribution to debate to acknowledge, for instance, that '[a] society in which all antagonisms have been eradicated, far from being a truly democratic one, would be its exact opposite' (Mouffe 1994: 25). Or, it may also be useful to suggest that '[i]f we are to develop a conception of the social that is more congruent with democratic politics, we need to do some serious work on how morality and solidarity can become oriented by individualised and democratically-oriented judgement' (Yeatman: 1993: 52). But to state such sentiments does not provide much of a basis for 'examining what kinds of structures and processes can facilitate and make adequately socially accountable this individualized [*sic*] and/or decentralized [*sic*] capacity for judgement' (52), particularly in a multicultural context. If the latter is indeed an achievable goal, then it is essential to think more deeply about the strategies for governing in an ethnically and culturally diverse society, such as that of Australia. As Stuart Hall *et al.* have put it in a more general way: 'What, then could be the shape of such a "politics-beyond-politics"?' What spheres of action and agencies of change lie beyond the antagonistic categories of the market and state *in a multicultural context* [my italics]?' (Hall *et al.* 1995: 13).

Clearly, I agree with Hall (1995; see also Hall in Terry 1997) and others, that we should not dismiss the achievements of the '[social] democratic state' which deserve being defended. While they were always limited and contradictory, the gains made in cultural policy as it related to ethnicity during the 1980s and early 1990s in Australia did, among

other things, make a difference to the lives of many 'migrant workers', improved the situation for some groups of students from ethnic minority background in education and made provision for cultural difference through such initiatives as language programs. For instance, such initiatives meant that Ivan Sheng was able to maintain and develop his Chinese language in a formal school setting in a way which kept open his communication with his parents. It also allowed him to maintain a very important set of language skills which would certainly have been useful for him in his future education and work. Moreover, though limited and piecemeal, efforts to improve community relations and deal with racism must also be seen as positive steps towards a 'just' society (see Bennett 1997: 104), particularly when we bear in mind the isolation which Li Li Sheng and Francis Wu felt that they experienced in the workplace. However, it would be unwise to argue that these changes were substantive, or that issues of inequality or racism experienced by people of ethnic minority background disappeared as a result. But 'progressives' have been unable to maintain these gains in the face of a growing acceptance of the 'market' as the 'best means of allocating every good and service, when it is clear that markets generate inequalities as their intrinsic driving force' (Hall *et al.* 1995: 12). Moreover, while the recent debates on governmentality offer some hope in ethnically and culturally diverse communities, I would agree with Stuart Hall when he argues that too many of these debates 'are too value neutral' and 'are too unconscious of their liberal suppositions and commitments' (Hall in Terry 1997: unpublished section). Commenting further on this matter, Hall says: 'Some of these arguments are too oversocial, are too much as if the discourse constructs the subject without contradictions, without existence' (Hall in Terry 1997: unpublished section). So where does this leave us in terms of identity politics or the politics of identification as it revolves around our ethnicities?

On the one hand, it seems that there is widespread agreement that it is not possible nor should we attempt to revive the 'welfare state' in its old form. On the other, clearly the emerging debates on governmentality are of limited help to us as we struggle to formulate a democratic response to the fact that ethnic and cultural difference will be a continuing feature of our society. However, working with more fluid notions of ethnicities, a number of theorists have attempted to develop a politics that works with and through difference by focusing on the way in which ethnic representations come into being. Some researchers, for instance, recognise that 'regimes of representation in culture do play a constitutive, and not merely a reflexive after-the-event role in cultural politics' (Hall 1996a: 254; see also Hall 1986). Henry Giroux (1993: 19-20) reinforces this point when he argues that '[r]epresentations are not simply forms of cultural capital necessary for human beings to present themselves in relation to others and human nature, they also inhabit and sustain institutional structures that need to be understood and analysed within circuits of power that constitute what might be called a political economy of representations'. Consequently, a post-multicultural strategy must be concerned with supporting minority groups in gaining space to bring into representation alternative identifications to those ones that seek to exclude some groups by casting them only as outsiders. The problem here is that efforts to date have foundered because alternative identifications as they form around ethnicities are always introduced into a context in which they perform as subaltern images to that of the dominant ethnicity. We therefore need to proceed with caution in thinking about the inclusion of different voices into our life-worlds. The difficult question, however, is how can this be achieved? The idea that 'cultural workers need to be involved in the reform of pedagogy which highlights the ways in which cultural identity is learned in relation to ordering and

structuring of dominant practices of representation', is something that needs to be supported as part of a reconfigured multiculturalism (Giroux 1993: 20). This would involve developing 'critical methodologies' 'to understand how issues regarding audience, address and reception configure within cultural circuits of power to produce particular subject positions and secure specific forms of authority' (Grossberg in Giroux 1993: 20 - 21).

