

Nightmare on Shaw Street

Getting Lost in Shorty's Private Collection

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Imagine the need to re-member through the constant repetition of images fixed, condensed, studied on, and made visceral, the need to watch, to chronicle ... the attachment to things that matter, the fascination of objects on which the mind can stare itself out ... Imagine the desire to amass such a place around you, to dig yourself into it, to occupy it.

Kathleen Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road*¹

Zeehan's main street is silent and deserted as I drive through at lunchtime. The main street which bisects the town is lined with the abandoned shells of grand old 'frontier' buildings, one of which now houses a cafeteria that is closed as I drive through. Another building, lacking a sign-front, houses ghostly mannequins made up in dated attire, making it difficult to ascertain whether it's a museum of dead styles or another charity clothes shop which would add to the town's strange surplus of op-shops displaying colourful knitted jumpers and stuffed toys. Other shopfronts stand abandoned, windows splintered. When I go to the petrol station to fill up, the booth is unmanned and fuel is only accessible by the swipe of a credit card. After Peter Conrad passed through here in 1987, he added the place to his catalogue of Tasmanian ghost towns, noting 'a rusted cannon parked in a field of daisies outside

the cream and blue-trimmed hut of the Returned Servicemen's League, its metal drooping with fatigue and rot'.²

At its height in the 1890s, Zeehan, on Tasmania's wild west coast, was known, somewhat glamorously, as the 'Silver City' for its wealthy silver mines; with a population of over ten thousand it was Tasmania's third largest town. Then, it boasted its own stock market, more than twenty hotels, its own port at Trial Harbour and two theatres. The Gaiety Theatre, attracting performing artists such as Enrico Caruso and Dame Nellie Melba, was, it seems, as Barthes said of the Le Palace theatre, 'a whole apparatus of sensations destined to make people happy, for the interval of a night'.³ Zeehan's sparkle began to fade in the 1920s when the ore bodies gave out, and the last silver mine closed in 1960. The town revived somewhat with the opening of Renison Bell tin mine fifteen kilometres away in the mid-1960s but this also closed in 2005 and workers left to find work in Western Australia and Queensland. Zeehan's population now hovers around eight hundred; the town still houses a small, itinerant mining population, though this is more likely to work in the mines in nearby Queenstown, Rosebery and Henty, and in the other mines that are opening up in the region such as Renison Bell, now owned by Metals X. Other town residents work in the few shops or services in town, or live on unemployment benefits.



Figure 1: Shopfront, Zeehan

The highlight of the town for the passing tourist—indeed the only place open—is the West Coast Pioneers Memorial Mining Museum, the town’s—and the west coast’s—official museum. A branch of the state-funded Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, the museum won the award for the best regional mining museum in the southern hemisphere, and is said to attract twenty-five thousand visitors a year. The museum appears to be all that saves this town from total dereliction. But so too the museum signals the deathliness that pervades this town. Inside the grand, haunted edifice that once served as the School of Mines and Metallurgy is crammed scores of dead train engines and black and white photographs of the mining towns throughout the west coast. The entire town appears to be vacant except for the figures in these photographs—a mortuary collection of ghosted populations.

The hills surrounding the town are burdened with industrial junk from worked out mines—old cogs, caved-in mine shafts, bits of disused railyard. While mining has not forged anything like the spectacularly grotesque landscape that nearby Queenstown is famous for, Zeehan’s hills—densely forested—are pock-marked with abandoned but concealed mine-shafts. In his poem, ‘Zeehan’s Waste Acres’ (1975), Roger McDonald had his subject walk through this landscape where ‘Air, metal and rock/grow from the valley—old Hessian and concrete, mullock/cogs, fractured and half-buried bricks’, and ask, ‘Who else desires it but me?’⁴ But this waste not only inspires the thrill of the sublime as it does in this wandering poet; it also serves as the dead matter out of which a curious life has grown.

There is something ominous about the back roads off Zeehan’s main street, which are lined with tired identical white weatherboards. Passing through these streets where front yards resemble back yards—littered with empty inflatable pools at the end of summer—you get the feeling that you’re ‘somewhere else’. And in this open valley, the satellite dishes and aerials that attach themselves to every house appear more prominent, and more prodigious. The ubiquitous satellite dish acts as a portentous bowl serving up encounters with the otherworldly.

