

much of the worst of geopolitical realities, he retains an optimism that workable systems can be created and employed to produce a sane international order. Whether, in the age of Trump, many will share his optimism is another matter.

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Whispering softly to me....

***How to be an Academic: The Thesis Whisperer Reveals All* by Inger Mewburn**

ISBN 978-1-7422-3507-3, Sydney, Australia, New South Publishing, 328 pp., 2017.

Reviewed by Andrys Onsman

Inger Mewburn is the Thesis Whisperer (<https://thesiswhisperer.com>), the blog site indispensable for anyone who is thinking about doing a PhD; anyone who is doing a PhD and anyone who has done a PhD. It is a wonderfully practical gift to all of the above, and a godsend to all supervisors, especially those who don't think they need it. If you think that, then you really do need it. And as an aside, the site has also had its benefits to Mewburn herself, as she is now (as a consequence to the site, she claims) director of research training at the ANU. Mewburn did her PhD in Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning at the University of Melbourne, which is where I work. Apparently, she graduated in 2009, which is well before I started, so there is no obvious conflict of interest. But I do know people who know her, and they say she is very nice. So, there you go.

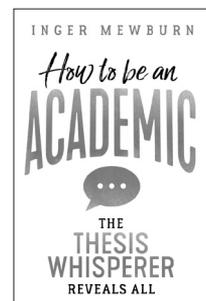
Her new book, *How to be an Academic*, draws heavily on the blogs and posts she has put on the site over the years; which in the hands of a less skilled narrator would be enough to suggest double-dipping and cashing-in. But Mewburn is a skilled communicator and instead of cutting and pasting what is already out there, she organises and contextualises her contentions without resorting to the usual academic sleight-of-hand of couching everything in terms of one standardised theoretical framework or other, like 'looking through a phenomenological lens' or 'coming at it as postmodernist functionary'. Thankfully, the book transcends all that, and is so much the better for it. First and foremost, it is accessible: I read the whole thing, cover to cover in a day and enjoyed every word. It is entirely useful. Even the bits that aren't.

Few books about doing your doctorate have a chapter about writing 10,000 words in a day and not going 'bat

shit crazy'. Although that term made me think of David Attenborough in a dingy cave, and I don't really believe you can write 10,000 words every day, I could see how it could possibly be done every now and then; like when panic stations are looming. If someone had shown me how it could be done when the faeces, cheiropteran or not, was about to meet the whirling blades, I would have suffered considerably less angst during my own studies.

But the book is about much more than doing your doctorate. It's about being an academic, which, given the title, is quite appropriate. If you had to boil the advice therein into three words, it would probably be 'don't do it'. And not to use word 'therein'. But she knows full well that few people will listen to that advice. And she also knows full well that universities know that full well too, and will have little hesitation in exploiting that desire. For those of us who have other strings on our bow, academia provides a reasonably steady stream of support for our other activities, which in turn often makes us better at teaching or researching, and worse at managementy (Oh bugger off, Microsoft spell checker, that is a perfectly good word!) things. Unfortunately, it is the last that seems to have a disproportionate effect on becoming a real, tenured academic, known, in universities as in prison, as a 'lifer'. Those gigs are hard to get but Mewburn articulates the must-dos to give yourself the best chance of getting a toe hold.

Most of us who have climbed, albeit temporarily, up into the professoriate, have had help. Finding a mentor is a good step. Finding a good mentor is a big step. Their advice is invaluable. Having the DVC (Research) tell me that my application for promotion needed drastic rewriting didn't immediately plunge me headfirst into the slough



of despair because I trusted her completely. Although I did, just for a moment, dip a toe into that loveless lake, I knew that she was basically right. And so it proved. If you can't find a good, trustworthy mentor, buy this book. It won't hand you a tissue, buy you coffee and have a good chat, but it will provide succour, perspective and smile encouragingly as you take a deep breath in preparation of following her advice.

Mewburn doesn't specifically mention mentoring: she bangs on about networking. And she's on the money: networks are essential. But she points out that they are a two-way process. You give as much as you take, else the ties will come undone. And universities covet your networks for their own purposes: a small step away from those companies that steal and sell your mobile numbers and email addresses, so they can annoy you at tea time. These days, in job hunting it's about who you know and who else you know (and how much status you can bring: grants, papers, citations, media profile, consultancies and so on). That's networking: rhizoming your way to the top. Build your networks solidly, purposefully and trustworthily.

The book is divided into six sections. The first covers her morphing into the thesis whisperer, which has a lot of "this is how I did it" stuff. The next five are beings: being academic; being productive; being a writer; being employed and being political. Each chapter is built around three or four blog posts, tied together by theme and commentary. All the chapters are easy to read, and for those of us who have been there, each contains a neck muscle strain of head nodding. Even as a middle aged

white male (generically privileged, apparently), there was much I recognised from both sides of the fence.

The book is also a fillip for those of us who didn't come from a privileged background – my parents were immigrants working in a factory to provide a better future for their children and it was thanks to Gough and scholarships that I was allowed to do a PhD and get a desk in the 'foreign students postgrad room' at the university – because it provides sound advice to get over hurdles that are sometimes missed by the Skips.* For example, Mewburn doesn't mention international students in any great depth but makes her advice accessible to them. That is such a fantastic strategy and skill; few international students, especially those who can speak English reasonably well, want to be treated differently. I expect the same applies for early career researchers. She doesn't talk down to anyone.

For me, the single most salient point of the book is the suggestion that getting an on-going job in a university isn't easy, but it is doable. If you are hell-bent on chasing that red balloon, be strategic, be proactive, don't lose sight of your aim (and your sanity), gird your loins and don't let the bastards grind you down. And have a copy of this book on your desk.

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**Anglo-Celtic Australians*

English as she is spoke

***The Career Trajectories of English Language Teachers* by Penny Haworth & Cheryl Craig (Eds.)**

ISBN 978-1-873927-87-8, Oxford, UK, Symposium Books, 256 pp., 2016.

Reviewed by Neil Mudford

This book contains a wealth of stories from and about English language teachers and their students. Many stories are very moving and their variety and complexity are striking. Acquiring English language proficiency can be vital for employment and mobility for those whose first language is not English. Throughout the book, it is clear that English teachers find their work richly rewarding. The rewards include satisfaction in helping people in a

vital area of their lives, meeting a diverse range of people of various cultures who are well travelled and being able to travel yourself with skills and qualifications that are valued worldwide.

As stated in the Foreword, the book's particular importance lies partly in the fact that little has been written about this huge variety of English language teacher experiences and their cultural, political and economic