Also following Giroux, I would suggest that it is necessary to raise people's awareness of and to challenge notions of identity that regard history as monolithic and unchanging. The recent calls by some politicians and historians in Australia for a return to a 'national' or 'common' history needs to be contested, not for the reasons of political correctness but because they do not relate to any of the life stories in this text, not even my own, which from the point of view of ethnicity is far more complicated than I had ever imagined. The life-narratives of Albert Marshall, Jane Marshall, Lily La Terra and Sam La Terra, for instance, show that it is not possible to construct a single story around ethnicities even in situations where people share the same language or original home. Accordingly I agree with a number of researchers that we do not have to be bound by the idea of narrating an 'authentic history', but rather we must be concerned with 'the dynamics of cultural recovery which involves a rewriting of the relationship between identity and difference through a retelling of the historical past' (Giroux 1993: 22); a rewriting or retelling which I have tried to some extent to achieve in this text.

However, my experience in attempting this has shown me that it is a task that is fraught with difficulty. While we should not let this deter us from working around issues of

difference, we must be aware that our efforts will always be constrained by the fact that we are enmeshed in different but interconnected webs of power and meaning that are historically and socially constituted. Clearly then, we need to continue a vigorous examination of 'the historical genealogy that produces the scene of writing [and the other texts such as film]' (Wolfe 1997: 84) or as one theorist has suggested, it will be necessary 'to endlessly reopen the question of how are our social realities produced and ruled' (Trinh in Giroux 1993: 20; see also Trinh 1996: 3), if we are to contest narrowly imposed representations of ethnicities, as well as reflect on our 'ethnographic ventriloquism'; a style of speaking in which we are always at risk of putting words in the mouths of others (see Wolfe 1997).

In contesting narrow definitions of what it is to be Australian, it will be important to keep the issue of language diversity on the policy agenda as arguments are made to restrict the use of other languages in Australia to the private domain. A recognition that many languages, both indigenous and non-indigenous co-exist in Australia and do not displace English as the key language of communication, provides a positive representation of what it is to live on this continent at the beginning of the new millennium. In many regards Australia has led the way internationally in this area in recent decades. A post-multicultural agenda will need to build on this achievement, with a view to ensuring that government support for languages is not simply based on economic criterion but involves consideration of rights, inter-group communication and an interest in developing what Homi Bhabha (cited in Bottomley 1996: 2) refers to as the third space, ' "where unlikely traditions of thought" are "yoked together and give rise to the possibility of articulating different, even incommensurable cultural practices and



priorities” ’, though here I would like to think in terms an endless array of spaces, not just a third space.

Despite concerns being expressed about multiculturalism as strategy for managing difference, a critical multiculturalism will require institutional arrangements to support its implementation and development. The advocates of a post-multicultural strategy will therefore need to think about how we might continue to develop our central social institutions to take account of the fact that in the contemporary world ethnic and cultural difference will not disappear, but will in fact become more complex. To my way of thinking, in the past there has been a tendency on the part of some ‘progressive’ researchers to work within too rigid a framework with regard to the institutional arrangements for multiculturalism. Aware of the fact that notions such as ‘choice’ could be used as a way of splitting groups off from the benefits of being in the ‘mainstream’, efforts at promoting ‘access and equity’ have often forced people into institutions which are often not of their making, or necessarily concerned with their specific interests; one type of institution for all. The problem here is that some ethnic and cultural minorities have had only a limited degree of success over an extended period within these bodies. Sam La Terra’s experience with education is the most obvious example of the barriers that some groups still confront in important areas of social life. However, it is essential to recognise that if we are to successfully address issues arising from difference, we must create multiple pathways for the achievement of the goals of equality and fairness, both within and outside our central institutions. Here the emphasis should be on the strengthening of relationships between the life-worlds of specific groups and our major institutions. A good example of the efforts to offer a variety of pathways for such goals

is the way in which some minority languages have been taught outside the 'day schools' but have been given formal recognition by these schools. This meant that Ivan Sheng, Mark Marshall, Kristina Marshall or Anne Wu could maintain their languages to a high level of proficiency as well as have their skills formally recognised as part of their overall education. Nevertheless, while a post-multicultural strategy will provide an open structure for groups to pursue their various interests, it will be important not to 'slide into an infinite and never-ending plurality' (Hall 1988:10).

