



# INDEPENDENT SCHOLARS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA Inc

## NSW Chapter Bulletin 115 June 2024

<http://www.isaa.org.au>

ISSN 2207-614X

Dear Members,

The committee has been busy organising an interesting program for the rest of the year as advertised under 'Upcoming Events'. We hope that you are able to attend them. This issue contains a lengthy section reporting on talks given at the Workshop on Modern Slavery in April, so there are no book notes this time.

The Reading Groups continue to meet on alternate months. If you would like to join one of them, contact Convenors Christine Jennett for Public Affairs and Christine Yeats for the Biography Group.

If you have any contributions for the next *Bulletin*, such as scholarly book notes, notes on exhibitions, films or plays, or interesting snippets of research, please send them to me by **1 August 2024** at [cjennett@ozemail.com.au](mailto:cjennett@ozemail.com.au).

Stay safe and well. **Christine Jennett, *Bulletin* Editor**

### ISAA NSW ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**THURSDAY 6 JUNE 2024**  
**4 pm via zoom**

#### **Agenda**

1. Apologies
2. Confirmation of the Minutes of the 2023 AGM
3. President's Report
4. Treasurer's report
5. Election of Office Bearers
6. General Business

#### **NSW Chapter ISAA**

##### **Executive members**

Chair: Dr Christine Jennett

Vice-Chair: Christine Yeats FRAHS

Secretary: Susan Flaxman

Acting Treasurer: Dr Rodney Nilsen

Immediate Past Chair: Dr Lesley Potter

##### **Committee Members:**

Dr Hilary Yerbury

Monica Dennison

Dr Ian Willis OAM

Dr Susan Steggall

##### **Library Liaison:**

Christine Yeats

##### **Public Events Committee:**

Lesley Potter, Christine Jennett,

David Carment AM, Shirley Randell  
AO, Christine Yeats

##### **Dates for Your Diary**

6 Jun: AGM

14 Jun: Open Forum

18 Jul: Doing Research

27 Aug: Open Forum

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## OPEN FORUM

14 JUNE

4 pm via Zoom



### *Modernist Disguise: Masquerade in Modern Performance and Visual Culture*

(Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021)

(Paperback Edition, November 2022)

Ron J Popenhagen

#### ***Abstract***

In *Modernist Disguise*, Dr Popenhagen elaborates upon the importance of mask objects and performance in European Modernism. Book chapters offer interdisciplinary perspectives on developments in modernist culture and thought, with an emphasis upon art, dance, music, scenography and theatre. The commentary begins in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century when photography emerges as an art form; it concludes with a discussion on the proliferation of ‘masquerade’ imagery and ‘wearable art’ in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Events and images cited include works by artists like Sarah Bernhardt, Pablo Picasso and Mary Wigman. The book presentation and discussion will provide examples of the phenomenal ways and means chosen to dissimulate the face and body through acts of innovative transformation or total disappearance.

#### ***About the speaker***

**Ron Popenhagen**, a specialist in performance history and theory, spoke on African Masquerade Performance at the France-Florida Research Institute (University of Florida, 2023). Recently in Melbourne – and in a London webinar – he presented on Baltic and Scandinavian modernist painting and on architectural and spatial dynamics Drama, Music and Theatre in performance. Dr Popenhagen has directed opera and theatre –and trained singers and actors – in Australia, Europe, the UK and the US.

## DOING RESEARCH MEETING

18 July  
4 pm via Zoom

*Uncovering the Feminine Occupation: Researching women as occupiers in Japan and Germany*

Speaker: Dr Christine Matsos



As an historian, I have spent a scholarly lifetime researching the post-WWII military occupations of Japan and, more recently, Germany. This has included the oft forgotten roles of women as occupiers, as in my most recent publications, [‘The Home as a Space of Re-Education’](#) (2024), which compares colonial and occupation housekeeping texts as tools of re-education, and [‘Visualising the Modern Housewife’](#) (2024), which uses visual sources to interrogate representations of US women vis-à-vis German women. In this *Doing Research* presentation, I reflect on the research undertaken for these papers and on the topic more generally, including my current multi-researcher project-in-progress comparing the place of the home in these two occupations, and the challenges and joys of that process. Some of the challenges include: being open to the use of uncommon primary sources, such as housekeeping texts, recipe books and images; researching a topic over a long period of time, usually due to constant disruptions; conducting research in multilingual environments, especially when you are not fluent in those languages; and working as part of a multilingual research team dispersed across the globe.

