

Miss Craig goes to Chicago (Jean Martin finds Australian sociology)

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Abstract

Jean Martin, born Jean Craig, was the founding mother of Australian sociology. Beginning her career in the early 40s at the University of Sydney with A P Elkin, enthusiast for sociology and practitioner of anthropology as well as religion, she inherited a rich intellectual culture but also had to make her own. After completing her MA and further research on farming life in northern New South Wales in 1945, she worked further for postwar reconstruction via Elkin and then, in 1947, spent the academic year at the University of Chicago. She was much influenced by American scholars like Warner and Dollard; but she was already thinking in a so to say Durkheimian cultural manner before Chicago. This paper opens up some of these times and issues, to wonder what Jean knew first.

Keywords: Jean Martin, Jean Craig, A P Elkin, Sydney, Chicago, sociology.

Jean Craig was born in Melbourne in 1923 and grew up in Sydney, where she also died in 1979. She took a BA at Sydney working with A P Elkin, one of the founding fathers of Australian anthropology; and she, in turn, as Jean Martin became the founding mother of Australian sociology in the establishment process of the discipline in the sixties. By the age of 22 she was completing on her MA with Elkin. Its subject was rural life in northern New South Wales. Subsequent early research included a major report on two soldier settlements in NSW (1946), this conducted via Elkin and the Postwar Reconstruction Unit of the Federal Government. By 1947 she and her best mate, Florence Harding had decided to study sociology in the US. At this point there were no doctoral programs offered in Australia. They wrote to Dollard, at Yale, whose work they admired; and to Chicago. Chicago picked up. She spent the academic year 47-8 and then some working with the cream of the crop – Lloyd Warner, Robert Redfield, Wirth, Blumer, Burgess, Carl Rogers, William H. Whyte.

The two women enrolled in a coursework PhD program with the Committee of Human Development.

Together with Florence Harding Jean Craig conducted fieldwork in Hegewisch, a German-Polish precinct on the south side. Returning home via the UK and Europe, she took further lectures at the LSE by Laski, Firth and Shils. She remained in contact with Shils when, back in Sydney, she took up casework in industrial sociology, now working on and in a clothing factory associated with the retailer David Jones in Sydney and the Kayser hosiery factory in Goulbourn in regional NSW with reference to the usual issues of labour turnover, morale and absenteeism. In these years Jean Craig developed an interest in migration, initially in internal migration, for example, of youth and especially young women exiting country for city. In the absence of Durkheimian community building, country life stifled, women especially. Women would seek income, independence and meaning, but also ego identity and recognition increasingly in paid work, in an Australia which had always been heavily urbanised in terms of population distribution. Girls left for the city, where they often didn't fit.

From 1949 the establishment of the Australian National University in Canberra as a national research institution meant that local PhD work became possible within Australia. Jean worked with Siegfried Nadel now on displaced persons, and submitted in 1955. The result was a thick sociological enterprise, both more dense and more robust than her Sydney MA, which was loosely constructed through entirely comprehensive in narrative form. Now married to historian Allan Martin, Jean followed the pattern of his appointments until her first real job took her straight to the top. Her first significant academic appointment was as foundation Professor of Sociology at La Trobe University, where Allan Martin was simultaneously appointed Foundation Professor of History, and the two disciplines were closely worked together, following the inspiration of the Sussex model. Jean Martin

produced many papers, and at least one hallmark book, *The Migrant Presence*, as well as the major Adelaide study on migrant networks, *Community and Identity* (1972), which established her as a major force in defence of the emergent idea of multiculturalism. Her most enduring effect otherwise, in addition to teaching, mentoring and institution building, was evident in her work on commissions and reports, including the pathbreaking *Henderson Commission of Inquiry into Poverty* (1975), the Karmel Report's Commonwealth Schools *Commission of Inquiry* on the educational needs of girls and women (1974), her *Survey of the Educational Experiences of Children of non-English-speaking Origin* (1972) and her contribution to *Who Cares? Family Problems, Community Links and Helping Services* (1977).

