Travelling writing, writing travelling: the text as journey, the journey as text

John Borthwick
University of Wollongong


This paper is posted at Research Online.
http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/560
NOTE

This online version of the thesis may have different page formatting and pagination from the paper copy held in the University of Wollongong Library.

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

COPYRIGHT WARNING

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.
4.1

THE AUSTRALIAN JOURNEY

'... the idea of Australia is a central, almost mystic, symbol in our literature. It is a vision of a certain kind of innocence, not childlike but regenerative; a purification which is the result of hardship and endurance, of sacrifice of personal ease, sacrifice perhaps of life itself.'

Judith Wright

*Preoccupations in Australian Poetry*

'The inhabitants of this Country are the miserablest People in the world. The Hodmadods of Monomatapa, though a nasty People, yet for Wealth are Gentlemen to these; who have no Houses and skin Garments, Sheep, Poultry, and Fruits of the Earth, Ostrich Eggs, etc. as the Hodmadods have: and setting aside their Humane Shape, they differ but little from Brutes.'

William Dampier (1688)
A geographical unconscious

The writing of the early Australian journey proceeds from tracing the outlines of an anticipatory European dream, through the dream's manifestation (as - among other things - an Aboriginal nightmare) to the use of the continent as a kind of tabula rasa for the inscription of the European will to power. (Or, variously, the wills to name, claim, traverse, romance and remorse.) Dramatic projections and subsequent corrections of these visions have dominated the experiences and the literature of its travellers: 'The strange, as it were, invisible beauty of Australia, which is undeniably there, but which seems to lurk just beyond the range of our white vision.' wrote D. H. Lawrence in Kangaroo. 'You feel you can't see - as if your eyes haven't the vision in them to correspond with the outside landscape. For the landscape is so unimpressive, like a face with little or no features, a dark face. It is so aboriginal, out of our ken, and hangs back so aloof.'

'Greater Java,' 'Lochac,' 'The Golden Province of Beach,' 'Australidia del Espiritu Santo,' 'New Holland,' 'Terra Australia Incognita' — the oldest of continents (and yet the last to be discovered) had attracted over the centuries many names, each reflecting the aspirations and history of the namers. Prior to the unequivocal confirmation of its existence (for Europeans), this hypothetical continent was an artifact of classical Greek geography. Known as the antipodes, it was thought to lie on the opposite side of a spherical earth, providing a necessary balance to the oikoumene, or known, habitable world of Europe, Asia and Africa. (Turner,'86:176) It represented, writes Robert Hughes, a 'geographical unconscious,' which, upon the arrival of the First Fleet was awoken to and by the European consciousness which has dominated it ever since: 'One may liken this moment to the breaking open of a capsule.' writes Hughes ('87a:2) By the time Australia was discovered by James Cook, it was an idea whose time had come.
Aboriginality

'Just as the West creates universal reason for itself, it finds in the Antipodes a human kind which is displaced from the concerns of history and progress, which is fabulously pre-Edenic, but which can only be destroyed as it is annexed to this idea of universal reason.'

Jean Baudrillard

Austral Dreamings

Jean Baudrillard unwittingly invokes two recurrent desires of European writers in their approach to Aboriginal culture: firstly, to mystically empower it, and then to appropriate that mysterious power. Finding Aboriginality (to borrow from his own terminology) 'fabulously' pre-Edenic, he seems seduced by the possibility of annexing it (despite his acknowledgement of the destructiveness of this) to his hyper-theorized version of 'universal [read 'European'] reason.' He writes, 'Dreamtime? Austral unconscious? All powerful thought extending over the expanse of the desert: the Aborigine is the only one who can communicate over these fantastic distances. Could there be a conjunction between this cosmic fable, between this primitive, other-world oneiric past and a hypermodern, hyperreal future, between the telepathic ecosystem of the Aborigines and our white telematics which in its own way is striving for all powerful thought?' ('88a:31) In speaking so, Baudrillard, for all his contemporary relevance, seems to be yet another traveller donning the Emperor's (and Empire's) old clothing of 'romancing the primitive.'

In commenting on this sentiment, George Alexander (in Australia, A Prophecy) identifies quite clearly the pattern at work: 'The black becomes the conscience of Western narcissism: too much romance with insufficiency, too much terminology of disadvantage, too much breathless pursuit of the "primitive" with its exotic promise of a final absolute proximity that will make alienated white people "whole". The search for cross-cultural tranquillisers is mischievous because it assumes our uncertainties will be reduced rather than multiplied by the encounter. ('85:36) It is against the
polarities of such European mythologising of Aborigines that travel accounts touching upon them must be considered: on one hand, as people they seem to 'differ but little' from telepathically-enhanced 'Brutes,' and on the other, promise a 'proximity that will make alienated white people "whole".'

The Outback

The term 'Outback,' when opposed in a spatial sense by alternative directional suffixes, 'side' and 'front' (as in 'out-side' or 'out front'), displays both an exteriority ('out-') and a 'behindness' ('-back') which carries a double removal from whatever is central. In relation to time and to motion, 'back' is retrograde to, respectively, time 'ahead' and movement 'forward'; that is, it is again synonomous with 'behind.' The Outback, then, is seen as being behind the centre, in place and time and motion. This 'out-ness' (posterior to) and 'back-(ward)ness' (post) of the Outback signifies, at one extreme, being out-of-touch with the contemporary, metropolitan centre; but, at the other extreme, it is construed as that Other zone of constant, 'sacred time,' for which the 'profane time' (the terminology is Mircea Eliade's) of the cultured centre, with its persiflage and anxieties, is irrelevant.

Prior to the projection (by coastal white settlers) of this interior zone of suspension and exclusion called the Outback, the whole Australian continent had occupied such a position in the imagination of 'pre-contact' Europe - that is, it had been Europe's notional 'Outback.' Ross Gibson, in The Diminishing Paradise: changing literary perceptions of Australia, argues that in English writings on the yet-to-be discovered continent '... the south land may be regarded as a diminishing paradise where searchers attempt to locate the source of a dream in the concrete world of geography.' (84:88) The dream is one of paradise; its diminishment is caused by the difficulty in locating the land, and in the unwittingly prophetic, critical projection by Swift (in Tale of a Tub [1720]) that the south land, when found, would also be, for some, Purgatory on earth. With settlement, and the establishment of that actual, coastal, penal Purgatory, the interior of the continent, later
to be known as the Outback, became the receptor zone for those displaced dreams of paradise: '... as the pattern of the diminishing paradise continued, hopes were spiralling in on the interior - the heart of the land - as the centre of Australian dreams.' (ibid:90) The oneiric interior, as Gibson writes '... glowed alluringly in the imagination,' (loc cit) and was coexistent with the persistent notion in popular discourse of '... an Australian Purgatory wherein disappointment and adversity may be seen as necessary preludes to the attainment of some blessed realm.' (ibid:91)