### *About the speaker*

Christine de Matos is an historian and writer who researches the Australian role in the Allied Occupation of Japan (1946-1952), using gender, race and class to elucidate the power dynamics of the occupier-occupied relationship. Her most recent book publication is *Japan as the Occupier and the Occupied*, coedited with Mark E. Caprio and published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2015, and most recent article ‘The Home as a Space of Re-Education: Imperialism, Military Occupation, and Housekeeping Manuals’ in *The International History Review* (2024). She is currently working with scholars in Australia, Japan and Germany on a comparative project on the home in occupied Germany and Japan.

## OPEN FORUM

Tuesday 27 August

3 pm via Zoom



### *Life So Full of Promise: Further Biographies of Australia's Lost Generation*

*Life So Full of Promise* is Ross McMullin's second multi-biography about Australia's lost generation of World War I following *Farewell, Dear People*, winner of the Prime Minister's Prize for Australian History. Ross has again combined extensive research and narrative flair in another collection of interwoven stories about forgotten Australians who had radiant potential. With their families and friends also conspicuous in the narratives, *Life So Full of Promise* illuminates what the war was like at home and at the sharp end. It provides insights into the experiences of Australians before, during and after the war, whether they were combatants or civilians, or soldiers' wives or parents. *Life So Full of Promise* was shortlisted for the Nib Literary Award and reviewed by Barry Jones in the SMH: 'His scholarship is impeccable; he writes like an angel ... and his narrative gift is Blaineyesque'. You'll be enlightened, entertained and moved as Ross brings these extraordinary yet unknown Australians back to life.

#### ***About the speaker***

Ross McMullin is an award-winning historian and biographer, and a renowned storyteller and speaker. His biography of Australia's most famous fighting general, Pompey Elliott, won multiple awards. His other books, including his acclaimed ALP centenary history *The Light on the Hill*, are featured on his website: <https://rossmcmullin.com.au>

## REPORTS ON RECENT EVENTS

### **Workshop on Modern Slavery in Australia**

15 April

#### **Rural Workers**

Michelle Cavanagh

According to the NSW Anti-Slavery Commissioner Dr Cockayne, the best survey-based estimate came out in 2023 stating around 41,000 people are working in modern slavery on farms.

With much of Australia's wealth due to human trafficking, the Australian Human Rights Commission reported that 62,000 people were kidnapped in the Pacific between 1863 and 1904 working on the sugar industry in New South Wales and Queensland with details published in the *Brisbane Courier* in 1886.

The Pacific Assisted Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme allows eligible Australian businesses to hire workers from Pacific island countries and Timor-Leste when there are not enough local workers available. Some who came here under the scheme wound up in situations which meet the international test for forced labour or are in debt bondage while others face threats and intimidation from dodgy labour hire contractors, to dissuade them from speaking out

about dangerous working conditions and on-farm accidents. Poor health and safety standards resulted in 174 deaths in agriculture between 2015 and 2019.

For over four decades Australian farmers have relied on vulnerable temporary migrant workers and Working Holiday Makers (WHM) to undertake farm work that is insecure, itinerant, low paid, exploitative and often unsafe, many of whom are unaware of workforce laws and standard practice in Australia.

Following Australia's COVID-19 international border closure in March 2020 there was an estimated 80,000 drop in WHM and a 4,000 dip in PALM workers. The farming industry was dealt a further blow when the United Kingdom and Australia signed a Free Trade Agreement in 2021 with the presumption it would lead to another 10,000 farm worker shortages per year.