Various challenges face us (Sheila Shaver, Trevor Hogan, Amanda Watson and myself) as intellectual biographers of Jean Martin. One is simply to periodise her work. Another is to seek to explain its changes, shifts and transitions. As I have already intimated, there is a significant shift from the tenor of her early work to that of her PhD; and it would be tempting to view this as the direct result of her time and experience in Chicago. The earlier work, the 1945 MA on rural sociology, and the 1946 research project on soldier settlement, already, however show clear and powerful Durkheimian sensibilities, which can be attributed to Elkin's influence, but also to the two-way traffic between Australian anthropology and the metropolis.

Australia was attractive to anthropologists because of the example of aboriginal culture, as mediated by Spencer and Gillen via Durkheim's *Elementary Forms*. Radcliffe-Brown notoriously took Lloyd Warner along on his expedition to Australia; and Warner famously insisted throughout his life that his subsequent sociology was an attempt to apply the knowledge base of his fieldwork with the Murngin people finally crystallised in *A Black Civilization* (1937) to the organisational and cultural life of American modernity, as in

Newburyport, Mass., or Yankee City. Jean Martin's undeclared position was exactly the same: to seek to legitimate anthropology as sociology, or was it the other way around? This was also Elkin's ambit: an anthropologist of aboriginal culture and religion, he was an ordained Anglican minister and the founder of the shortlived Australian Institute of Sociology at Sydney and editor of its progressivist journal *Social Horizons*. Elkin became Professor of Anthropology at Sydney in 1934, after Radcliffe-Brown and Raymond Firth, working a double shift as Rector of his country parish in the country area where he encouraged Jean Craig to research. The ambit of Warner, Elkin and Craig/Martin is nevertheless apparent: whether construed as 'moderns' or 'traditionals', Australian blacks and whites live in communities that fulfil similar needs and functions. We are more like each other than we might at first care to think. (But to anticipate later developments into the seventies: if community is the local group, what happens to this premise when we introduce the idea of multiculturalism?)

Jean Craig's early research focussed powerfully on the material life of dirt poor whites, as well as those who fared marginally better in farming, dairy and fruit. She worked as research assistant for Elkin's books on *Citizenship for the Aborigines* (1944) and *Aboriginal Men of High Degree* (1946), though Jean never wrote on aboriginal culture; all her work on displaced people and migrants was focussed on newer immigrants, from the Baltic states after World War 2 to her pioneering work on the Vietnamese refugees to Australia consequent on war's end in 1975.

Jean worked earlier at the ANU for Mick Borrie (from 1951) who was then researching his pioneering book *Italians and Germans in Australia*. Academic sociology was born in Australia in the fifties as demography. The traditional obsession of the white invaders from 1788 had been with 'peopling a nation', filling up the 'empty' spaces, making the stolen deserts bloom. Aborigines were rendered invisible in this process because they

were viewed as one of the oldest peoples, a 'dying race'. Sociology became the study of white or whiter Australians, and cities; anthropology took on the original inhabitants, who for long were not viewed as modern or urban (though that they of course also were). From 1952 to 1954 Craig worked on the assimilation of displaced persons in a large rural town in NSW close to Canberra. Her subsequent work was that of the journeywoman; lectures and short courses or class and culture, tropical communities, social work, etc, followup work on her PhD, resulting in *Refugee Settlers* (1965).

Evidence scattered throughout Jean Martin's papers held at the National Library, Canberra, and the Butlin Library, ANU, as well as in her Chicago notebooks (communicated to us by Bill Martin, now in our possession) make it clear that her daily sociological thinking when it came, say, to class was as much influenced by the Warner study as her thinking about race was influenced by Dollard's *Caste and Class in a Southern Town*. There were more crossovers, of course. Her industrial sociology was influenced by the work of the Australian born and trained Elton Mayo, who had earlier taken on Warner at Harvard from 1929 to 1935. Warner was beginning his work on Newburyport at the same time as Mayo was working on Hawthorne. Warner's multivolume study of Yankee City significantly ended on a Durkheimian, rather than conventionally American-Weberian note. The largest volume of all, and in some ways the most innovative was *The Living and the Dead* (1959). Less well known, Warner also entertained the idea of conducting research into white Australian society, as well as Chicago and Yankee City and alongside *A Black Civilization* (Elkin to Hole, 22/10/47, University of Sydney Archives; Hole to Elkin, 4/10/47, idem). While Mayo had no such known plans of return, his interest in trauma, like Warner's in death and memory, places them in the centre of anticipations of the newer American cultural sociology. One wonders, indeed, perhaps especially as an outsider, about the relative indifference of North American