By 1830, myths of a fertile interior continued to draw explorers towards 'uncharted pristine regions.' The heart of the continent was the subject of so much literary speculation, writes Gibson, '... that the unknown interior had become virtually a symbol of the essence of Australian experience.' (ibid:95) I believe that this perception - a romance with myth, absence and the topographic Other of 'the desert' - has continued in Australian travel writings up until the present day. Popular writers of the 20th century, including Ion L. Idriess, Ernestine Hill and Robyn Davidson, have continued to employ the resonances of this idea of the Outback as the heartland of an Australian spiritual essence. Idriess, who published a large number of books on the Outback from 1927 to 1941, testified repeatedly (according to Margriet Bonnin) to the '... irresistible influence of the spirit of the land.' Idriess wrote, 'It has a fascination that creeps into the very blood of a man: it seems to be living; the farther you ride into its great silent heart the closer it enfolds you.' (in Bonnin,'80:322) (Foreign writers too were not immune to this sense of the land's 'spirit of place': 'The mystery of the bush,' wrote D. H. Lawrence, 'seems to recede from you as you advance, and then it is behind you as you look around.') The Outback in particular became (and has remained) a spatial analogue for, and symbolic ground of, the temporal and spiritual quest: initial loss/void and ultimate restitution/plenitude coexist within the ambit of its mythic possibilities.
Writing the Australian journey

'History does not merely touch on language, but takes place in it.'

Theodore Adorno

Each journey account is in part a dialogue with previous accounts, a modifier and a commentator. Any literature which deals with the perceived characteristics of a new society and its habitat, as Gibson notes, 'must be construed as creative.' The impressions and fantasies regarding a country '... are filtered through a writer's personality, prejudices and language, so that any image which ensues must be treated as a constructed entity ...' (84:xiv) As proposed elsewhere in this paper, we need not expect that travel accounts present any sort of unmediated, absolutely 'real' version of the world, no matter how 'realistic' or documentary they may purport to be. The account must be seen within the context of its historic (generic, cultural and authorial) determinants. In reference to accounts of early Australian exploratory journeys, Barry Hill (in Fresh sign posts in the journey of Australian history) notes that, 'When men [sic] name, they wish, dream, possess, reminisce, allude and create in their own ways, depending on those who have gone before them, their sense of audience, their individual dispositions, their habits of mind.' (87:24) Internalising this agenda of functions, and subsuming their 'raw data' to a series of literary mediators (audience, self-percieved role, taste, style, etc.), these explorer-writers engaged a twin journey; they 'traverse a literary symbol' as well as a concrete geographical entity. (Gibson, '84:95)

Paul Carter, in The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History, considers the primacy of the naming process in the record of explorers' travels around and into Australia, attempting to decode those records according to the rhetorical (and personal) strategies which gave literary lie to the land. For Carter, the cultural place where 'spatial history' (a term which he never very satisfactorily defines) begins is neither in a particular year nor place, but in the act of naming. By this act '... space is transformed symbolically into a place, that is, a space with a history. And, by the
same token, the namer inscribes his passage permanently on the world, making a metaphorical word-place which others may one day inhabit and by which, in the meantime, he asserts his own place in history.' ('87:xxiv) In spatial history, travelling becomes inseparable from story-telling. While it is not possible to do justice to Carter’s whole argument here, it is important to note his observations on the textual determinants in discovery; that is, how central to the travelling and naming is the explorer's journal.

The main function of the journal, writes Carter, was ‘... to name the world of the journey.’ The explorer's record served to bring the country into historical being; travelling ‘... was not primarily a physical activity: it was an epistemological strategy, a mode of knowing.’ (ibid:69) He proposes that the object in exploratory travel writing (of authors such as Cook, Mitchell, Flinders, Sturt and Eyre) is neither geographical nor geological, but (as already noted) 'to constitute space as a track.' (ibid:76) The life of this linear space, he argues, resides ‘... in succession, in the demonstration that its parts link up, looking forward and backwards along the orientation of the journey.’ (loc cit) The logic of discovery, for these explorer-writers is intimately connected to the logic of the daily journal and its continuity, which ‘... left no spaces unrelated and brought even the most distant objects into the uniform, continuous world of the text. If there was a principle of association at work, it was to be found in the orderly succession of diary entries, not in any logic of the landscape.’ (ibid:69) However, the squatters and farmers who followed these explorers did not do so for the names or the 'spatial events' of the diaries, but for their references to arable land and potable water.

Carter's argument in extemis might imply that what results, instead of a journey-determined text, is a text-determined journey - which he does not go so far as to argue. Instead, he suggests that the account is what might be termed 'a desire-determined' text: '... phenomena enter the traveller's narrative only in so far as they align themselves with the direction of his desire.' (ibid:77) The character of the discourse, he writes, is not ‘... empirical, factual or map-like, but personal, directional, intentional.’ (ibid:118) The literary territory, then, of these explorer-authors is, as Gibson too
suggests, 'somewhere between documentary and fiction.' Their quests are after 'undefined but alluring goals,' which nevertheless are enacted '... in actual historical time, across a real geographical landscape.' (Gibson, '84:95)

Explorers had a readership who wanted definitive results, and so their accounts were aimed to bring the country before those eyes. No longer was the journal simply rooted in a historical space; instead, '... the explorer's unique experience, both historical and spatial, formed its subject matter.' (Carter, '87:72) Carter says that readers of these personal accounts understood that '... the journal narrative might resemble the plot of a novel but it was not fiction.' (loc cit) Within this latitude, in place of the fictional characters of the novelist, '... the explorer-writer introduced the character of the country.' (Ibid:73) These narrators adopted a distinct persona similar to that of the hero in romance; but more importantly, what is being told is the 'biography of the journey.' The explorer-writer is concerned with not just the physical, factual country or his own state of mind, but with the process of exploring. (Ibid:74) Matthew Flinders's A Voyage to Terra Australis (1814) epitomises for Carter this sort of document. It was not merely the account of a voyage; in dwelling on the feelings and impressions of the narrator as an authentic aspect of his expedition's history (alongside all the scientific annotation and physical and cultural description), Flinders '... set a monumental precedent for the explorer to appear as his own historian and biographer.' (Ibid:179) It became a model of how explorations should be written up and, according to Carter, '... is the first great Australian work of spatial history.' (Ibid:179) For all the subtlety of Carter's writing, it does not do it a disservice to note, as Barry Hill has in his review of the book ('87:24), that Carter asks quite basic questions of each explorer's account: what was going on here, and, what was the actor in the landscape doing, in naming things so? These become effective tools by which other texts too may be interrogated.
Writing Australia: mid-20th century

A century later, far past the age of primary explorations of Australia, the 'character' of the Outback was an important concern in the works of Australian travel writers. Their travels, no longer primarily for terrain and naming but for other personal goals, often have a parallel and equally important abstract aim, the experiencing or apprehending of the 'character' of the land. This engagement with place however was not a metaphoric or metaphysical approach, but a practical, developmental aspiration. Margriet Bonnin in *A Study of Australian Descriptive Travel Writing, 1929-1945* found that the 'descriptive and travel writers' (her preferred nomenclature) of the period which she studied, dealt mainly with inland Australia, its problems, and its 'vast potential' as the country's major asset in the future. ('80:i)

