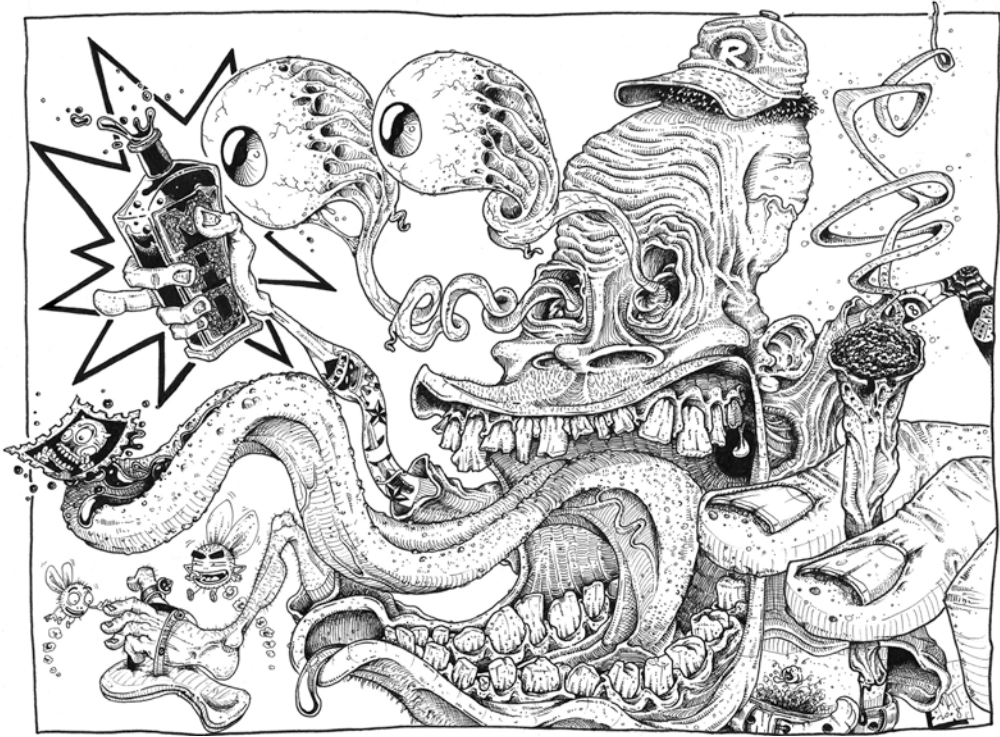


## Michael Wilding



### *You Are Writer*

The downside of early retirement was that in not going to work anywhere, you did not regularly and automatically meet any fellow wage-slaves, eager to rush off and have a long lunch with you. Or even a short one. Pawley was spending more and more time on his lantana farm up in the bush. And Dr Bee, who knew what Dr Bee was doing? The last time Henry had seen him had been from the window of a bus down the seedy end of town, standing outside a shop whose window declared 'All Your Oriental Needs Supplied.' All of them? Really? And then the bus had shuddered forward and Henry never knew whether Dr Bee had remained standing outside like an ageing Heathcliff, or had entered and been supplied.

He phoned Dr Bee and delivered his lament.

'Bad as employment was,' he said, 'it was at least a place to meet.'

'Ah, meat!' said Dr Bee. 'You are missing the young flesh that university supplied.'

'It's not that,' said Henry.

'Of course it is,' said Dr Bee. 'We are still human even if retired. We still have our desires and needs to fulfil.'

'Oriental ones?'

'Whatever turns you on,' said Dr Bee.

'I don't think of university as a flesh market.'

'Oh, yes, you do,' said Dr Bee. 'Or did. It was our equivalent of Hollywood. "A business that would feel lost if it didn't have a dozen or so women to 'introduce' every year." I quote,' he added, meticulous as ever in attribution, no point courting the opprobrium of plagiarism charges.

'You quote? What from?'

'The life of Nicole Kidman.'

'What on earth are you reading that for?'

'Media studies,' said Dr Bee.

'What media studies?'

'Our former Department of English Language and Literature, you may not have noticed since you claim no longer to enter its portals, is now designated the School of Letters, Art and Media. On the lam as hardened criminals used to say in those quaint old Pinewood movies. Or perhaps Solaam, to court our Islamic brethren and the oil producers.'

'And you're conscientiously keeping up to date with advances in the discipline by buying biographies of movie stars.'

'Who said anything about buying?'

Dr Bee asked. 'I settle on a sofa at the local chain store book emporium. A cup of tea beside me. A recipe book open to transcribe anything that looks interesting. A biography of a movie star, as you put it, to stir up the testosterone. And I survey the mid-morning trade. Mid-afternoon, too, if it's good.'

'A boulevardier of the shopping malls,' said Henry.

'It has its rewards,' said Dr Bee.

'I don't believe you.'

'There are also the satisfactions of prurience. I quote again: "gingery pubic hair, small breasts, and boyish hips." Not being a vegetarian I omit the