



## HOAXERS USE SUFFERING SYNDROME.

By Alan DUFF.

1,096 words

31 March 1997

Daily News

THDAIL

6

English

(c) The Daily News, INL 1997.

IT'S coincidence or Australian incidence, that every time I'm over here there's a literary controversy raging. It makes my own personal experiences of being controversial tame in comparison.

Here it's the literary hoax, as you'll recall of one Helen "Demidenko" a "Ukrainian" writing of experiences in her erstwhile mother country, when she was really Helen Darville, daughter of British immigrant parents. She was awarded the nation's most prestigious literary prize. More recently, as a columnist for the Brisbane Courier she raped and pillaged an article she got off the internet, claiming it as her own. When exposed, she was quite unapologetic for plagiarising someone else's work to the extent that about 70% of the column was - verbatim - the original author's. She said it was there and she took it. So the newspaper editor took her from the job. I wonder where she'll turn up next.

Now they've got one "Wanda Koolmatrie" supposedly an **Aboriginal** woman whose novel, *In My Own Sweet Time*, so impressed the critics they gave it one of those awards meant to encourage women's writing. Now they've got egg on their faces at "Wanda" revealed as a bloke, a white one, Leon Carmen.

The real embarrassment is that these hoaxers reveal, somewhat similar dishonest qualities in the critics eager to award prizes and shower praise on these writers not, as they ought, for the literary quality, but because the writer is ethnic, woman, indigenous, anything but an Anglo-Saxon, let alone male, because that lot don't know "true suffering" while females, ethnics and blacks do. ("So do ugly people, mate. And those of low intelligence. And the emotionally afflicted. How about the shy?" I hear forgotten voices outside my window.)

I struck this syndrome last year as a guest at the Vancouver Writers' Festival, itself extremely well run I hasten to add, with a star cast, and I wasn't one of them! I shared a panel with a couple of Native Canadians (they never call them Indians anymore) one who was half-native, half-white, a male and, as it turned out, a slyly self-pitying one.

The other, a genuine article from up north somewhere, who was rather sweetly vacuous and, I think, astonished at her literary success. I'm not a jealous person, I swear. But this women's writing wouldn't have got seventh-form pass grades outside of a politically correct environment such as has afflicted Canada when it comes to their natives. Of course we had the same disease here, where anything Maori could not be criticised.

The half-caste fulla served his tears on a bed of ice surrounded by garnishes of more tears because he was of two races, "caught in between. Can you imagine this profoundly sad state? No you can't. Only I can;" - and how bad can that be. (Boo-hoo!)

Yet as a poet he was rather good. Trouble was, he didn't have the confidence in his poetry enough to let it stand - or fall - on its own merits. No, he had to make sure it couldn't possibly be held up for scrutiny, cold "whiteman's" analysis. So first he made a speech stating quite specifically that only he and his ilk knew the true meaning of suffering, he even more. Then he intoned his self-lament like a dirge. If he'd leaned across and looked at me he'd have seen true suffering - of his public weeping and blatant **fraud**.

One thing these hoaxers and fraudsters do is expose the literary set for being patronising to minorities and females and being guilty of subjective judgement. I hope, too. New Zealand's own sexist nonsense of having a Women Writers' Festival is exposed for the hypocrisy it is. Imagine the outcry from that same camp if we had a men's equivalent. I feel the same way about the bullshit Maori Writers and Artists setup. If there was a

European Writers and Artists organisation the Maori would be calling it the Ku Klux Klan and attacking with hammers.

There's another reason for the hoaxer doing what he/she does: being told by the narrow minded, inquisitorial politically-correct that, "A man can't write as if he's a woman. So there." Really? This author wrote his first book almost solely through the eyes of a woman, and/or her daughter. "You have to be ethnic to write about ethnic matters." I got that crap from wanna-be Maori writers who told me I was duty-bound to write as a Maori. And that under no circumstances was a ono-Maori qualified to write on Maori matters. I just sneaked through being almost exactly half of each.

Leon Carmen has written a most convincing retort about why he wrote his book as if it was by an Aborigine woman. I can't quote it, but suffice to say he wanted to explore the extent of what it was to be a black woman in her own country and all that that entails. And that's reason enough.

I myself struggled with Warriors until it occurred to me that it could only be written through the eyes of a mother living in those circumstances. Same with the character Grace in how she saw the well-off, seemingly happy, Pakeha middle-class family, the Tramberts.

A male youth hiding in a tree spying on such a family would never have noticed the floral patterns on the curtains and nor picked up on most of the subtle meanings and undertones. As for a child being raped, as Grace was, what a huge challenge that was to see it through the eyes of the teenage girl.

So before we pass judgement on these so-called hoaxers, let's hear them out first. Two of my literary heroes, Mark Twain and William Faulkner, both wrote Negro characters and the unique dialogue as if they were Negro themselves.

A writer is usually a simple recorder of that which interests him. He tries his best to capture the tone, essence, soul, idiosyncrasies of his characters and their special characteristics. Doing it from the inside is our ultimate mountain challenge. And we'll try it wearing trousers, a dress, a tutu, bearskin, lace panties or nothing at all.

It's the mountain that counts. Because the view up there is better. Or just climbing and sweating is fun enough.

(c) The Daily News, INL 1997.

Document thdail0020011003dt3v00613

### Search Summary

Text	Aborginal and fraud
Date	All Dates
Source	All Sources
Author	All Authors
Company	All Companies
Subject	All Subjects
Industry	All Industries
Region	All Regions
Language	English
News Filters	Region: Australia
Results Found	5
Timestamp	15 August 2021 7:32 GMT