scholars to Warner (cf Mildred Warner 1988) and Mayo (cf Trahair 1984) as well as to maverick Marxists like C L R James in *American Civilization* (1950).

Is there, then, a clear sense in which Jean Craig changes after she visits and works in Chicago? The answer to this question is yes, though it remains at present difficult precisely to define. Craig was already thinking like Durkheim before she left Australia. The report that she wrote for Elkin under the auspices of Postwar Reconstruction was already more ambitious than her MA. There she addressed Elkin's theorem that societies depended on five Durkheimian factors for their coherence: where the 'essential principles of social organisation are continuity with the past, contiguity, kinship, social expression and a common hope for the future' (Craig 1946: 2). At the conclusion of the study she adds a sixth: common occupation; which does not itself have general validity, but reinstates the centrality of economic bonds, as in the *Division of Labour in Society* (1946: 249). Craig has made the point earlier, in 'A Study of Rural Emigrants in Casino and Sydney', focussing on country women, girls and delinquents. Work is the key agent of assimilation, via the primary group, the employment group; and this is what takes Jean Craig into industrial sociology, even though she is essentially making it up for herself. Assimilation, in any case, can work through modern mechanisms like work, and not only through the institutions of tradition.

By the early-middle seventies Jean Martin was a pioneer of what she, like others, called multiculturalism. One of our other central tasks for this project is seeking to determine exactly what this meant. The logic of her earlier argument, just alluded to, is that inclusion rather than assimilation as a conformism is a social fact in modern societies. Multiculturalism is, in her view, a sociological fact: communities work as networks in different ways, intersected by class and ethnicity and gender. Networking is in any case also a social fact.

In this regard a nation state like Australia might be viewed as a community of communities, at least when the Federal, State and local state authorities consciously follow policies whose purpose is to encourage these networks, for it is they through which social life is already routinely mediated. The American postwar experience was doubtless one key horizon for this way of thinking. But there is no enthusiasm here, in Martin's work, for the theory or practice of strong assimilation. What is implied is rather a weaker politics of coexistence, based less on an overarching ideological unity or a strong identity politics than on a practical sense of ordinary trust as mediated through the culture of economic life. Even the most apparently bland tracts of suburbia, in this way of thinking, were criss-crossed by networks of support and action.

Thrown together by the accidents of world history, the peoples called and made into Australians by their state simply had to get on together. But this could also become a case of necessity into virtue, so that Martin's eventual argument in *The Migrant Presence* was for a robust cultural pluralism or 'structural pluralism'. Multiculturalism, in this way of thinking, became another way of recognising and encouraging pluralism. Where ethnic groups became significant actors in civil society, in a polity characterised by a strong state tradition, multiculturalism was a social fact. The nation-state would then operate as a network of networks, many of which were also necessarily transnational. But this is to take us beyond Jean Martin's times, through the challenge of establishing the distinction between what she achieved and the nature of the situation which we now face persists.

The broad sweep of Jean Martin's work thus crosses various curiosities concerning individuals, primary groups and their integration. Ethnic groups, factory groups work as little publics, or at least they can do; work groups are the more potentially democratic. Underlying this sociology is a strong sense that is closer to Durkheim than Renan: solidarity is less

ideological than practical. Trust is mediated as much by the ordinary commerce of everyday life as it is by spiritual bonding. We do not have to love each other to live together.

Doubtless Miss Craig's time in Chicago confirmed these sensibilities, at the very least. The detail of the case will have to be laid out with much more care as the span of our book opens out. I am grateful for the opportunity to share something of these lines of inquiry with you.

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