The Freedom Fund headed by Nick Grono launched the first ever Global Slavery Index directly liberating 30,767 people from slavery and enabling over 153,000 at risk children to return to school. Associate Professor Anna K Boucher analysed labour market exploitation in four countries over twenty years including Australia, building on a database of 1,912 migrants in 907 court cases.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* has also reported on cases documenting casual workers being underpaid, 'less than a year after a federal court fined it \$60,000 for employing undocumented workers', and that twelve women were suing for almost \$4 million, for being 'repeatedly sexually harassed at work'. proving that it's imperative we all keep abreast of what's happening with rural slavery.

## Sexual slavery

Christine Jennett

I first encountered the topic of sexual slavery when teaching police recruits and serving police courses on 'Organised Crime' and on 'Human Rights and Policing' for Charles Sturt University between 1994 – 2007. Then again after I retired from full-time teaching I taught a couple of courses at the University of NSW (2008-2016) part time, one of which was Sex, Human Rights and Justice which had sub-topics on 'sex work and sexual slavery' and 'rape and sexual slavery'. At that time the main focus of the literature on sexual slavery was that women were being trafficked to work in prostitution either because they were deceived by promises of other work, such as waitressing, and then found themselves providing sexual services in unfree and often unpaid conditions. Another focus was on women who had been aware that they would be sex workers but were completely unprepared for the slave-like conditions of their employment.

As criminal justice investigators and academic researchers became aware of the situations of these women it was found that authorities often treated them as illegal immigrants who deserved punishment under Australian law. They were labelled as 'criminals' not 'victims'. Academics and NGOs, such as Project Respect, argued that these women were victims of traffickers, often traumatised, who needed support of all types eg language, accommodation, money. They then became labelled as 'victims'.

However, other academics, such as Sanja Milivojevic, Sharon Pickering and Marie Seagrave began to publish in this area, particularly their book *Sex Trafficking and Modern Slavery: The Absence of Evidence*, based on research conducted in Australia, Thailand and Serbia, where they emphasised the simplicity of treating these women purely as victims of traffickers. Also, they observed the shift away from sex trafficking to modern slavery as the dominant focus in policy and advocacy, but they argued that 'human trafficking, forced migration and slavery remain politically loaded, empirically obtuse and ambiguous terms that fail to impact on creating better livelihoods' for migrant workers. (2019 Preface).

Fast forward to 2024 when I revisited the topic of sexual slavery, both literature and academic webinars informed me that the focus of sexual slavery is now on forced marriage (as opposed to consensual arranged marriages). Forced marriage is 'marriage without free and full consent of one or both parties to the marriage'; slavery is 'the status or condition of a person over whom any or all powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised, including where such a condition results from a debt or contract'. This literature labels women caught up in these forced marriages as 'victim/survivors'. These researchers focused on forced marriage in Australia and New Zealand. Space does not permit me to discuss their findings in detail, but these sources are available online. Suffice to say that Australia, like Denmark and the UK, has criminalised the practice of forced marriage but this has both positive and negative consequences. On the positive side stakeholders consider this has conveyed a clear message that the practice is not condoned in Australia. However, others argue that it can weaken the resolve of victims to

seek help as they do not want to criminalise members of their own families and communities and therefore it is likely to lead to further shaming and ostracism. So there is uncertainty about whether laws criminalising forced marriage have any real deterrence effect as leaving even a violent, abusive, slavery like marriage can leave the victim/survivor without community or family support or contact.

.....

S Lyneham 'Attrition of human trafficking and slavery cases through the Australian criminal justice system', *Trends and Issues in crime and criminal justice*, No. 640, November 2021, Australian Institute of Criminology, Australian Government.

S Lyneham, C. Dowling & S. Bricknell 'Estimating the dark figure of human trafficking and slavery victimisation in Australia', *Statistical Bulletin 16*, February 2019, Australian Institute of Criminology, Australian Government.

S Milivojevic, H Moore & M Seagrave 'Freeing the Modern Slaves, One click at a Time: Theorising human trafficking, modern slavery, and technology', *ANTI-TRAFFICKING REVIEW*, 14 (2020), PP.16-32.

M Seagrave 'Human trafficking and human rights', *Australian Journal of Human Rights*, Vol 14(2), 2009.

M Seagrave, S Milivojevic & Sharon Pickering, *Sex Trafficking and Modern Slavery: The Absence of Evidence*, Routledge, 2019.