These writers, such as Ion Idriess, Ernestine Hill, Charles Leslie Barrett, Bill Beatty, Frank Clune, William Hatfield and many others, generally were not romantics. For them, the diminution of 'Paradise' was to be confronted and halted by an appraisal of the resources of the Outback. In this sense, the Outback had moved from being an unknown zone of promise, exclusion and suspension to a knowable one, amenable to a program of development and population increase. These writers advocated, notes Bonnin, '... a new civilisation based on modern technology, which would take advantage of the economic and spiritual benefits that they felt the inland had to offer. They also sought to prick the consciences of Australians in the hope that action would be taken on the preservation of the natural environment.' (ibid:ii) In these aspirations there is still strong evidence of the paradisal projection, of the interior as the realm of salvation, purity and the regenerative sacrifice to which Judith Wright has alluded.

Characteristics of this literary genre, as identified by Bonnin, include: a propensity for lay theorising on scientific matters, 'good natured story-telling,' a fascination with the exotic and the adventurous, social criticism, and an eye to the popular market of a city readership. (ibid:iii) On the latter point, she records that these publications '... were much more successful in the market-place
than the "serious literature" of the same period, which often dealt with similar themes.' (loc cit) Part of their popularity was in '... their egalitarian appeal as ordinary Australians speaking to other ordinary Australians on a level understandable to all about matters they considered to be of national importance.' (ibid:209) (She notes in passing that Rohan Rivett (in Writing About Australia, [1969]) called descriptive and travel writing, the '... field which has attracted more writers in Australia than any other.' [ibid:6]) Other generic characteristics included claims to being the first to perform a particular feat (thus, presenting the authors as pioneers and as authorities on particular Outback regions) (ibid:5); an esoteric interest in the more sensational aspects of the Aborigines and their benefactors and persecutors (ibid:292); and assertions that the unique spiritual or material quality of Australia resided in the rural landscape and, by opposition, not in the cities.

Bonnin notes at some length the perceptions of these writers on two important (to them) aspects of the Outback, its practical and spiritual potentials for national regeneration. Of the former she notes, 'The interest in the land shared by the writers of these books tended, with few exceptions, to be utilitarian rather than aesthetic. Even when they set out to highlight the beauties of the landscape this was generally approached with a view to persuading Australians of the value of countryside which had previously been seen as barren, worthless and monotonous. (ibid:295) Of the Outback's spiritual potential (in the eyes of these writers) for a wider national regeneration, Bonnin concludes, '... the spirit of the land was an irresistible force whose influence, even in its frightening aspects, must be accepted by Australians as essential for national development through development of the interior. It required a tie similar to that which the aborigines felt for the land—a national sense of belonging. Landscape was seen not in terms of neo-classical aesthetic theory, based on the influence and superiority of civilisation, but as something wild and free—reflecting the spirit of the land and its original inhabitants—moulding rather than being moulded by the people who inhabited it.' (ibid:324)
4.2

INTERROGATING THE SAMPLE

'... while metaphor is never an innocent figure of speech, the protagonist himself is always a figure innocent of metaphor.'

Marjorie Kalter
Metaphorical Quest
The destination

For the sake of refreshing the travelling reader's memory, I will reiterate the objectives ('the exploratory brief') of this journey which were stated so long ago. They are:

1) To survey a broad range of commentary which has been written about travel narratives and allied literary forms;

2) To consider a number of constituent discourses within travel writing;

3) To discuss a limited sample of 20th Century Australian travel narratives (one from each decade, 1920s to 1980s) with reference to those discourses and to the 'double quest' narrative;

4) To apply to each of the sample texts the following questions (drawn from those suggested by Katz ['87:154] and Hill ['87:24]):
   - Who are the heroes of this work?
   - What do they stand for?
   - What are they doing here?
   - What is the nature and object of the outer search?
   - What is the nature and object of the inner search?
   - Are the various goals achieved?
   - Is there a 'narrative quest' involving the author's textual representation of reality?
   - Is the reader required to engage actively in this negotiation of meaning and text?

5) To discuss the overall sample in terms of the propositions that:
   (a) the nominated constituent discourses cluster around the 'quest' as both theme and structuring device; and

   (b) the quest has two dimensions, inner and outer, both of which are supported by the constituent discourses.
The questions

Those questions which refer to the quest will not be applied in terms of various established models of narrative structural analysis. For example, one such model, as enunciated by V. I. Propp (in Morphology of the Folktale), identifies in traditional European folk tales 31 'functions' (or stages) undertaken by seven performers in 'spheres of action': villain, provider, helper, sought-for person and her father, dispatcher, hero and false hero. A. J. Griemans (in Semantique Structurale and Du Sens) takes the analysis further and considers narratives in terms of deeper binary oppositions of 'actants' (which subsume most of Propp's figures), so that a model may be constructed of Subject (e.g. hero) versus Object (sought-for person), Sender versus Receiver, and Helper versus Opponent. He attempts to 'describe narrative structures in terms of an established [Saussurean] linguistic model ...' (Hawkes,'77:87) T. Todorov (in Grammaire du Decameron) shifts the linguistic analysis from an emphasis on writing to an emphasis on reading the text as a grammatical construction. Terence Hawkes summarizes Todorov's model as '... the units which make up propositions and sequences are treated as parts of speech, while the propositions and sequences themselves function as 'sentences' and 'paragraphs' which make up the whole of the récit of the text. (ibid:97) Each of these analyses might be applied fruitfully to travel narratives and may spell out interesting parallels or divergences between the nuclear and external structures of travel narratives and those of other quests. However, such deliberations are not the purpose of this paper, and while the presence of these functions, oppositions and linguistic homologies are acknowledged, the matter must remain there.

The answers

Having posed the above questions, I will compare the range of answers, consider what overview emerges, and then attempt to draw a conclusion about the applicability, if any, of the propositions.

Any analysis is an artifact of theory. But, insofar as this paper has not erected a preferred theoretical framework through which to view the texts presented, any patterns observed or conclusions
drawn will be principally empirical (that is, '... depending upon experience or observation ... , without using science or theory'). Moreover, as the sample is spread widely across time and is arbitrarily selected, it does not represent a significant longitudinal sample and thus, as I stated in the Introduction, '... firm deductions about travel literature in general cannot validly be extrapolated from it.' Having said this, nevertheless, I shall be looking for whatever patterns or indications which do emerge from the investigation.