On the outskirts of town, a hand-painted sign fixed to a wire mesh fence on the roadside reads:

DR FRANKENSTEINS MONSTER MUSEUM
WHERE NIGHTMARES COME TRUE
12 WHYTE STREET →

Following the hand-painted arrows to Whyte Street, the visitor passes the jaded caravan park and a smattering of decaying weatherboards, to a yard containing a pack of warring dinosaurs. But these dinosaurs are still, as if fossilised in mid-brawl. Assembled from pieces of found bleached beachwood, they imitate a kind of deranged museum exhibit of dinosaur bones. On the day I visited, however, a sign outside the house read that the museum was ‘closed for renovation’. I later learned that ‘Dr Frankenstein’—Gail—was transferring her collection to a large new shed out the back of her house.

Once lured off the highway, the tourist is snagged; the monstrosity spills out over the road to a squalid shack named ‘Farque Ranch’, where a diamond-driller lives. He’s crouched down on his front path, busying himself with an indecipherable object. When I ask if I can take some photos, he lifts his head only briefly to nod, and returns to his *thing*. Behind a white fence without pickets, the yard is dotted with all manner of mutant figures and fantastical oddities like lily pads floating on a pond of water. Where flowers might ordinarily grow, an Indian chief’s head, a flame-haired 1980s’ Troll Doll and a flock of concrete rabbits provide decorative flourish. A giant



Figure 2: Front yard, Farque Ranch



Figure 3: Front yard, Farque Ranch

stuffed toy sheep wearing a green Yoda mask sits by a miniature windmill. Replacing suburbia's common garden archway, a frame akin to those used in executions provides the yard's front centrepiece. A rock with attached label, 'Hanging Rock', is suspended from its beam, presumably in a comic-macabre punning reference to the Victorian site now enshrined in Australian mythology. Nearby, fake flowers grow from a toilet bowl to fill a glass mannequin head like flowers encompassing a skull. Despite its grotesque spectacle, and unlike Dr Frankenstein's, this front yard is not open to the stray tourist. The dog's barks would send the visitor on her way.

In the car again and rounding the corner into Shaw Street, I am again confronted with a mass of twisted forms: the front yard of 'Shorty's Private Collection'. Pulling up out front, a dog's throaty barking sounds from inside the house, enough to keep me inside the car a while longer. Ready to turn the ignition at any moment, I scan the menagerie of contorted forms—a couple of Nordic serpentine figures with fanged teeth emerge from a ship named Helga made from waves of rippling iron; a big black boar's head, carved from wood, surveys the road out front; a tin UFO's daddy long legs are bolted to the ground to prevent levitation. Among them are bits of old unidentifiable mining machinery and painted up old spokes. The front door creaks open and a set of identical girl child twins emerge. One of them tells me it's safe to get out of the car and the other ghosts her words. They appear to be living alone, like the children of Rossetti's 'Goblin Market'. As they usher me to the front porch, they speak to each other in deep, broad accents like that

of old men, then tell me to ‘wait there’ while they get their grandmother. They return to escort me past the ‘Witches Coven’—a wooden hut of which the insides remain unseen—and around the back to the shed where, apparently, the collection is housed. I wait outside while they ‘set up’ the museum, which appears to be more like a theatre, as they switch on lights and reassemble props and furniture.

—TASMANIAN GROTESQUE

Just as ‘the whole of the United States is spangled with wax museums’,⁵ Tasmania’s landscapes are thick with what Edward Colless calls ‘grotesqueries’.⁶ In Colless’ gloss, grotesqueries are sites where a ‘degenerate kind of folk art’ is produced as part of Tasmanian ‘local lore and dedicated to amateur, often lifelong, enthusiasms’.⁷ Colless says this art is degenerate ‘because it has been compromised in the effort to be incorporated within tourist commerce’.⁸ In the Tasmanian grotesqueries that Colless discusses—miniature villages such as Mole Hill, and sprawling, home-grown museums like Copping Colonial on the way to Port Arthur—a pastime is transfigured into a folk art of grotesquerie, of unbounded and chronologically incomplete embellishment’.⁹ Colless suggests such grotesque sites make up the ‘Tasmanian Grotesque’, a low-key aesthetic that revels in the strange and peculiar, which he charts ostensibly in terms of a tradition of folk-centred visual arts. Colless’



Figure 4: UFO, front yard, Shorty’s Private Collection



Figure 5: Front yard, Shorty's Private Collection

work bears all the traces of Bakhtin's rendering of the grotesque in his study of Rabelais in relation to carnivalesque humour and an aesthetics of superabundance and heterogeneity. Colless' own hyperbolic and excessive descriptions—a language, it appears, of Nietzschean error and risk—effectively matches these outlandish sites, intimating a glimpse of the 'real'.