## The story of cleaners

Hilary Yerbury

Cleaners have long been recognised as among the most vulnerable of workers, according to United Voice/United Workers, the union that represents them. In Australia, those most likely to be experiencing practices amounting to modern slavery are temporary migrants, specifically, international students and those holding working holiday visas; thus, they are young and often in their first job. I take modern slavery to be a situation where individuals might face violence or threats, be forced into inescapable debt, or have their passport taken away and face being threatened with deportation.

The 2017 study of temporary migrant workers by Berg and Farbenblum identified a range of poor employment practices and linked some of these to exploitative practices that amount to modern slavery. Underpayment was a significant factor, as was being paid in cash. Neither of these by themselves constitute modern slavery. However, a small number of respondents reported illegal, exploitative practices, including having their passports confiscated, threats to report them to immigration for breach of their visa conditions (often instigated by the employer), and having to pay a 'deposit' to secure employment or to pay for basic training. Some of these exploited respondents were employed by members of the same ethnic community.

Those deemed responsible for taking action to curb modern slavery have included government, unions, NGOs, employer peak bodies and employers, as well as workers themselves. Union submissions to government enquiries on modern slavery have called for measures that emphasise fair working practices, and changes to temporary visa programs to enable workers to enforce their rights at work. The Cleaning Accountability Framework, an independent, multi-stakeholder initiative that seeks to improve labour and cleaning standards in Australia, in 2020, proposed an auditing system to make employers more accountable for these exploitative practices.

The discussions following the implementation of the Modern Slavery Acts (Commonwealth and NSW) have shown that the structural changes proposed have not yet brought about significant change. Anecdotal evidence suggests that whereas most cases of coercion were previously related to visa conditions or tax responsibilities, cases are now emerging of coercion based on social factors, including the use of photographic evidence of inappropriate behaviours such as drunkenness at a "workplace drinks evening" to bring shame on the individual or their wider family.

Briefing international students on the principles of fair work in Australia and alerting them to behaviours that fall outside these principles, could offer some measure of protection.

## International Links to the Fashion Industry

Shirley Randell

I first became aware of the international links to the fashion industry when I was working in Bangladesh in 2004-5 on a Gender Mainstreaming project with the United Nations Development Program. Every day as I was driven into my workplace at UNDP, Dhaka, I was consistently astonished to see hundreds of women marching along the sides of the roads to their work in the multi-story garment factories that lined the streets.



On 24 April 2013 one of these multi-story garment factory complexes, Rana Plaza collapsed. Over 1,020 bodies were recovered from the debris of the fallen factory building and about 2,500 women were injured. It remains the worst accident in the history of the apparel industry and one of the deadliest industrial accidents in the world. Those investigating the rubble after the tragedy found clothing labels from Western retailers in the ruins of the building, which had been home to a handful of factories operating with varying levels of safety and scrutiny. This shone a spotlight on the unsafe conditions in which a sizable portion of Australia's cheap clothing and fashion materials are produced. Women often work 56 hours a week in these factories for a salary of 8,000 taka (AUD \$112) per month - not enough to cover rent, food, clothes, and medicine when they need it. Most workers lack the information and power to demand safe working conditions.

The fact that the Rana Plaza collapse was not only a humanitarian crisis, but a public relations crisis, prompted swift action by international organisations, Western brands and clothing fashion retailers, as well as prompting governments to introduce Modern Slavery legislation. Fashion brands have the power to lift millions of women who work in these factories, and their families, out of poverty. Brands can and should balance the twin demands of responding to consumer demands and protecting workers' human rights in factories. Brands should address their poor purchasing practices so Australian consumers can purchase clothes from their favourite stores knowing that the women who make their clothes are paid a living wage in safe conditions.

Groups like Oxfam's 'What She Makes' campaign ensure big clothing companies demand international suppliers pay a wage that enables their workers to afford a decent standard of living for themselves and their families. Oxfam's Company Tracker makes it simpler for us to take action against many of Australia's biggest and most well-known brands who are lagging behind, to take action, and to let brands know we expect more from them.

**Reference:** Oxfam Australia: Who Made My Clothes? The truth behind fast fashion. [www.oxfam.org.au](http://www.oxfam.org.au).