The sample

Beyond three characteristics, the topic of 'travel,' non-fiction account and Australian authorship, the selection of the seven sample texts was not determined by theme, location or treatment. The choice of titles was mostly arbitrary; the sampling of books had two aspects, random and controlled, with the 'control' partially in service of the 'random.' That is, the control of selecting one travel book from each of the seven decades, 1920s to 1980s, ensured that the works selected would be widely spread over time and, hopefully, across changes in literary fashion, function and popularity. Within that time-frame, I then selected - sometimes simply on the basis of availability - any one book per decade which, upon a fairly brief inspection interested me. I generally chose books which I had not previously read, in order that my own predilections should not too heavily colour the sample.

One non-arbitrary factor was that several of the books were to be by women: there are two included here. While all authors must be Australian, the travelling was not necessarily limited to within Australia. The criterion of 'Australian' was a way of limiting the enormous cultural variation which might have entered had books by authors of other nationalities been included. I preferred some constancy of national cultural background (as varied as that may be) in a sample which already would deal, by definition, with widely varying geographic and cultural material. There are no books by Aboriginals, because I knew of none which fit the generic criterion. *Wild Cat Falling* (1965) by Colin Johnson, being a novel,
and *Dreaming the Country* (1984) by Paddy Roe et al, a collaborative narrative-theory hybrid, were both inappropriate, as was Burnum Burnum's, *A Traveller's Guide to Aboriginal Australia* (1988) which is, as its title states, a guide book.

The sample books were not selected because of any special 'literary significance'; indeed, some may lack it, while others in their time may have enjoyed a reputation for it. Included are accounts of journeys by groups and by individuals on excursions which range across the gamut of private, official, literary, picaresque and introspective undertakings. The sample is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trip</th>
<th>Publ.</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>On/offshore</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'29-30  '84</td>
<td></td>
<td>Harold Fletcher</td>
<td><em>Antarctic Days with Mawson</em></td>
<td>off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'32</td>
<td>'35</td>
<td>Dora Birtles</td>
<td><em>North-West by North</em></td>
<td>on &amp; off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c'42</td>
<td>'44</td>
<td>Alan Marshall</td>
<td><em>These are my People</em></td>
<td>on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'49-'50 '52</td>
<td></td>
<td>Peter Pinney</td>
<td><em>Dust on My Shoes</em></td>
<td>off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'61</td>
<td>'62</td>
<td>Drysdale &amp; Marshall</td>
<td><em>Journey Among Men</em></td>
<td>on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'77</td>
<td>'80</td>
<td>Robyn Davidson</td>
<td><em>Tracks</em></td>
<td>on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'66-'69</td>
<td>[89]</td>
<td>Jack Ho</td>
<td><em>Log of White Wog</em></td>
<td>on &amp; off</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'Onshore' and 'offshore' refer to the site of the journey undertaken. The first column ('Trip') indicates (to the best of my knowledge) the year of the journey and the second ('Publ.'), the year of publication.

In the case of Harold Fletcher's *Antarctic Days with Mawson*, I have taken a great liberty. There was a very long lag, of over 50 years, between event and publication, nevertheless, the book is included as representative of the 1920s because its material is drawn directly from the author's diaries of the 1929-30 BANZARE expedition, and (as I argue) although it is a personal narrative, it is very much in the documentary style of that era: a linear, outwardly-focused, goal-oriented record of an official expedition, which goes to pains to note quantitative detail and permits only
limited inclusion of personal reflection and subjectivity, and certainly no questioning of the enterprises of either expeditioning or writing. Robyn Davidson's Tracks, while published at the dawn of the '80s is the account of a journey within the previous decade, and so is included as representative of the 1970s. In the instance of Jack Ho's Log of the White Wog, the trips depicted in the book took place in the latter half of the 1960s, but were not written up in this form until 20 years later. Unlike Fletcher's book, The Log is stylistically much more of its period of writing than that of its journeys, and so has been placed in the 1980s.
4.3

SEVEN AUSTRALIAN TRAVEL NARRATIVES

'... the true dialogue the writer conducts is not with external reality, but with language itself. What he explores is the resources of meaning implicit in the mere repetition of conventional phrases. And this is not a solipsistic exercise shutting out the world; on the contrary it faithfully records the existential condition of its own appearance as a diary entry. It is only that what this emigrant's words refer to is not an event, but a spatial occasion, a moment on the journey when the journey became an object of consciousness.'

Paul Carter
The Road to Botany Bay
4.3.1

Antarctic Days with Mawson
Harold Fletcher
Sydney: Angus & Robertson. 1984. 313 pages

Harold Fletcher, 27 at the time of this expedition, sailed as an assistant zoologist on the two voyages of the 1929-31 British, Australian and New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition (acronymously known as BANZARE). His book Antarctic Days with Mawson is drawn from his own diaries, with some reference to those of fellow expeditioner, cameraman Frank Hurley. Official versions of the expedition had been published much earlier by its leader, Sir Douglas Mawson, and by others. Fletcher's book has, in his own words, two objectives: firstly, to present '... a full and personal narrative of life and activities ashore and on board the expedition vessel Discovery ...,,' and secondly, '... to make known the everyday experiences and the more domestic life and feelings of the expedition's 37 members.' (11)

Fletcher's account of the journey was published in 1984, more than half a century after the events, a lapse for which no explanation is offered. (It may be speculated either that Fletcher had never intended to publish the material from his expedition diaries, and did so only after a much later re-appraisal of their content and value; or, that all along he had intended to publish, but had not found time to write it up until - presumably - after his retirement.) In the previous chapter I stated my contention that the book is written in a style which I consider consistent with that of the expedition's era. My assertion is not that, had Fletcher written and published this account soon after the expedition, it would have been identical to this version. (Fletcher does not attempt such an anachronistic posture. Indeed, his text has a diachronic perspective, occasionally acknowledging much later events in the Antarctic region - for example the overkill and then subsequent protection of whales.) Nor do I argue that, stylistically, Antarctic Days with Mawson could not be associated with any other period before or after this expedition. This 'non-exclusive' assertion that the style is '... consistent with that of expedition's era ...' is
made on the basis that the book's form and its treatment of content 
embody *inter alia* the following: historical introduction; a centred, 
linear narrative functioning principally to record events; an 
outwardly-focussed and task-oriented perspective; the inclusion of 
significant amounts of quantitative detail and emphasis on hard 
data; a very limited inclusion of personal reflection and 
subjectivity; no questioning of the enterprises of either 
expeditioning or writing. It is not argued that these features are to 
be found *only* in reports from the 1920-1930s period, but rather, 
that, as a documentary record of an official scientific and territory-
claiming excursion, these are features typical of such an enterprise 
of that period. Thus (my assertion continues), embodying those 
features, Fletcher's book is sufficiently consistent with the reporting 
style of the decade of its events (and probably less so of the decade 
of its writing) that it may be seen as 'representative' of that era.