The kind of semiotic grotesquery at work here is also evident in Flinders Island resident Arne Erikssen's 'kingdom' of houses assembled from scraps of driftwood and discarded objects, as seen in Roger Scholes' documentary, *Last Port of Call*.¹⁰ Lisa Garland's portrait photography also speaks to this aesthetic, portraying eccentric collectors living on Tasmania's north west coast in a fashion that recalls Diane Arbus' work, with their sympathy to detail and simultaneous emphasis on the banal and peculiar. Tasmanian grotesque might also be traced not only to backwater locations and rumours of two-headedness, but also to Tasmania's shack culture, the peculiar and abundant presence of roadside topiary, quirky towns such as Dootown where every house bears 'doo' in its name, and to the latter-day celebrity domestic goddess, Marjorie Bligh, whose home hints and cookery books encourage an ethic of excessive thrift and frugality. A grotesque staging of irregular detail, ornament and embellishment—stuff usually relegated to the margins of aesthetic and cultural practice—is clearly visible in such sites and practices.¹¹ As with the case of those elaborate designs combining the fantastic with the realistic which framed a more serious artwork, popular from the Renaissance onward, the grotesque mode typically flaunts the nonsensical, the trivial and the debased.¹²

The dense concentration of semiotic grotesquery that sprawls the back roads of Zeehan—Whyte Street and escaping into Shaw Street, or vice versa depending on which direction you're driving—displays the particular resonance of these sites in Zeehan as a town that, like many Tasmanian towns based around primary and secondary industries, is slowly dying. Shorty's Private Collection, in particular—on the margins of a marginal town—dramatises the diabolical potential of collecting junk in a place on the wild, 'other' side of Tasmania, a transformative, performative, and potentially transgressive practice that negotiates death and life and questions what it means to collect a place and its 'stuff'. Like the practice of mining which once defined the places Shorty collects and once worked, Shorty's collection—itsself a view from below—unearths a region's stuff and re-members it differently.

—GETTING LOST

The first time I visited Shorty's collection, its eponymous collector was nowhere in sight. As I was led through the collection by his wife, I wondered who this 'Shorty' was—my mind flickered with images of freak midgets as I passed through his collections of scrap mining articles and gnarled bits of timber forged into popular cartoon characters, mythological creatures and notable figures from television. From timber and metal debris—odds and ends gathered from around abandoned mining sites throughout the west coast—Shorty creates a diabolical fantasia of real and fictional figures characterised by varying degrees of alterity. But when I finally came to meet the man behind this grotesque spectacle—the mysterious Wizard of Oz I had come to think of him as—I was mildly disappointed. Rather than stumbling onto my own genuine example of Tasmanian freakery, the man I met and later interviewed was, I learned, already something of a celebrity. He proudly told me that he had featured on ABC TV's program *Collectors*, and a host of people from other TV programs had visited his collection, including Neil Kearney from Channel 7. Former Tasmanian premier Michael Field was one of the first to tour his collection and a faithful backpacker tour operator had also visited weekly, bringing a busload of young international tourists. Shorty is something of a performer when he takes visitors through the museum, and the name assigned to him from his time underground has the effect of a stage name. This means he was also astute about interview protocols and knew how to answer my questions, how and where to

embellish, gloss and evade. Speaking of 'Farque Ranch' around the corner, Shorty says: 'I think he's a bit of an eccentric like myself. Yeah, I think this street is! ... They're a bit loopy [in this street].' Shorty's self-reflexiveness reminded me that this is a place that, in Kathleen Stewart's words, cannot be 'gotten "right"', cannot be assumed or predetermined by abstract models, but exists only through a diacritics of dialogue.¹³ Indeed, Shorty's Private Collection appears to be an exercise in error, as it were—as revealed through the precarious and subjective process of collecting.