## WORK IN PROGRESS

9 February

The ISAA NSW W-I-P program for 2024 got off to a flying start on 9 February in person at the State library with a presentation by Dr Ian Willis on *The memory landscape of the Cowpastures in memorials, monuments, and murals*, which explored the place of the history of the Cowpastures area in modern historiography.

The European history of the Cowpastures begins with the two bulls and five cows, collected from the Cape of Good Hope by the First Fleet, which wandered off from Sydney Cove in 1788. Their progeny was discovered south of the Nepean River in 1795. This area became known as the Cowpastures until the 1850s.

Ian's overview considered the history of the area, first as a government reserve in 1803 and its later association with prominent early white settlers, such as the Macarthur family. He then considered 'memory' both in the context of the Cowpastures and those with links to the area. As he noted, while the narrative of the Cowpastures may be familiar to many it is little known or understood by others.

Ian's overarching theme was the link between landscape and memory and the various attempts at memorialisation that have been made in the Camden and Cowpastures area. He posed three questions to his audience which he discussed in the context of the area's history:

- What is landscape?
- What is history?
- What is the truth of history?

Arguing that memory is all around us 'in plain sight', Ian cited the following examples to emphasise his point: public art; memorials, statues, roads, bridges and the list goes on. He also considered the loss of the landscape as the area has evolved and its impact on local 'memory'.

We were introduced to a range of published histories of the Camden and environs. Ian also showed us the images of a selection of local memorials. The 1962 Rotary Pioneer Mural of Camden painted by the artist Byran Mansell (1899-1977) in particular generated questions as to its relevance and any likelihood as to its replacement with a more fitting memorial. **Christine Yeats**

## Blue Plaques

The NSW Government's Blue Plaques Program showcases the stories of people and events that helped to shape our history. They have been selected from the hundreds of nominations by individuals and communities across the state. The March 2024 *Blue Plaques Newsletter* includes stories about the latest plaques to be unveiled – Bondi Surf Bathers Life Saving Club (on 10 March) and Grace Cossington Smith OBE, AO (on 21 March).

The Bondi Surf Bathers Life Saving Club is Australia's first recorded surf lifesaving club. The plaque is a tribute to its legacy of community service since its formation in 1907. The Grace Cossington Smith NSW Blue Plaque – the 25<sup>th</sup> to be unveiled – is outside her former home in Turramurra. Cossington Smith is one of the most celebrated 20<sup>th</sup>-century painters in Australia. She was one of the first artists in the country to be influenced by the European post-Impressionist movement. Her aim, she said, was 'to express form in colour – colour within colour, vibrant with light'.

The *Newsletter* also has articles about the subjects of two plaques that are waiting to be installed – Arthur Stace (remembered as 'Mr Eternity') and the journalist Dorothy Drain. In 1932, inspired by evangelist John G Ridley, Arthur recalled – 'I felt a powerful call from the Lord to write "Eternity". I had a piece of chalk in my pocket, and I bent down right there and wrote it. I've been writing it at least 50 times a day ever since.'

Drain, one of Australia's first women war correspondent, helped pave the way for the women war correspondents of today. While her exclusive 1955 interview with Frank Sinatra was a career highlight, she is best remembered for her long career with the *Australian Women's Weekly*, retiring as editor in 1975.

Link to other stories <https://blueplaques.nsw.gov.au/>.

**Christine Yeats**

### Verbalising Can Clarify

Do you wonder what other people might think of your ideas?

Tired of keeping them to yourself?

Want some genuine, helpful, and considered discussion of *your* work-in-progress?

If an ISAA Work-in-Progress meeting interests you, please contact:

[cjennett@ozemail.com.au](mailto:cjennett@ozemail.com.au)

**Book Notes   Exhibition Notes   Film Notes**

### Research Snippets

If you have read a book, seen an exhibition or a film of substance lately or come across a snippet of interesting research that you would like to share with fellow ISAA members send in a piece (up to 300 words) containing its key insights and arguments to: [cjennett@ozemail.com.au](mailto:cjennett@ozemail.com.au) by **1 August 2024**