It is interesting to see how debates about ethnic identity in Australia, particularly those constructed around the idea of 'Asians' as outsiders are now far more complex than they were before our economy became so interrelated with the economies and politics of our closest neighbours. Interestingly, this inter-dependency means that opposition to immigration from different parts of Asia has not gained the support of many business organisations or education institutions or trade unions so that the debate can no longer be described under the simple rubric of 'conservatives' versus 'progressives'. While the effects of globalisation pose many problems, this unusual alliance between business and minority community interests, even if it is sustained by differing rationales, provides a means for combating some forms of racism, and also guarantees that there are no easy pathways for those who seek to reinvent Australia in its former guise as a 'White Australia'.

Regardless of the changing global context in which we are operating, central to a post-multicultural strategy is a continued opposition to racism. I, like Meaghan Morris (1997), have 'made a humiliating discovery'. This being that '[t]he world is full of

people who believe in alien abductions, Satanic conspiracies, and the ineffable evil of government; people who believe that Aborigines are privileged in Australian society, and that minorities have too much power . . . [and that some of the advocates of fortress Australia] are "victims" of political correctness' (367). A view emerging in recent times is that debate around issues of ethnicities have been stifled by the use of the term 'racist' (Sheehan 1997). What this assertion does is to deflect attention away from the power differences between those talking about things such as the 'Asianisation of Australia' and those who are actually being cast as the 'outsiders'.

Moreover, as Barker (1981; see also de Lepervanche 1984; see also Goldberg 1993) highlighted some time back there has been a shift away from the idea that some groups should be excluded from the nation because they are biologically inferior to an argument in which incommensurate cultural differences have become central. In Barker's view, even though 'the biologists have rejected race as a legitimate scientific category', racism is now hiding within the safe confines of the notion of cultural difference which appears to be related to natural attributes. Goldberg takes this argument further by suggesting that there are a number of 'masks of race' and consequently a variety of racisms. As he says: 'I have undertaken to establish not only that the meanings associated with the term [race] are various but that the dominant meaning at any time is related to its reinforcement of prevailing conceptions of self and otherness, of acceptability and excludability' (Goldberg 1993: 89; see also Gilroy 1992; Castles 1996). In highlighting the variety of racisms Goldberg refers to those involved with socio-biology, race as nation, race as class, cultural race and ethnorace. Explaining the emergence of these concepts Goldberg (1993) argues that: 'It is the embeddedness of race in prevailing cultural and scientific

conceptions, in the rationality of the day that has enabled its renewable currency throughout modernity, that has underpinned its repeated and repeatable normalisation' (89). Castles (1996; see also Rizvi 1996) takes this notion of racism further by looking at the way in which the processes of globalisation are reasserting or reconfiguring different expressions of racism. For him, 'most contemporary racisms are closely related to globalisation and to the way this brings labour transformations—often of a disturbing or even traumatic nature—at the national and local levels' (1997: 32). In his brief summary of some of the types of racism to be found in various settings he mentions: oppression of indigenous peoples, racism connected with decolonisations and nation-building, racism towards migrant labour and racism against old and new minorities (35 - 36). Clarifying his argument, Castles suggests 'that globalisation leads to fundamental societal changes, which are experienced as crises of the national economy and social relations, as crises of culture and identity, and as political crises' (37), thereby providing a space for the emergence of simple solutions to a complex set of changes that we are all experiencing to varying degrees.

According to Judith Butler (1997), '[w]hen we say that an insult strikes like a blow, we imply that our bodies are injured by such speech. And they surely are, but not in the same way as a purely psychic injury takes place. Just as physical injury implicates the psyche, so psychic injury affects the bodily doxa, that lived and corporeally registered set of beliefs that constitute social reality' (159). Given that such speech does impact on the real lives of people such as those whose narratives are represented in this text on ethnicities, the call for 'freedom of speech' rings hollow. We may well ask in what position are Li Li Sheng, Peter Wu, Ming Zhang, and a number of others whose stories

are retold in this text, to defend themselves or participate in any public debate about their ethnicities in this country? Here I agree with Goldberg when he informs us that '[t]he right to free expression does not entail extending the right to be granted a forum to express whatever view one wants' (Goldberg 1993: 231). In fact, because of the power of language to injure I agree with Butler (1997) that 'some form of speech that forces change needs to be constructed in response to an injurious language as it calls into question the linguistic survival of the one addressed' (163). However, I think that there is a need to construct our responses so that accusations of 'censorship' cannot be deflected back onto us. This will require us to more vigorously analyse and respond to the arguments in ways which highlight the factual flaws as well as show that the exponents are involved in a divisive act. For instance, the use of the terms 'Asian' or 'Asianisation' have little validity in the light of the life stories which are represented here; there is no essential 'Asian' or 'Chineseness', no culture, which in Bhabha's words, 'is full unto itself' (1990: 210). While our personal and group histories have a specific quality about them, the stories here show that they are also formed in relationship with a range of other cultures. Moreover, as Goldberg suggests it will be important that exclusionary views are contested at all levels and by people in all areas of social life—'especially prominent people'. The emergence of new forms of racism in recent years in countries such as Australia may have a variety of causes but clearly the inability of some powerful figures in public life to argue a strong enough case against such speech indicates an ignorance of what 'freedom of speech' actually entails. One step in combating racism is to continue to contest the stereotypes and holistic images which are used to exclude groups from substantive citizenship. The stories of Anna Yang, Ming Zhang, Francis Wu or Matthew Wu, among others, as I have retold them here, highlight

our differences but also the ways in which our stories are interconnected.

