



## Torn: Costa Mandylor's New Film

Torn, Costa Mandylor's upcoming film was shot in Melbourne, home to Greek-Australian actor. The movie is about a bookseller who randomly meets Steve Clay (Mandylor), a successful real estate agent. In Steve, Daniel suddenly sees all that is wrong in the world, and sets out to destroy him. Mandylor's character is forced to defend himself and his loved ones against this peculiar enemy. Born of Greek parents, his Greek name is Costas Theodosopoulos. Costa's new thriller will first debut in Australia 2010. The film is a product of Instinct Entertainment, Melbourne based production company.

by Katerina Gagkas

# Power of storytelling

Arnold Zable is the medium through which a generation of immigrants and asylum seekers have told their stories

**IF YOU want to be a storyteller, you have to first be a good listener. You have to listen to yourself and have the patience to listen to others. But you don't get someone's story just like that. You have to enter into a relationship with that person and allow the stories to come out over time.**

Melbourne novelist Arnold Zable is accustomed to listening to other people's stories.

The son of Polish Jews whose families were wiped out in the Holocaust, he grew up in 1950s Carlton surrounded by a community of Italian, Greek, Yugoslav and Jewish immigrants.

"Listening to my parents and their friends, I picked up the stories and journeys that would later preoccupy me as a writer," he says.

"I grew up in a house of ghosts with photo albums of people I didn't know. I'd say, 'Who is this? Where are they



Melbourne author Arnold Zable. Picture: Jon Hargest

now?" My mother would say, 'I don't want to talk about it.' She never told me about their fate."

From this, Zable became aware of the trauma his parents' generation carried.

Sea of Many Returns, his recently reissued latest novel,

returns to the preoccupation of his previous four books: the journey of displaced people, immigrants and asylum seekers. This theme drives his work as an advocate for asylum seekers and as president of Melbourne PEN, which agitates for the release of writers who are imprisoned for their political beliefs.

**Set in Ithaca, the Greek island home of his wife's family, the book spans four generations and their journeys from the island.**

**"I've been going there with my wife and son for the past 20 years, so have got to know it very well."**

The tale echoes the myth of Odysseus who left Ithaca to fight in Troy. He did not return for 20 years.

Sea of Many Returns reflects the journey of those Ithacans who have migrated to Australia since the 1850s.

But it also tells of the women who stayed behind, like Odysseus' wife, Penelope, whose stories are as epic and powerful as that of the men who sailed away.

There is a gentleness in the

way Zable takes my hand when we meet at the State Library, and it is easy to understand why so many have been willing to share their stories with him.

For 18 months, he has worked on a project listening to and recording the stories of Black Saturday bush-fire survivors from Kinglake, Strath Creek, Flowerdale, Narbethong, and Alexandra.

"When I listen to people's stories, there are always jewels. Extraordinary moments of courage. Like this guy trying to save his house. Standing there with a mop in his hand, like an image out of Don Quixote, he looks up to see the whole mountain burning. These are the stunning images that can be rescued.

"You encourage people to find their own voice. Some of it is very angry. I say, 'Great. Let the anger out.' Sometimes people want to talk about the wonderful life they once had. It helps them restore, in a way, the life they have lost."

Growing up with a mother traumatised by her past, taught him to sit with people dealing with grief and trauma.

"There were times when she would spin out into a kind of psychosis, when she didn't know who I was. This was quite harrowing as a child, but I learnt to see that those moments are just another state of being, and it has a certain truth to it.

"I revel in that stance of being the listener and the medium through which stories are told. I've been a medium through which that generation of immigrants and migrants and asylum seekers can tell their stories."

Zable believes that the way people tell their stories must be respected. His mother told stories in fragments. Like snapshots in a photo album. The way of telling contains its own meaning.

"You have to find a way to make wholeness out of all these fragments," he says.

Arnold Zable is appearing at the Melbourne Writers' Festival, in conversation with Peter Manseau on August 29, and Fethiye Cetin on September 4.

He is also running a workshop for deaf writers. Visit [mwf.com.au](http://mwf.com.au)

Sea of Many Returns by Arnold Zable, Text Publishing, rrp \$23.95

Article from The Herald Sun

## Book Review: Sea Of Many Returns

"The story you are about to be told is a fairy tale ... sit back and become a child again."

This new novel from Wellington-born, Melbourne-based Arnold Zable is also much concerned with identity and dislocation, across **nine decades and four generations of a Greek family from Ithaca, the island to which Odysseus returned after 20 years of absence.**

In many ways it's a reworking of Homer's narrative, from several viewpoints, and with much more attention paid to the women who wait and endure while men voyage and (often) neglect.

At the start of the 20th century, brothers Manoli and Andreas have built a boat on which they ferry passengers across the Ionian Sea and explore the world beyond their island. As they sail, they wait for their father Mentor to return from Australia.

The story follows Mentor, Manoli and others as they move between the old world and new. Some find fulfilment, others exile. Some accept one country, others deny both.

**We hear mostly from Mentor, who leaves Ithaca for Kalgoorlie and Melbourne, and from his grand-daughter Xanthe, when she returns to Greece. Xenophobia in World War I Australia, the building of the Kalgoorlie-Port Augusta railroad, the growth of Melbourne's Greek community, the Balkan Wars and the World Wars - "every generation has ways of devouring its young" - all of these feature as characters seek or spurn where they belong.**

They're people "cursed with a craving for departures and arrivals, condemned to live for the sight of islands receding and horizons beckoning". They inhabit a natural world of powerfully evoked seas, storms, mountains, which still has room for gods or saints to intervene, and for dreams and prophecies to pack the plot. The writing resonates with Homeric imagery and cadences: "the seas are seething with blood and the watery graves of its victims ... war is the wildest wind contained in the ox-skin bag". Narrators and narratives are emblematic, heraldic. Virtually every object and action is metaphorical: a rust-stained apartment building, ants on a burning log, a Volvo on a jetty. It makes for - dare I? - a certain monotony of tone.

Physical and emotional landscapes are depicted meticulously, skilfully. High literary ground and high philosophical ground are staked out early. Homer and Zable don't nod much in this novel. They don't smile much, either: solemnity and portentousness pervade all.

It's an impressive piece of writing. It's subtle, sensitive, significant, slightly soporific. Rewarding? Undoubtedly. Engrossing? Intermittently.

David Hill is a Taranaki writer. Article from New Zealand Herald