Before applying the set of nominated questions to the text, 
several brief comments may be made on the packaging of the book. 
The title indicates much about its contents. It is 'straightforward,' 
unpoetic, denoting without self-reflexive connotations (such as, for 
instance, Lincoln Hall's title *White Limbo*, or Johnathan Chester's 
*Going to Extremes*) that herein the author (and vicariously, the 
reader) experiences 'Antarctic Days' with the emblematic Sir 
Douglas Mawson, one of the Australian legends of the 'white 
continent.' (With this reference to Mawson it is also an intentionally 
'marketable' title.) The book's chapter headings are also emblems 
which continue this signalling of factuality and exteriority of 
narrative, e.g. *Planning the Expedition, A Great Farewell from Cape 
Town, Flag Raised on Proclamation Island, Beaten Back by 
Mountainous Seas*, etc. Six maps and 19 sepia photos (expedition 
members, farewell from Hobart, ship in ice floes, huts at 
Commonwealth Bay, sea elephants, etc.) as well as a 23 page 
introduction to the history of Antarctica from the 16th century to 
the 1980s, contribute further to the coding of this book as a 
documentary record.
Who are the heroes of this work?

There is no one heroic personality in Fletcher's account, other than the lofty presence of expedition leader Sir Douglas Mawson, to whose memory the book is dedicated. (Edgeworth David's epigraph lauds Mawson as '... an Australian Nansen, a man of infinite resource, splendid spirit, marvellous physique and an indifference to frost and cold that was astonishing - all the attributes of a great explorer.') Having established Mawson's stature, via a prefatory account of his dramatic 1911-1914 Antarctic feats, Fletcher does not then labour the hagiographic point. Mawson appears only as a kind of emeritus hero in beard and balclava on the Discovery's bridge, and as an always competent leader in voyage circumstances which are trying but rarely life-threatening. Nor is the hero of this journey the author himself - in fact, the first person singular pronoun is remarkably hard to find among his pages. Instead, I propose that the hero of the book is the expedition itself, a collective hero. (Not a collective of heros; the distinction 'between the institutional collective and a collection of individuals is relevant.) 'It is a story,' writes Fletcher, 'of a concerted effort in which everyone worked together as a team in a spirit of comradeship always more accentuated when conditions became most trying and hazardous.' (11)

What do they stand for?

These 37 men (and no women) of BANZARE stand for values which by now may seem Kiplingesque and thus, in some cases quaint - or worse, severely compromised. Some of these individual and collective values expressed in the text are: scientific advancement, imperial territory, stoicism, physical courage, comradeship, the greater national good, collective striving ... Within Fletcher's pages there is, not surprisingly, little that might undermine these Etonian-Edwardian values, for their venture was not the anachronism which from our perspective, 60 years later, it may appear to have been. The BANZARE expedition was probably the last party to flag such a large previously unclaimed area of the globe for any power - and did so in a square-rigged sailing ship.
(All this only 14 years before the first A-bomb and 16 years before India won its independence.) Though some of the first moving pictures of the Antarctic were shot from Discovery's crows nest, the historical 'Age' of this expedition was not even fully the Mechanical Age but partly still the Age of Discovery. Remembering also that this was an official expedition, it is thus not anachronistic to find expressed in the text an ideology in which individual ambitions are submerged unquestioningly to the institutional priorities of science, King and country.

In parallel to such positivist, empiricist, collective, imperial undertakings, today we have the memories of individual Antarctic expeditionaries like Shackleton, Amunsden, Scott and Oates. These are filleted into vague myths - 'I may be gone for some time,' said Oates as he stepped from the tent, never to return; and '... the soles of [Mawson's] feet separated and had to be bandaged back in position ... oblivious to pain, he cut his sledge in half and set off ...' (31) This mythology is now dispersed into culture at large, and the set of individual values embodied in it are those of a pristine, self-challenging and Nature-challenging 'outdoors-ness,' an ethos of personal 'character-building' in frozen climes.

If there is an historical dialectic at work upon these respective collective and individual values, the result is that expeditions can never again be conducted (or described) within such an unambiguous, or at least unquestioned, moral agenda. These once-'noble' imperial notions later unleashed destruction upon the polar territory gained - science and neo-colonialism are still working both towards and against that end. And nowadays, personal snow-shoe heroics and 'character-building' activities in chilly climates, though ever popular, have been somewhat deflated, as in this aside by Barthes (in Mythologies): 'We find again here this bourgeois promoting of the mountains, this old Alpine myth (since it dates back to the nineteenth century) which Gide rightly associated with Helvetic-Protestant morality and which has always functioned as a hybrid compound of the cult of nature and of puritanism (regeneration through clean air, moral ideas at the sight of mountain-tops, summit-climbing as civic virtue, etc).' (73:74)
These early Antarctic explorers not only rendered geography and territory (whose 'ownership' may be debated) and myths of endurance and death-defiance (whose implications may be deflated), but in doing so also engendered something more abstract and symbolic of all human attempts to 'go beyond.' Sydney artist Nigel Helyer observes that '... their footsteps lead into a zone of annihilation of meaning, of culture, and frequently of bodies. To so staunchly maintain a sense of personal and cultural identity within that leaching field is the principal reason their memory evokes such pathos; they carried their supplies of humanity (as water through a desert), towards the fictive axis of a world uncontaminated by meaning.' (in Weiss,'86:80) (Helyer suggests that perhaps the Antarctic should remain a forbidden zone, the '... one place on this sullied globe where fantasy may fly to roost.' [loc cit]) In the wake of this dialectic of mythologizing, subsequent de-mythologizing and re-mythologizing of the region and its travellers, the account of the Discovery's voyage reaches us.

What are they doing here?

To penetrate territory and occupy it is a socio-cultural 'imperative' which has exercised tribes and states throughout history, and which, under various rationales and ideologies, continues to this day from Amazonia to Antarctica to Kuwait. For 400 years, since the opening of medieval Europe during the Renaissance, the very idea of human progress (as Helyer notes) '... had been associated with limitless overseas expansion and the riches that usually flowed from it.' ('86:11) In this tradition, Mawson's expedition was contributing to the putative 'progress' (via naming, surveying and claiming territory) of the British Empire, in competition in this instance with Norway. Concurrently, BANZARE's scientists were studying plankton distribution, penguins and other avian life, sea elephants, and undertaking meteorological projects. In all this they were acting within a long tradition (European, Islamic, Oriental) of simultaneously colonising and studying the colonised region.
As the final reaches of Antarctica were being pegged, it was commonplace to speak of the age of geographical exploration - the Age of Columbus - as coming to a close. (Conflating heroism and exploration, one of Fletcher's historical sections is even called *End of the Heroic Era.*) In Antarctica, the limits of terrestrial exploration and appropriation had been reached, and the 'riches' which flowed were displaced into the myths of national heroism (individual and collective) and a pre-emptive territorialising (against competitors), as well as the deferred mineral rewards of a future extractive technology. Fletcher is agent and diarist to such activities.