If we accept that globalisation is impacting on all areas of social life with serious consequences for inter-group relations in countries like Australia, a post-multicultural strategy will need to develop an alternative vision for society which involves a range of policy areas. For, as Castles says, anti-racism (or a critical multiculturalism) 'needs a multi-faceted strategy, which takes account of the strength, diversity and mutability of racism . . .' (44). The present undermining on the part of anti-multicultural groups of legislative and other initiatives, such as the Office for Multicultural Affairs, multicultural broadcasting and the various bodies concerned with racial and ethnic discrimination also needs to be contested. This does not mean maintaining these institutional arrangements simply for the sake of it but it will require us to continue to review their functions and effects in supporting a range of positive initiatives that move beyond simple statements about multiculturalism. The abolition of the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research (BIMPR) in recent years has left a vacuum in providing government and other agencies, as well as the broad community, with up-to-date research on a range of important issues. It has also meant that funding for research outside of government has also diminished with the result that policy workers, community agencies and teachers at all levels of the education system are finding it difficult to obtain informed material on matters relevant to immigration and multiculturalism.

Recent research on racism, ethnicity and the media (see Jakubowicz *et al.* 1994), also indicates that we have achieved very minimal change in the way indigenous and ethnic

minorities are represented in the various types of media. While the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) has broadened the media images that we do receive, there appears to be little change in other areas of the communications industry. Representation of people from ethnic minorities in 'mainstream' media is still very limited, a problem which Albert and Jane Marshall encountered in their early years in Australia and one which leads to a consideration of a number of strategies including: changes in employment practices in the media, better representation of people from ethnic minority background in all areas of media production, as well as more investigation into the expectations of audiences in a multicultural society (Jakubowicz 1994: 196).

The stories of Li Li Sheng, Matthew Wu, Francis Wu and John Vella, highlight the way in which some specific sub-groups within ethnic minority communities are locked into the lower strata of the workforce. It is true that Mary Zhang and Joyce Vella, both of whom come from groups (Maltese and Timorese-Chinese) that are not doing as well as other communities on all the possible indicators, achieved 'success' in tertiary education. However, it also needs to be recognised that Joyce and Mary were the only members of their large families to go onto tertiary education. Also, their entry into university was only made possible by a partial opening up of the education system through the creation of new universities that, at least to some extent, managed to look beyond the normal entry requirements. However, while there are examples of individuals and some sub-groups doing well in education and work, it is apparent from the personal testimonies in this text that some specific groups and sub-groups still encounter major barriers in achieving substantive citizenship in the education system and the workforce. The stories of Li Li and Zhu Sheng, Francis and Matthew Wu, for example, highlight the fact that

this is the case in some sections of the Chinese-speaking communities.

Given this situation, it is obvious that the shift towards deregulated education and labour markets has major implications for members of such groups. After all, it is hard to imagine how workers such as Li Li Sheng who has limited English skills will be in a position to negotiate such things as employment contracts or tenders for the provision of government services. Moreover, it is necessary to ask how Mary or Joyce would be able to afford the massive costs that are proposed for a private university degree. However, because of the lack of research on this question it is difficult to substantiate the effects of such changes on ethnic minorities. A post-multicultural strategy will need to monitor the impact of these developments on specific social groups. It is surprising, given that we are at risk of losing many of the gains which have been made in the 1980s, that many researchers are still concentrating on the same sorts of issues which were associated with multiculturalism in that period, thereby ignoring the new conditions under which we are operating. While some have focused on more recent concerns, such as globalisation and identity, or issues concerning multicultural citizenship in a changing context (see, for example, Castles 1996), very little effort has been directed towards examining the effects of the new forms of governance on minority groups and other groups at the level of everyday life. We are faced with questions such as, how does the tendering out of essential services change the relationship between minority groups and the institutions of governance? What groups are losing employment as a result of the new contractualism? What mechanisms are being put in place to support ethnic minority groups with such things as industrial contracts? What are the effects of the privatisation of areas such as power, water, electricity or education on different ethnic and cultural



groups? All of these questions can be raised as part of a much larger project on the impact of economic rationalism on Australian social life. Yet, it seems that these questions are not even being posed by researchers and policy makers, let alone investigated as key research issues. As stated, an alternative agenda will need to focus some of its attention on the implications of these changes for marginal groups. This does not mean rejecting all of the elements that we have regarded as central to the multicultural project in the past. Clearly, we will need to maintain our interest in issues which the older versions of multiculturalism emphasised, and which are still relevant in the current climate of change, such as labour market barriers and concerns about education and training. However, as stated all of these matters and others must now be dealt with in the context of the changes occurring at the level of the nation-state, as the globalisation of capital demands a loosening of national boundaries and a 'flexible' workforce.