If, as Benjamin notes, the collection only has meaning in relation to its personal owner, then Shorty's Private Collection might appear to display the intimate relation that exists between the object and its collector.¹⁴ Shorty began collecting minerals as a boy at the age of twelve after he moved to Zeehan with his family from Wynyard on the state's north-west coast. By then, Zeehan's silver mines had closed, and only the Renison Bell tin mine fifteen kilometres away remained productive. After working there for thirty-two years, Shorty took early retirement and began to collect mining equipment from abandoned mine sites, as well as bricks, timber, bottles and other discarded materials he came across on his trips along the west coast. He eventually opened his collection to the public in 1995. What began as Shorty's collection of precious and unusual minerals and rocks has grown into a grotesquerie containing multiple objects and forms made from waste collected from around the West Coast.

On his weekly peregrinations—often with his collector friend and his dog—Shorty accumulates small-scale fragmentary objects from abandoned mining sites around Gormanston and Linda, Philosopher's Ridge, the old smelter site at Crotty and around Lake Burbury. '[We go] out in the bush, walk along the beaches, up creeks,' Shorty tells me, in what seems to me to be a rural variant of the ocular gastronomy of *flânerie*.¹⁵ His travels around the west coast resemble something of the French tradition of 'gleaning' or the figure of the scavenger as described by Walter Benjamin. But as Shorty wanders the west, he collects the remnants of modernity in its industrial guise. In one sense, then, Shorty's collection appears to act as a memorial to the now-finished practice of mining which the town was moulded around. But the scope of Shorty's collection and the mode of his collecting practice is much more diverse than this, which opens up questions about waste.

From the west coast surrounds, Shorty takes objects that have already been discarded: articles as diverse as old bricks, shoes, false teeth, Indigenous tools, and thylacine dung. The wasted objects collected are most often fashioned into objects designed for display in either his collection or Gail's Monster Museum, objects valued for their spectacular visual power that actively solicits the attention of the visitor. In this sense, 'that which is rejected is ploughed back for a renewal of life'.¹⁶ Gay Hawkins suggests, with reference to Agnes Varda's film *The Gleaners and I*, that 'wasted objects can be reanimated and brought back to life'.¹⁷ When waste is animated, notes Hawkins, the line between subject and object, human and non-human, useful and useless, dead and living is disrupted.¹⁸ In this guise, waste becomes a relational force which opens to possibilities—of both enchantment and disturbance.¹⁹ But this is not a simple matter of rescuing and reanimating the rejected inanimate matter. Rather, the process of collection might be more likened to the process of bodily ingestion and release, whereby the bloated body releases material 'in fits and starts in all manner of recombination, inversion, mockery, and degradation'.²⁰ In this sense, the objects appear to be less subject to redemption or re-enchantment than to a grotesque reconfiguration.

The process of Shorty's collecting and refashioning of wasted objects appears to blur the line between 'collection'—usually defined through consumption—and 'art'—usually conceived of as production. The altered forms are indeed the teratological, the weird and incredible, but they are reproductions of those characters *already* deemed weird by popular culture. The objects of Shorty's collection are, rather, marvels in human craftsmanship; they are less admired for their originality than for their likeness to the original character they purport to represent. Indeed, it seems that there is an ongoing pursuit of perfection, as seen in Shorty's numerous attempts to faithfully replicate the friendly alien character, ET. There are three ETs in Shorty's collection, and a 'Mrs ET'. When I last visited Shorty, he enthusiastically showed me his latest ET, made from tin and *papier-maché* and clothed in a red hoodie, just like ET's human friend's in the film: 'You wouldn't get a better ET than that. The one in the movie is not much different to that.' Shorty also pointed out that it took him a long time to find the right piece of knotted timber to make ET's hand.



