
Robert Manne considers that *Making Trouble* is a sequel to his ‘previous collection, *Left, Right, Left*’ (8). Published in 2005, this earlier anthology takes its title from Manne’s peripatetic, political positions, whereas *Making Trouble* compiles essays published since 2005, almost all of which ‘concern the politics and history of Australia’ (10). Introducing the collection, Manne feels no need to obscure or disown his political past. Provoked by ‘the failure of the Western Left to grasp the astonishing evil of communism’, after an ‘early attachment to the social democratic Left’, Manne’s allegiance turns towards the Right (8). Following the collapse of European communism, Manne’s sympathies return to the Left. At this point, separation with the Right takes place because of the failure of Western conservatives to acknowledge ‘the racist shadow that fell across their history’ and ‘their growing hostility to the struggles unleashed by the cultural revolution of the 60s’ (8). In the late 1990s, as Manne (in association with Raimond Gaita) writes more and more about Aboriginal child removal and the ‘stolen generations’ – he fuels an already tense relationship with the *Quadrant* board. Ultimately, Manne resigns his editorship of Australia’s flagship conservative journal. Eventually, his severance with the Right is made final because of ‘the role played by American neo-conservatives and their Australian followers in the invasion of Iraq’ (8).

Vigorous and passionate engagement in Australia’s cultural and political life comes at a cost and Manne wears his heart on his sleeve as he laments, ‘the metamorphosis of the group with whom I had fellow-travelled during the Cold War into apologists for American neo-imperialism and Western cultural hubris was particularly salutary and painful to me’ [8]. Thus, having set the scene akin to Tennyson’s *Ulysses*, with undiminished vigour, a newly radicalised Manne ventures forth to wage cultural battle once more. In *Making Trouble* his stated intention is to expose ‘the new Australian complacency’ and the presumption that ‘our goodness and wisdom are self evident and beyond question’ (6). No matter what Australians do in pursuit of our self interest ‘it is inconceivable that we will inflict any serious harm upon other countries and cultures’ (6). Exposing this ‘insufferable’ complacency, Manne takes on some powerful and dangerous targets: American and Australian neo-conservatives; the Murdoch media empire including mastheads such as the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Australian* and electronic outlets such as Fox News; ex-Prime Minister Howard; Tony Abbott and a populist conservative Coalition – the list goes on (9).

Two recent events serve to thrust Manne even further towards the Left. Firstly, his study of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) convinces him that the crisis is ‘grounded in the marriage of false ideology – faith in the magic of the unregulated market’ (9). Instead of inciting the return of ‘social democracy and neo-Keynesianism’, Manne is appalled that in the United States, the GFC heralds the rise of the Tea Party and the folksy (but venal) politics of Ma and Pa Kettle politicians like Sarah Palin, who gain legitimacy in right wing media outlets such as Fox News. The second event which radicalizes Manne is the rise of ‘global warming denialism’:
[t]he interests of the fossil fuel corporations – represented most crudely by the billionaire Koch brothers’ investment in the Tea Party and by Rupert Murdoch’s creation of Fox News, all of whose ‘journalists’ are under instructions to spruik the cause of climate change denialism – have, quite simply, won. (9)

In an Australian context, Manne considers that the ‘interconnected demise’ of Malcolm Turnbull and Kevin Rudd, along with the elevation of Tony Abbott to the leadership of the Liberal Party – ‘represents a victory of a similar although not irrevocable kind’ (9).

All but six of the thirty-two essays that appear in Making Trouble were originally published in the Monthly. Assembled for a general readership, these assured essays benefit from the argumentative coherence of being published in a single volume. Conservative readers are unlikely to be impressed but for those with leftward leaning views Making Trouble serves as an excellent summation and interrogation of recent Australian politics. The anthology also benefits from the good editing which organises the essays into the seven themes that have preoccupied Manne’s writings since 2005. In the first section, ‘The Howard Legacy’, Manne delivers a sustained and compellingly argued critique of John Howard’s prime ministership. On the other hand, this section also takes in essays on Mark Latham, Paul Kelly, Australian Muslims and an exchange of letters with Howard heir and Prime Minister in-waiting – Tony Abbott. The following section, ‘Asylum Seekers and Australian Democracy’ rewards the reader with one of the tour de force articles of the collection – ‘The Strange Case of Cornelia Rau’ – an essay that should be read by Australians of all political persuasions and which deserves be set as mandatory text in national civic studies (95).

Along with essays on Rupert Murdoch and the ABC in the ‘Media’ section, comes the second remarkable essay of the collection – ‘The Cyberpunk Revolutionary: Julian Assange’ (194). Manne’s tribute to the anarchic Assange is fulsome, as he credits him with one of the ‘few original ideas in politics’ which is Assange’s stated mission for the creation of WikiLeaks namely: ‘that world politics could be transformed by staunching the flow of information among corrupt power elites by making them ever more fearful of insider leaks’ (221). Certain to make the reader squirm uncomfortably, particularly in the Australian context, the section on ‘Climate Change’ incorporates Manne’s comprehensively researched pieces on the subject, as well as an article on the recent Victorian bushfires. Seven essays in ‘The Rise and Fall of Kevin Rudd’, serve as timely reminders of recent Australian political history. Reflecting on the impact of Australia’s past on present controversies, the section on ‘Past and Present’ takes in essays such as: ‘Pearson’s Gamble, Stanner’s Dream’ and ‘Gallipoli and the Armenian Genocide’. Unexpectedly, Manne concludes Making Trouble with a section dedicated to ‘Interpreting the Holocaust’. Yet, those familiar with Manne’s work as a polemicist will recognise that he merely ends where he begins. Over time, Manne has repeatedly stated that his individual political identity was profoundly shaped by the Holocaust, an event that has haunted him all his life. Manne’s parents came to Australia as post-war refugees and his grandparents died in the Holocaust. Consequently, some of the essays in this section are among the most thoughtful in the collection.
Where rhetoric refers to the use of language to argue and persuade, on the whole, *Making Trouble* serves as an exemplary study in rhetoric. You may or may not agree with the paradigm within which Manne frames a particular political or cultural reality yet once this is done, Manne focuses unswervingly on his target sustaining his arguments with extensive background research. In part, such intense application may point to the fact that Manne does not like to be wrong. All of which makes it all the more admirable that Manne subjects his previous assumptions to such serious scrutiny. I venture to suggest that in *Making Trouble* rather than finding Manne to be irrelevant, a younger generation may well be inspired to find a voice for their own concerns in this older cultural warrior who refuses to become compliant and domesticated within a public sphere dominated by a submissive, populist and conservative media.

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