Bound up with this is the place of researchers in the development of a post-multicultural strategy (see Bottomley 1996). In recent years 'progressive' researchers working in this field have lost momentum by becoming too dependent on the idea of competing for government grants. The effect of this has been to reduce our capacity for critical and independent work. This is by no means to deride some of the efforts of researchers through studies supported by a number of government agencies during the 1980s and 1990s. But increasingly government reluctance to fund such initiatives has led to a rapid and dramatic decline in the number and range of projects which are being developed in this field. Of course, informed debate in complex social policy areas such as migration and cultural relations is necessary and the withdrawal of funds in these

areas has real implications for policy development around issues of inter-group relations. However, the failure of researchers to have anticipated recent developments in this field, and their inability to maintain an alternative set of networks in a rapidly changing scenario, have left research workers and community groups unable to develop a vigorous response to the dismantling of multiculturalism as a formal policy of government. So one of the very real tasks in constructing an alternative agenda for multiculturalism will be to revitalise the networks of researchers and their links with community groups, and to re-establish innovative projects as part of a post-multicultural strategy. In so doing, it is worth bearing in mind, as some writers have pointed out, that 'intellectuals can never make themselves adequate to the standard of representing the subaltern point of view, of simply giving it speech. Nor can they entirely do without that standard' (Chicago Cultural Studies Group 1994: 124).

Another major area which must be seen as interrelated with that of globalisation which will need to be addressed by a post-multiculturalism is the implications of the new technologies for different ethnic and cultural groups in our community, as well as for the issue of identity more generally (see, for example, Turkle 1995; Featherstone and Burrows 1995). The old versions of multiculturalism would have needed to be far-sighted to see the implications of such things as computerisation on our life-worlds. Commenting on such change one theorist has suggested that '[i]n the discourses on cyberspace and identity, however, things do not appear so problematical or bad. This is because the technological realm offers precisely a form of psychic protection against a defeating reality' (Robins 1995: 142). Further on this writer argues that '[t]echno-reality is where identity crisis can be denied or disavowed . . . [where we become] [l]ost in the

funhouse' (143). The increasing use of the Internet for aspects of everyday life is raising important questions about the 'information rich' and 'information poor'. It is apparent that some ethnic and cultural minorities are at risk of being 'lost in the funhouse' as literacy with the new technologies, I suspect, is unevenly taken up by different social groups. A lack of commitment on the part of governments to high quality education systems within the public sphere means that some groups or sub-groups, including some ethnic and cultural minorities, will be disenfranchised from major developments occurring in the broader society. As well as questions about who will gain literacy with the new technologies, the digital revolution will also put in question the future shape of our cultural life. For instance, given that English is the language of global communication (the Internet), what will be the effects on such things as the notion of linguistic diversity? Already educational programs are being 'delivered' to students in developing countries using the new technologies with minimal debate about learning styles, language and cultural backgrounds and long-term development issues. Here, I am not arguing for a rejection of the new technologies because, as with some other theorists (see, for example, Spender 1995), I believe that it will be imperative to take part in shaping these technologies to ensure that they enhance our cultural lives rather than merely reinforce existing inequalities. Underlining such a view Turkle (1995) comments that 'the culture of simulation may help us achieve a vision of a multiple but integrated identity whose flexibility, resilience, and capacity for joy comes from having access to our many selves', though she does point out that 'if we have lost reality in the process, we shall have struck a poor bargain' (268). While for Turkle and others (see Spender 1995) computerisation may offer some liberating possibilities, the fact is that the life-narratives which I have worked with in this research do not at all engage with this issue.