Figure 6: ET display, Shorty's Private Collection

The visual curiosity of Shorty's collection hence comes not from the authenticity or antiquity of the objects, as it might in the tradition of the *Wunderkammer*—the 'cabinet of curiosities' of the European Renaissance period where singularly 'authentic' and 'exotic' objects were assembled by aristocrats and princes from their faraway travels—but from the unusual forms the junked objects take on after their transformation and assimilation into the collection, which is something of a theatrical display trading on brazen exhibitionism in the best tradition of P.T. Barnum's American dime museums. But it is in this aesthetic of, perhaps paradoxically, private theatrical unveiling that the collection does take its cue, in part, from the *Wunderkammer*. Shorty's collection resembles the private and 'pre-modern' mode of the *Wunderkammer* in its focus on the rare and exceptional, and in its selection of objects: objects are typically selected for their 'singular qualities rather than for their typicality, and encouraged principles of display aimed at a sensational, rather than a rational and pedagogic effect'.²¹ Like the *Wunderkammer*, too, Shorty's collection eschews scientific classification and rigid systems of order that are central to the formation of classical and modern museums and played a significant role in the production and organisation of knowledge and

subjectivity.²² In the *Wunderkammer*, the singular object is not categorised by way of theological nor scientific principles; it stands representative of a subjective and hidden knowledge of the world.²³ Shorty's collection is curatorially 'unsound' compared to the standard of modern public museums in its random and rampant selection of artefacts, and there appears to be little classification or explanatory description of items. Where there is reference to an object, it has the effect less of explaining it in terms of a revelatory narrative than of making a punning reference to systems of representation by way of playing with the order of colloquial language. This is the case with a pair of wood-turned feet, with attached label, 'I GOT THE BOOT!' It is also the case with a 'BOTTLE IN A ROOT' and the 'ROOT IN A BOTTLE'. Shorty's labels immediately question the ability of the label to explain or describe the display, and appear to divert or avert the penetrative, interpretive gaze. This is also the case in the display which appears to be about a fictitious missing person. Alongside a collection of fossilised hats, a whistle, and dirty false teeth, is an antique photographic image of a man in the bush with an accompanying label: 'IT'S NO WONDER, TRYING TO FIND THE REST OF HIM IN THIS SCRUB!!!' The punning wit that is evident in these displays does not point to the tactility of the objects but instead refers us to what de Certeau would call Shorty's 'tactical' engagement with powerful modes of representation. The tactic refers to an intervention within the strategic and powerful order of things, a move which would take 'advantage of "opportunities"'.²⁴ It does so, says de Certeau, through 'wit' and 'trickery' which are temporally constituted 'acts'.²⁵



Figure 7: Bottle in a root, Shorty's Private Collection

Just as these labels defer to puns and word-games, so does the entire collection appear to play a cunning game with the visitor. As fearsome as it is ludicrous, the collection disorients her with its chaotic assemblage of things and, in this regard, the collection exceeds the delimited space of the traditional mode of the curiosity cabinet, as that which can be mastered by the eye. Shorty's collection cannot be mastered visually, at least not in the entire sense, since the collection sprawls seemingly endlessly throughout the rooms of the house and outside.

The visitor's first impression as she enters the 'shed' is that the building is entirely separate from the house—a 'filthy workshop' akin to Frankenstein's. But she soon learns that this shed is more than it seems, as she is led from room to room, down a ramp, and into more rooms—along the way meeting the Flintstone family, a number of ETs, Bugs Bunny, Agro, Mr Squiggle, Jaws, as well as the Tasmanian thylacine. At the end of the tour, the all-too familiar boom of a television behind a door signals that we are at the edge of the living room. The collection in fact forms a monstrous distension to the house; what might appear as a fantastic, coexistent reality into which one might step (say, from the living room), as a child might step into Narnia, is more apparently a warping of *this* world. Shorty's collection resembles that ever-open and incomplete body that Bakhtin celebrates in his work on Rabelais and medieval carnivals. Shorty describes his collection as an 'ongoing thing'. As a 'thing' the collection mutates, as does a living organism, as the it continues to grow. The movement of the collection—its open-endedness—corresponds to the grotesque's celebration of movement and acts of transition and metamorphosis.²⁶ Bakhtin celebrates that which 'protrudes, bulges, sprouts, or branches off'.²⁷ The collection now contains such diverse 'oddities' as toy dinosaurs, mugs, a replica antique mine complete with a stuffed mannequin miner, and an 'adults only' cupboard containing male and female genitalia (styled here after the 'animalistic' Tina Turner) hewn from timber. Spatially unbounded and chronologically incomplete, the collection appears to be overwhelming the house. As Shorty told me, 'The minerals are still going! And wood's still going ... When I find it! It's an ongoing thing, but I'm running out of room so I'm going to have to stop. Either that, or build around it some more! It'll cost a fortune!' It appears that Shorty mines not just the jewels but the junk left behind by the west coast's lost populations—and not just the stuff directly associated with mining, but that of an entire culture