What BANZARE was doing here was naming, claiming, measuring, assaying, and describing what was witnessed in the language of European empiricism. Equally significant is that BANZARE (in its square-rigger, one of the last still active) represented both the end of Columbus's 'Heroic Era' (of marine-terrestrial travel, manual work and artisan production) *and* heralded to Antarctica (via its Tiger Moth seaplane and Hurley's cine camera) the beginning of the 'Mechanical Era' (of flight, industrial culture and mechanical reproduction of imagery).

**What is the nature and object of the outer search?**

'Going and getting' (within which is embedded 'naming and claiming'): is the reduction which conveys BANZARE's primary objective, as outlined in Fletcher's text. Against a climate of competitive nationalism (which still continues in the Antarctic) these territorial activities, in the name of England and her 'dominions' Australia and New Zealand, had to be executed with speed.

The various scientific investigations (subsidiary objects of the outer search) were undertaken in conditions of definite hardship and hazard. The nature of the overall search (and sub-searches) entailed the efficient and coordinated functioning of team, individuals, apparatus and procedures under these conditions. For instance, the *Discovery*'s reconnaissance aircraft was one of the first ever in Antarctica and there were serious difficulties in
transporting it, starting it in sub-zero temperatures, flying and retrieving it. All this was successfully concluded through 'team, individuals, apparatus and procedures' functioning in concert. Scores of other major and minor objectives, from the conservation of fuel, avoidance of ice floes, landing of parties, preservation of samples, etc. - some involving all, some involving few members of the team, all involving personal and professional expertise - were apparently successfully undertaken and noted the author.

Survival (always a meta-objective) against the extremes of Antarctic weather and Southern Ocean waves is an over-riding priority of the expedition. Nature - as weather, sea and ice - is generally depicted as an oppositional force, though this is modified by a scientific, investigatory observation of its aspects (temperatures, wind force and direction). The actors in this 'drama' and the writer were operating within a model of challenge against the extremes of contestatory Nature - Hurley's film of the expedition carried, tellingly, a strong military metaphor in its title, *The Siege of the South*. ('In the literature of travel, nature is a perennial protagonist.' [Hassan, '90a:411]) The resulting discourse, as should be expected, would spell out this contest: 'The ship pitched and rolled in the heavy seas, the decks flooded by huge waves crashing over the forecastle head and gunwales.' (55)

The object of Fletcher's own external search was for penguins, seals, skuas, petrels, plankton and such samples. His task then was to weigh, skin, stuff, preserve and examine the stomach contents of his specimens, and to record plankton counts, whale sightings, and so on. The nature of this work was the application of scientific methodology and, given the difficulties of environments, of personal resourcefulness and a sense of equanimity (not to mention equilibrium).

**What is the nature and object of the inner search?**

Within the text, there is no implicit or explicit inner search described as undertaken by either the author or the expedition - unless we are to seek evidence of the collective underlying ideology
of 'for God (or science), King and country,' and this is not my intention. Presumably, all members were engaged in individual personal professional 'quests,' which, at different levels, involved performance re proclaiming territory, quantitative results, specimens and successful navigation. Also presumably, there were many personal agendas involving separation from home and family, aesthetics (writing, sketching, photography), physical discomfort, contemplation, devotion and other intangibles. Yet, for our purposes, none of these categories can be proffered as collective or individual 'inner searches,' for there is insufficient textual evidence of goals and responses to support such a discussion.

Despite a diary-like chronology, Antarctic Days with Mawson is not a set of diary extracts and never intends to be. The exclusion of 'interior search' content (as might be found in a diary) from the personal account of an expedition might nowadays suggest something excised or suppressed. (The almost obligatory inclusion of such material can sometimes give rise to gratuitous, psychological accounts of striking banality and spitefulness, as in, for example, David Lewis's Icebound in Antarctica.) In my opinion, Fletcher's book, as an outwardly-focussed documentary record ('a horse for a course') is not 'wanting' for the lack of reference to this inner search dimension. It also ought to be reiterated that, just as all quests are not journeys, not all journeys are inner searches.

In another sense, Fletcher's inner quest (much delayed) might be seen as the execution of this narrative to the ends which he nominates, viz. 'a full and personal narrative' of the domestic life, feelings and activities of the expedition members.'

The diary

'The seamlessness of the journals (Flinder's and thereafter) is a literary illusion.' writes Paul Carter (87:173) Harold Fletcher's account is not presented in journal or diary form, thus it is not surprising that it should appear 'seamless,' despite its chronological sequencing, date references and episodic structure (each major landfall or sea leg occupies a chapter). Fletcher's seamless 'illusion'
is no more than a literary convention, and is understood as such by a contemporary readership. Consequently, its residual diary form is 'second generation.'

Of its diary content, despite Fletcher's intention to write '... a full and personal narrative of life and activities ashore and on board,' the narrative has - I assume - been so modified in its transition from the primary source diary (and after such a long time lapse) that - and again I assume - much which might have been truly 'personal,' immediate and reflective of the minutiae of 'life and activities' has been omitted as inappropriate, out-dated, ephemeral or irrelevant. Except for a few remarks on the lack of gumption of the ship's captain when approaching pack-ice, Fletcher eschews almost all negative personal comment, concentrating instead upon approbation, incident and anecdote. In this sense, his account is clearly not the 'full' one. (Which may be in any case, as Meaghan Morris says, '... a perpetual, impossible quest - for the perfect description, the full story, the 'living' characters of history.' ['88b:176])

The diary content then is also, arguably, 'second generation,' and, importantly, does not demonstrate the reflexive 'self addressing self' movement expected at least at some point in a diary. The book's diary form and content aspects are dispersed as a discourse rather than emphasised as a structure. More notable than the lack of reference to an inner dimension is the striking rareness of the pronouns 'I' and 'me' in Fletcher's text. (The book is certainly not what is sometimes called a 'travel confessional.') The diminished emphasis on the first person, subjectivity, internal monologue, self-reflexiveness or self-reflection, leads me to conclude that a diary discourse has been so attenuated that it functions only to reflect a specific, 'external,' event-based dimension to the primary source.

**Autobiography**

*Antarctic Days with Mawson* ought not to be judged for what it is not. Intended as a complement of '... everyday experiences and ... domestic life and feelings' to existing official accounts of the
expedition, Fletcher's book (as we have noted) has no ambitions to convey an inner quest, and bypasses almost all negative personal comments, in order to concentrate on incident, camaraderie and a little humour. Therefore, other than in the most general of terms, it is not surprising that the book has little explicit autobiographical content. Beside a few indications of the author's age, professional experience, 'jovial disposition and fine physique' (wrote Mawson) and voyage nick-name ('Cherub'), Fletcher lets drop little about himself - not because he appears guarded, but because he is writing in a generic tradition where 'a personal account' does not mean 'an account of the person.'