This is because in only a small number of cases, Albert Marshall, Joyce La Terra, Mark Marshall, Kristina Marshall and Ivan Sheng was there any use of the Internet at all. What this highlights is the uneven impact of globalisation and its tools not only across different societies but also within nation-states. Yet, despite the speed with which the new technologies are claiming a space within our life-worlds, there appears to be little work being done by researchers and community groups working in the field of multiculturalism on 'cultures of technological embodiment' (Featherstone and Burrows 1995) and how these interact with or undermine expressions of ethnic and cultural identity. Surely the new technologies provide a possibility for the development of a virtual democracy in which links can be made between groups around issues such as those canvassed in this study. However, a scan of Internet sites suggests that 'hate speech' has also found cyberspace a useful tool for promoting its messages (see, for example, Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party 1998, [www.gwd.com.au/one\\_nation/](http://www.gwd.com.au/one_nation/); see also Gonzales unpublished)

At this point, it is necessary to clarify the term post-multiculturalism or the more pluralised notion of post-multiculturalisms. I see my suggestions in the above part of the text as contributing to debate about how we might negotiate ethnic and cultural differences in Australia in the foreseeable future. I do not regard the term as one that might be taken up in the public domain, but have used it in the same way that Bottomley (1996) has to describe something which 'suggests a movement beyond multiculturalism . . . but also remains within what follows the prefix "post"' (1). Or as Stuart Hall has put it, I have used the idea of 'post' 'to highlight a highly transitional moment . . . that we are in—between the old state that we can neither fully occupy nor fully leave, and some new

state towards which we may be going, but of which we are ignorant' (Hall in Terry 1995: 67). While the notion of 'post' provides us with a way of thinking about the future while still engaging with old concerns which have not entirely disappeared, it is also necessary to think about how the term multiculturalism might be revitalised. According to Jakubowicz *et al.* (1994) '[m]ulticulturalism can stand for a concept of society which reduces all differences to idealised separated cultures within which questions of gender and class have no purchase or it can sharpen gender and class analyses to demonstrate the complex multidimensional aspects of contemporary identities. . .' (179). The nature of the life-narratives I have retold in this text confirm for me, while siding with Butler's non-strict notion of identities, the importance of a 'critical multiculturalism'. If, as is the case, I am agreeing that multiculturalism is an unfinished project in Australia, and that what we need is a range of policies and practices that relate to people such as those whose life stories have been retold in this text, then I feel that my views lie somewhere between Chakrabarty's (1997) idea of 'radical heterogeneity', which I take to mean the expression of unfettered differences, and the notion of multicultural citizenship particularly as it expressed by Castles in the Australian context, which is concerned with extending past initiatives on access and equity into a new and more complicated phase. In many regards my work here seems to be in line with Bottomley's (1996) (as well as Stuart Hall's and Henry Giroux's) efforts who appears to be attempting to develop something almost like a third space around the concept of post-multiculturalism by emphasising the 'challenge of decentering, of divergence' (Deleuze cited in Bottomley 1996: 1), while at the same time addressing policy issues which have implications for the everyday life of people such as Ming Zhang, or Sam La Terra, or of the others whose stories are retold in this text, including, for instance, the right to speak languages other than English in the public domain.

Approaching the conclusion of this work, I want to repeat my earlier endorsement of Docker's view that all our stories in some way will return to 'a history of Aboriginal sovereignty, to their different rights and history as indigenous peoples' (1994: 41). It is therefore impossible to think about any form of post-multiculturalism without reference to indigenous issues and perspectives. Of course, such a concept will not incorporate indigenous issues into its framework because the indigenous perspectives cannot be reduced to just another one of the histories existing in Australia or a set of claims made around issues of racial, ethnic and cultural identifications. However, it is clear to me that a set of policies, programs and perspectives bearing on the relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous ethnic and cultural groups in Australia cannot possibly be negotiated if our responsibility to the former is not appropriately addressed. In fact, a post-multicultural strategy will only succeed if the differences between indigenous and non-indigenous groups are being properly negotiated and settled in a just and compassionate way. To do otherwise will mean that such a strategy will have very flimsy foundations and will indeed run the risk of covering over the major inequalities that indigenous Australians encounter in their everyday life. The resistance on the part of government to genuine reconciliation, land rights and the inability to react compassionately to issues raised in the *Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* (1997), for instance, all pose major problems for the development of an approach which has at its core the social ethic and the desire for improved community relations. A failure to move ahead in this area will disrupt any efforts made towards the development of policies and practices to support any form of post-multiculturalism.