created around mining on the west coast. And as Shorty's collection grew, the house grew to accommodate it in a grotesque extension: the 'shed' is not a shed at all but an ex-Hydro housing unit from the dying town of Tullah, a town also forged through mining and which later housed itinerant Hydro workers. After the construction of the Rosebery Hydro dam was completed in 1987, the houses were sold off to the general public and Shorty bought the house—indeed, virtually 'collected' it—for \$5000. Shorty's house itself appears to be part of the collection and Shorty talks of it in the same way as he does of his other acquisitions. It is, in Marco Frascari's words, an 'architecture of spoils': a fragmentary architecture which takes up the leftovers, the ruins, the incompletions of other buildings.²⁸

In the tradition of Bakhtin's carnivalesque excess, Shorty's collection also displays a certain sense of 'protocol and ritual based on laughter and consecrated by tradition ... which [is] sharply distinct from the serious official, ecclesiastical, feudal, and political cult forms and ceremonials. Carnival is a spectacle lived by people who are all participants, actors, not spectators.'²⁹ Bakhtin says that carnival forms 'offered a completely different, non-official ... extra political aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside officialdom'.³⁰ But the grotesque carnival is not interpreted here as a way *out of* 'oppression, danger, and contingency', to quote Kathleen Stewart, but is instead perceived, indeed, performed, as 'a way in through mimetic excess. It pushes into the matter of things, intensifies latent forces to the point of their visibility.'³¹

As a view from 'below', Shorty's collection appears to highlight the representational limits of Zeehan's 'official' museum in its collecting and making of objects that exceed not only historic authenticity but also systems of order and chronological arrangement of objects. Rather than purport to be a coherent representational universe like Zeehan's 'official' museum, Shorty's collection dramatises and performs the very limits of the official museum's representational universe by intensifying its guiding principles. In contrast to Zeehan's official museum, which would evince Susan Stewart's assertion that 'collection is the antithesis of creation' in its destruction of history and labour, Shorty's collection tends toward both collection and creation through its disordered, infinite, and boundless mode.³² In this sense, the collection straddles art and collecting, which appears to be in line with the grotesque itself: 'The grotesque appears to us to

occupy a margin between “art” and something “outside of” or “beyond” art ... it serves as a limit to the field of art and can be seen as a figure for a total art that recognises its own incongruities and paradoxes.’³³ Whereas that museum, too, ultimately speaks of death, consumption and what Susan Stewart would call ‘closed knowledge’ and confinement, Shorty’s collection speaks doubly of death and creation.³⁴ While death and consumption also work as the constitutive conditions of Shorty’s collection, Shorty’s collection is a deliberately aberrant display of an ‘unofficial’ folk culture. The radical aestheticism of Shorty’s collection would appear to make visible the fictions of representational realism inherent in Zeehan’s official museum. Shorty reanimates the junked objects by lifting them into the world of the collection but this is achieved through an exaggeration or radicalisation of decontextualisation. In this way, Shorty’s collection appears to dramatise Bennett’s assertion that ‘official’ museums have always been for the people but rarely *of* them.³⁵

—WEIRD FUZZ

When I interviewed Shorty in his lounge room, it was the hottest day of 2007 and he was reluctant to turn off the television set, though he did turn the volume down. Throughout the interview, he would look past me to the TV screen. The TV remains the dominant and most pervasive mode of media technology over and above the internet in Zeehan, as on the west coast more generally; as in most regional locations in Tasmania, the internet here is accessed mostly through a government-initiated Online Access Centre. And, also like the west coast more generally, most of the mining company houses that remain include registration with Austar, making the watching of television a popularly enshrined practice. In a town where almost every house has a satellite dish, where the light of the TV staves off (and epitomises) small-town boredom with news of the ‘world’, the images received here—at the ‘end of the line’, as the residents of Cunnamulla said of Tasmania in Dennis O’Rourke’s documentary of the same name—appear to take on a heightened importance.³⁶ Via the otherworldly medium of the satellite dish, television images are beamed from metropolitan centres to this far-flung region. The satellite dish transmits the figures of weird cosmic otherness with which Shorty is so fascinated which he can then replicate—the UFO out the front of his house, the numerous interpretations of ET,

the wood-turned Mr Squiggle ('the man from the moon'), as well as the other renderings of aliens made from wood, tin or *papier-maché*. But rather than convey a childlike or pathological rendering of excessive mimesis, Shorty's mediated freak show suggests the strangeness or 'interference' of interpretation that the grotesque mode itself engenders.