The Other

In Imagining Antarctica Rachel Weiss suggests that the continent remains a paradoxical and enigmatic '... focal point of the essentially creative desire to go beyond what is already known.' ('86:8) As the antipode (literally, 'other-foot') which opposed and balanced the known world in the north, Antarctica was fundamental to the symmetry and order demanded of the world by classical Greek thought. (loc cit) The aggressive search for it during the 19th century '... was fuelled by the belief that somehow, by touching the literal ends of the earth, something essential to the human spirit would be revealed and a new level of achievement would be enabled.' (loc cit) Such proposals, says Weiss, were based, in part, '... on the entirely bizarre idea (maintained by a surprisingly large group of respected individuals that included Edgar Allan Poe) that the South Pole was the site of a literal hole in the face of the globe, through which expeditioners could reach a civilized world reputed to exist within the "shell" of the earth's surface.' (loc cit) Fletcher's account is embellished by no such fervid projections of a fantastic Other. Indeed, this journey may be seen as iconoclastic to any such residual fabulations. However, the BANZARE voyage may also be seen as a manifestation of, among other things, that 'essentially creative desire to go beyond what is already known.' Their approach to the Unknown Other was through the creativity of investigation and scientific observation.
Occasional comments by the author on the icy beauty ('Incredibly long shadows were thrown by scattered icebergs on to the millpond surface of the deep-blue sea, and an eerie silence completed an experience I will never forget.' [122]) are as far as he ventures with his own creative written response to the intangible - a possible door to the Other. (In a broader sense though, the whole book - and its source journey - is an expression of his own creative desire.) Fletcher's expedition has concrete objectives - reaching Enderby Land, Proclamation Island and Kerguelan Island, sampling, coaling, filming, flying, and returning - and whatever sense of the Other, the oblique, the numinous, obscene, rebellious, poetic, ineffable, etc. which he may have experienced is not evoked in his account.

The most obvious Other of the Antarctic experience is, of course, death, and the threat of it is often alluded to: 'The boom passed so close to Johnstone's head that it removed his balaclava from his head. It was a miraculous escape from certain death.' (137) Difference and Other however are not absolutes, and always exist in relation to structures which attempt exclude or prohibit (and thus, displace) them. Humour and sexuality, for example, may be of themselves Other to specific structures, such as the Church, language, or even scientific expeditions - or to books about expeditions. Nevertheless, the Other will out, and Fletcher, writing in a later, less prudish age, is able to recount one eruption of the Other on Possession Island, which almost certainly would not have seen print closer to the time of the expedition. 'Sir Douglas ... noticed Professor Johnston was standing by with the extraordinarily large genitalia of six bull sea elephants dangling from his hand. He was promptly ordered to "throw those ------ things away", which he reluctantly did. The choice of the expletive, never before heard from Sir Douglas, was most apt and whether by accident or design left no doubt regarding the natural functions of the discarded objects.' (70)

With no women and no 'foreigners' (i.e. non-'British') on board, Discovery was a temporarily constituted floe of British colonialism and European scientism - itself a cultural Other to the natural Antarctica. The BANZARE expedition's own Other (in a simple sense)
may be seen then as Nature, as incarnate in Emperor penguins, albatrosses, icebergs, whales and the terrors of the storm.

**Exoticism**

If Antarctica is the continent of the imagination, the 'one place on this sullied globe where fantasy may fly to roost,' it is so in the sense of its human absences, its vast voids of heat and of winter light. Here is a *tabula rasa* for the mind at work in the field of survival or annihilation. Thus, the Antarctic 'exotic' will hardly be rendered in colourful or erotic cliches; rather, it will be seen in terms of its own history, and the converse of survival, death - discourses which in their time can progress to cliches. Fletcher links these two discourses: '... polar exploration exercises a strange fascination over men who participate in it. Refusing to heed extreme hardships and narrow escapes from death, many have returned again and again to compete against the hazards of the inhospitable ice-covered continent. In some cases it finally claimed their lives.' (22) Beyond its auroras, whales and crashing bergs, the Antarctic exotic may be simply its symbolic whiteness which is (as for many Asian cultures) the colour of death, the Ultimate Other.

In a diffused sense, the exotic is a general condition of the journey's environments (ship and Nature), the climate and wildlife. It is also the *sine qua non* of the objects (Territory and potential Knowledge) of the expedition, but, within a scientific discourse, it is not a property of those objects to be preserved - in fact, in the process of contact and examination they are to be intentionally, scientifically 'de-exoticised.'

**Are the various goals achieved?**

Not without difficulty, Mawson raised the Union Jack and cracked the champagne on Proclamation Island and later on Mac Robertson Land on the Antarctic continent, thus pre-empting Norwegian claims. Much scientific data was collected on birds, fish, sea mammals and crustaceans; over one thousand kilometres of
coastline were charted; the Tiger Moth flew safely; Hurley took historical movie footage; and all scientists, crew and officers returned safely. We are informed that the expedition obtained tonnes of zoological specimens from hundreds of deep and shallow dredgings and nettings in little known (at that time) waters; the Antarctic coastline between the 45th and 180th degrees of east longitude was charted; five new 'Lands' (e.g. Banzare Land, Lars Christensen Land) were discovered, named and claimed for the British crown; and approximately 100 prominent geographical features were named. (313)

Of Fletcher's objectives in writing the book - a possible post-
voyage inner goal - I believe that his narrative is detailed, but not 'full'; and while written from a personal perspective, is not 'personal' in the different sense of an exposure of his own feelings. His stance might be characterised as 'personal-impersonal.' In his intention to 'make known the everyday experiences and the more domestic life and feelings' of the expedition members, Fletcher is successful - if his description is to be contrasted with an official account of proceedings, but less so by other published yardsticks (e.g. James Morris's account of the 1953 Tenzing-Hillary Everest ascent). Nevertheless, the book cannot convincingly be deconstructed as a double-quest narrative model - which implies a simultaneous parallel quest for an abstract object, usually enhanced insight. The writing of the book might be seen more accurately as a second or subsequent outer quest.

In this sense, the known goals of the outer search were achieved fully; while of the inner searches, no further relevant comment can be offered.

Is there a 'narrative quest' involving the author's textual representation of reality?

In the tradition of documentary writing or 'the classic realist text' (like Antarctic Days with Mawson) a writer consciously faces his own questions of representation, veracity, voice, elision, subjectivity and so on. Johnathan Raban says that in such journey
accounts '... the relationship between then and now, between the journey and the book, is tricky and paradoxical, and as he negotiates it the writer discovers, often to his embarrassment, that he is a fabulist who only masquerades as a reporter.' (87:258) Fletcher may have faced such questions, but certainly makes no intimation of them. His speaking position is that of a detached (or at best, 'personal-impersonal') observer who, even when recounting events in which he is involved, uses unemotive language and applies it as an unproblematic, reality-to-reader conduit.