In trying to develop further what might be described as a hybrid position on future directions for multiculturalism in Australia, that is a position which combines the creative thinking found in some post-structuralist writings with the serious policy analysis found in some of the work of citizenship theorists, I have obviously, in some instances, ended up, more by chance than design, reinforcing some of the strategies already raised by others. I also hope that I have added some new perspectives for the workings of multiculturalism in the future. However, at this stage, though my intent has focused on the opening up of social spaces, there is one important aspect which some of the theorists with which I have worked here have not engaged directly. This is the notion of 'whiteness' which, according to Hage (1998), is a 'fantasy position of cultural dominance born out of the history of European expansion' (20). I would argue that without some reflection on the way in which a future multiculturalism (whether it takes the form of a post-multiculturalism or multicultural citizenship) would rightly seek to displace 'whiteness' as the dominant social marker and ensure that it is viewed as just another one of our ethnicities in Australia, then it runs the risk of becoming a policy of 'managing' others. Of course, some of the suggestions made in regard to post-multiculturalisms, for instance, particularly those that revolve around anti-racism, attempt to address such a concern. However, it will also be important for those of us who, hopefully, do not maintain 'fantasies of White supremacy', but whose histories are associated with 'white ethnicities' to contest efforts to maintain such ethnicities as the only legitimate ones. For me this has involved twenty years work around such issues, in which I have made many mistakes but have been concerned with what Hage (1998: 26) sees as a 'deeper commitment to a more far-reaching multiculturalism' than one which is concerned with managing in its most simplistic and economic rationalist forms. This

at the most basic level has involved me in making sure that my own children have been raised to live amidst difference, supporting issues in education to do with language rights, and trying to maintain an awareness of and concern about the way in which white ethnicities work to exclude others in institutions such as universities where the backgrounds of the most senior management do not at all go anywhere near reflecting the demographic realities which exist in Australian society. In all these actions I am not seeking to speak on behalf of others. Rather, I am trying to grapple with the way in which 'whiteness' has played a role in the formation of my self-identity, though this is a difficult task, for as Hage (1998) informs us, our aspirations in this area often reside at the unconscious level. Nevertheless, I agree with Giroux on the importance of this task when he says:

By shifting the conceptual weight of whiteness away from racial hatred and the legacy of domination (less an act of historical inquiry than as a social it becomes possible to envisage and bear witness to whiteness in its diversity, temporary attachments and orders of belonging as a performative practice - always open to negotiation - which attempts to expand rather than restrict the possibilities of a multicultural and multiracial democracy. (Giroux 1997: 385; see also hooks 1990 cited in Giroux 1997)

As I was completing this manuscript I saw pictures of my Greek grandparents for the first time since I had come to learn that my ancestry was different to the one that I had imagined for most of my life (now scientifically confirmed). Given the very different history which I experienced to these people, the sight of the pictures had the effect of



making me aware of the complex and tentative nature of our ethnicities, of how quickly the flow of story of the self can be interrupted (thus the return of the X in my name, this being the first letter of the family name of my ancestors). In a sense, this experience meant that some well established images of the self, of my ethnicity were at least in question, if not displaced. Likewise, the stories which I have retold in this text, had similar effects on the way I might tell the story of the self. While I made a shift in my focus from the beginning of the work to the end, away from a study of others to a writing about my own engagement with ethnicities, it became clear to me that I could not reflect on my own attachments to images of the self without reference to some understanding of the relationships between different ethnicities in Australia. In this regard there was a displacing in my mind of my 'white ethnicity' as being a privileged self or as a simple story of what it means to live on this continent at this moment in time.

I realise, to use a common expression, that I have stood on the shoulders of other writers to look as far as I can into the future of multiculturalism in Australia, but in so doing I have tried genuinely to highlight the need to open up the social space to *différance*. My suggestions above which have come out of an engagement with both theorists and the members of the six families who took part in the research, represent merely a thumbnail sketch of post-multicultural strategies. Nevertheless, in mapping out my thoughts on what the futures might be for multiculturalism, I have tried to 'ride the borders' of cultural life, so to speak. For as Bhabha suggests:

[T]he borderline work of culture demands an encounter with newness that is not part of the continuum of the past and present. It creates a sense of new

as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic present; it renews the past, reconfiguring it as a contingent 'in between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. (Bhabha 1994a: 7)

There is certainly a long distance between the description of Ming Zhang's parting from his mother and his grandmother in China early this century and thinking about our ethnicities and the possible futures for multiculturalism in contemporary Australia. But the narratives of people such as Ming and the others do intersect, overlap and in some instances underpin the narratives of multiculturalism that emerged in the 1980s and which are still with us in different forms. The story of multiculturalism and those of the people in this text, cannot be easily separated. The narratives of the individuals and families highlight the experiences of the self in all their jubilation and triumph, but also in their sadness, vulnerability and ambivalence. The story of multiculturalism in Australia is also characterised by the same pathos, uncertainty and ambivalence, but just like the stories of the people in this text, it involves a continuing set of narratives which function at a variety of levels in our life-worlds.