Shorty's collection reflects the fuzz and static of transmission itself, the weird interspace between production and consumption, collecting and art, mimesis and alterity, reality and fiction, here and there. Indeed, Shorty has acknowledged the satellite dish's role in delivery of the otherworldly: toward the end of my visit, his daughter entered the room to announce that a neighbour had an old satellite dish to give away. After some excited remarks, Shorty explained to me that 'they make good flying saucers'. Shorty's practice of re-membering evinces the powerful influence of media cultures on those isolated from its centres in a manner of grotesque reconfiguration, a power that entails a tactical and transgressive interference with *things*.

As the grotesque west coast country continues to be derided by visitors, locals take up resourceful and inventive measures to stave off the ghosts that have visited other west coast mining towns. The grotesquerie is intensified in these otherworldly self-understandings, materialising a desire to be seen, to be heard, to be visited. As one Zeehan resident states, 'we just need to feel important, like where we live and who we are matters'.³⁷

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—CORRECTION

A version of this essay published earlier in this issue of CSR should have acknowledged the following additional existing work in the area: Elizabeth McMahon, 'Tasmanian Lilliputianism: Miniature Villages and Model Citizens on the Tourist Trail', *Southerly*, vol. 61, no. 2, 2001, pp. 70–84 and Elizabeth McMahon, 'Wasted Memory and Generational History: Tasmania's Abandoned Places' in *Women Making Time: Contemporary Feminist Critique and Cultural Analysis*, ed. Elizabeth McMahon and Brigitta Olubas, University of Western Australia Press, Perth, 2006.

—NOTES

- ¹ Kathleen Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in an 'Other' America*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996, pp. 17–20.
- ² Peter Conrad, *Down Home: Revisiting Tasmania*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1988, p. 80.
- ³ Roland Barthes, *Incidents* [1987], trans. Richard Howard, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1992, p. 38.
- ⁴ Roger McDonald, *Airship* [1975], Picaro Press, Warners Bay, 2008, p. 33.
- ⁵ Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality* [1973], trans. William Weaver, Picador, London, 1987, p. 12.
- ⁶ Edward Colless, 'Tasmanian Grotesque', *Art and Australia* vol. 31, no. 3, 1994, p. 354.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰ Roger Scholes, *Last Port of Call*, Edward Street Film and Television, 2003, screened ABC TV, 27 April 2004.
- ¹¹ Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1982, pp. 26, 29.
- ¹² Mary Russo, *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity*, Routledge, New York, 1995, p. 5.
- ¹³ K. Stewart, p. 6.
- ¹⁴ Walter Benjamin, 'The Collector', *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, Schocken, New York, 1968, p. 67.
- ¹⁵ Author interview with Ray Keating, Zeehan, 5 January 2008.
- ¹⁶ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Routledge, London, 1966, p. 167.
- ¹⁷ Gay Hawkins, *The Ethics of Waste: How We Relate to Rubbish*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2006, p. 86.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 86.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ²⁰ Russo, p. 63.
- ²¹ Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, Routledge, London, 1995, p. 2.
- ²² *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- ²³ Krzysztof Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice, 1500–1800*, trans. Elizabeth Willis-Portier, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1990, p. 64.
- ²⁴ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* [1984], trans. Steven Rendall, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1988, p. 37.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

²⁶ Galt Harpham, p. 47.

²⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, [1965], trans. Hélène Iswolsky, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1984, p. 320.

²⁸ Russo, p. 100.

²⁹ Bakhtin, p. 7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5–6.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

³² S. Stewart, p. 160.

³³ Galt Harpham, p. xxii.

³⁴ S. Stewart, p. 161.

³⁵ Tony Bennett, 'Museums and "The People"' in *The Museum Time Machine: Putting Cultures on Display*, ed. Robert Lumley, Routledge, London, 1988, pp. 63–85.

³⁶ Dennis O'Rourke, *Cunnamulla*, ABC TV, 2000.

³⁷ Rodney Croome, 'The Death Wish Cowboys', *Island*, vol. 53, 1992, p. 52.