This work has been like a long journey for me. But I am not sad at nearing its end because I feel that it is a bit like a homecoming, a moment's rest after a long struggle. I do feel tired from the writing that I have just completed. This is because there were moments where I experienced great doubt about my capacity for the task. There were also times where I thought that I was heading in the wrong direction. Sometimes, because the journey was difficult, or 'too close to the bone' for me, I desired to return to

where I had begun. But such a turning back would be to return to a grief of Kristevian proportions, or to an earlier understanding of the story of ethnic identity, or to an intellectual position that was 'safe' and stable. It would have meant staying with a way of writing that I no longer felt was meaningful to me and an inability to come to terms with the fact that our language is never adequate for the task. More significantly, as Stuart Hall has said, 'it is no struggle to return in some mystical sense to where you were before, as if that was your real self. We are forever in the world, "worlded" . . . cut off from the mother. We are out there in the world' (Hall in Terry 1995: 62). And, like Stuart Hall, I recognise that the challenge is to 'negotiate respect and equal material things amidst this difference, not retreat from it'. (62)

At this point in time I am able to look back across the whole text and in so doing the idea of the 'mirror-stage' as proposed by Jacques Lacan (1977b; see also Sarup 1992) comes to mind. This idea, which Lacan was developing as early as the 1930s and which he first referred to as the 'Looking Glass Phase', and which is still in currency across a wide range of disciplines, was useful for me in thinking about how I might tie together my thoughts in this work. As with this text on ethnicities Lacan's piece is also concerned with the way in which the self is constituted. For Lacan the infant from about six months up until about the age of eighteen months, while '[u]nable as yet to walk, or even stand up' sees its image in the mirror (1). Gazing at this image and trying to touch it the child for the first time is able to imagine itself as a coherent and autonomous entity. Looking behind it at the person who holds it or is near, and then back to the mirror again, it is able to sense itself as different, an entity in its own right. According to Lacan this is the moment in which the subject is formed. However, for this theorist the image in the

mirror, while the basis for the formation of the self, is a misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) because it does not truly reflect what sits in front of it but a desire for something more. Summarising Lacan's thoughts on this process, Sarup (1992) suggests that '[t]he moment of self-identification is crucial because it represents a permanent tendency of the individual: the tendency that leads him or her throughout life to seek and foster the imaginary wholeness of an "ideal ego" [or coherent self] which is forever plagued by a "lack" [my italics]' (65). To my way of thinking when we narrate the self, whether it be around our ethnicities or not, we are in some way returning to that original moment when we tried to touch the specular image in the mirror; a time when we attempted 'to find a way around certain inescapable factors of lack, absence and incompleteness' (Lacan cited in Sarup 1992: 65). However, in my view, Lacan's looking glass does not fully resemble the one into which I feel I have been looking throughout my travels in this work. Instead, at the end of this investigation I find myself looking into a three-tiered mirror in which as each layer is placed on another, the images take on new forms. At the first level of my mirror is a simple image of myself. It is one-dimensional and alters its appearance slightly if I look at it from different angles. But when I overlay this reflection with the next set of images, which are in fact the reflections of my significant others, who may well have, or I wished had, at one time held me or stood behind me as I looked into the mirror, and whose reflections remained long after they moved out of my sight, a more complicated set of impressions begins to form. But in my mirror there is another group of images which are then placed over the other two. These are the reflections of reflections in other people's mirrors who seem to be different to me and with whom I have come into contact in some way or another, including those with whom I engaged on this journey. Unlike the image in the Lacanian mirror, the figures in

my looking glass can be seen from different perspectives, depending on the angle from which the mirror is viewed. Also my own reflection is not always easy to see because sometimes it merges into the other images which appear as the tiers are placed on top of one another. Clearly as Stuart Hall has suggested difference has entered into the equation. While these may be specular images they do arise within a specific cultural context and in this sense they are not free floating, though they might constantly disappear and reappear or change shape, thereby altering the overall impression which I obtain each time I turn towards the looking glass. However, at this point in the writing I realise that whatever I see when I attempt to view the coherent self, it is only through the capacity to tell others about it, or what Lacan refers to as our desire to enter into the symbolic, that some form of sociability or communication across our ethnicities becomes possible. Here, in doing just that, no matter what the inadequacy of language, I have tried like Lacan 'not to inform but to invoke . . . What I seek in speech is the response of the other' (Lacan 1977a: 86).

*At around the age of eighty Ming Zhang visited China: 'My brother thought that I had a good memory because I could remember the house where a crazy person lived'. On this journey Ming climbed to the top of a hill where he had stood waiting for his father to return some seventy or so years before. He thought for a moment about all the things that had passed in his life since and thought about the places he had lived: 'When I was a young adult, home for me was anywhere, whether it was in the east or west, north or south. But now that I am old I should always live where my children are living. Wherever they are I should always follow them. I cannot say that Australia is my home, or that China is my home, or that Timor is my home. They are all part of me'.*

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