Emphasis is laid upon quantitative detail (particularly navigation data) and description of events and locations; the narration functions to privilege these over personal response. There is no questioning of the enterprises of expeditioning or writing, nor of the author's sense of self or subjectivity. The writing reifies the journey account as a non-problematic artefact of reportage. (Having said that, I do not wish to dismiss Fletcher's work, simply because it does not indulge in more recent styles of narrative interiority, self-reflexiveness or decentered subjectivity.) The author's textual representation of reality does not self-inflect, except to genuflect in the very last sentence of the book: '... our members have diminished, but those on deck still meet once a year ... to relive our Antarctic days with Mawson.' (313) Consequently, there is no evidence of a 'narrative quest' involving questions of that representation.

Is the reader required to engage actively in this negotiation of meaning and text?

As the author does not 'problematishe' the relationship between meaning and text, predictably, the reader is not called upon to negotiate this area. (The reader of course may raise and negotiate questions of his own re this relationship.) Instead, the reader may encounter (in Fletcher) what Roland Barthes calls the Amateur: '(someone who engages in painting, music, sport, science, without the spirit of mastery or competition).' The Amateur, says Barthes, '... renews his pleasure (amator: one who loves and loves again); he is anything but a hero (of creation, of performance); he establishes
himself graciously (for nothing) in the signifier: in the immediately definitive substance of music, of painting; his praxis, usually, involves no rubato (that theft of the object for the sake of the attribute); he is - he will be perhaps - the counter-bourgeois artist. (Barthes,'86:52) It is this pleasure that I find in Fletcher's work, a book written neither for the sake of science (too late for that), nor for his own glory (too few first-person singular pronouns), but for the expedition in itself, 'graciously (for nothing),' for the sake of the book itself and its readers.

In summary, Antarctic Days with Mawson is a book of several eras. One is the era of its tradition, which is reminiscent of the late 19th century; another is that of the expedition's own 'industrial' and calendar time (in this the expedition was quite contemporary, employing the latest scientific equipment and methods of 1929-1931); the third era is that of its writing and publishing, the early 1980s, with Fletcher referring to much later events in the region. In each of those eras, 'double quest' narratives have been generated by expeditionary authors - and have increasingly become an expectation of the genre. However, Fletcher's overall discourse is that of the documenting scientist, not the self-documentor, and thus any 'double quest' reading of his text could be supported only by inference on the part of the reader. (Manifestly, there are two simultaneous quests here, for Territory and Knowledge, but both are exterior, acknowledged objectives, working in tandem, and not inner quests.)

The constituent discourses of diary, autobiography and the Other may be detected here, but as residual traces only. They mobilise neither the expedition nor the narrative. The exotic is a condition of the journey, but coincidental to its objectives, and something, ultimately, to be 'de-exoticised': it is an attribute, an incidental, not a motivation of events. Clearly, the book is about questing, but the discourses which I have nominated do not mobilise or strongly support its quest narrative. Other discourses do, such as imperialism, scientific method, documentary realism, stoicism, comradeship, and more. These however, cannot be pursued further here.
4.3.2

North-West by North
Dora Birtles

In 1932 the 34 ft cutter *Skaga* set sail from Newcastle with a crew of five - three women and two men - for Singapore via New Guinea and the Java Sea. The journey took eight months, and its toll on the author, journalist and poet Dora Birtles. In letters and a diary, which were later worked into this lengthy account, she recorded the pleasures, privations and considerable personal tensions experienced by the crew members. Unlike Harold Fletcher's it was not an official exploratory expedition, but nevertheless, was an arduous and long journey in an engineless craft which, by today's standards, was cramped, ill-funded and perilously ill-equipped. At the outset, only two of the crew, the males, were experienced sailors. The women learned rapidly on the job.

In *North-West by North* (the title refers the overall compass bearing of their destination) the chapter headings repeat the conventions observed in Harold Fletcher's table of contents; that is, they are a chronological, episodic sequence of destinations or events which indicates the progression of text and journey: *Departure from Newcastle, Toward the Barrier Reef, Pig-Hunting and Marooned on West Island, Spice Islands*, etc. However, unlike Fletcher's 'emblems of factuality and exteriority of narrative,' other headings in Birtles' list signal an at least equally important, parallel (to time-place-event descriptions) agenda of her personal record: *Prelude to Something Unpleasant, The Row, Shall I Go On?, It Is Goodbye*.

The new introduction to the book, written by Birtles in 1985, contextualises the voyage within the larger frame of her life. She calls the writing of the account a 'catharsis,' and thus confirms that what follows is an account which will equally present event description and the narration of psychological introspection. Highlighting the emphasis on the personal is the inclusion of eight poems by the author. There are 19 black and white photographs
(again, by the author) and three route maps. The photographs are casual, 'snap-shot' documentations of shipboard moments, native peoples, trees, forts, etc. which in their informality and apparent spontaneity support the coding of the book as a subjective and personal account.

Who are the heroes of this work?

Although she writes in a fairly self-effacing construction, the author may be seen to be one the two heroes of the voyage account. She is 'heroic' not for any specific deeds or role which she carried out (other than the whole trip!), but - in reference to the text - because of the diligent self-annotation of her responses in the face of chronic psychological pressures, and through the construction of the self evident in that annotation. Her self-portrayed 'hero' (or heroine) is a stoic who is constantly self-monitoring, as well as recording wider events: '... our stay at Thursday Island marked a period of furious activity ... seldom have I lived at such pressure and never experienced such a complexity of emotions, such a devastating negation of happiness, such a sense of bitterness and failure, muddled with the registered delights, the intense interests that sprang from an absorbingly new scene, extraordinarily friendly and informative new acquaintances, and a surface activity of unremitting hard work.' (216)

The conventional privileging of masculinity on sea voyages does not at first reading appear to be supported in this account - for all crew members are shown to have their pettinesses and weaknesses, particularly when 'cabin fever' strikes. The second hero, Sven, seems to be heroic not by dint of his masculinity or his nautical skills (although he is the most experienced sailor), but by his forebearance of the general pettiness of shipboard tensions and of the rejection of his affections by the author. Sven's heroism (not that it is ever accorded such a term) is constructed both by positive attribution and negative contrast. The two crew members with whom Birtles experiences most conflict, exclusion and disapproval, Henery and his wife Joan, are depicted as rigid, compassionless, elitist and unforgiving - in short, as prigs. By contrast, Sven is even-
tempered, equanimous to all parties, affectionate and the least conspiratorial (in terms of the text's recreated dialogues) of Skaga's complement. (In an alternative reading, Sven as the author's friend, can perhaps be reduced from hero status to hero's helper or ally - a recurrent figure in the classic quest model. I do not pursue this reading, because I believe that his support of her is not crucial to the completion of her quest.)

What do they stand for?

Martin Stannard, in Debunking the Jungle: The Context of Evelyn Waugh's Travel Books 1930-39, writes that at the time of Skaga's voyage, 'Large tracts of the world were still relatively unknown to the European reader. Alternative cultures were explored with eyes no longer dimmed by concepts of patronage or "progress". While in the grey light of the 'thirties Europe floundered through the Depression towards yet another global disaster, these smart young men [sic] provided intelligent light reading which satisfied both political scepticism and a frustrated thirst for the exotic.' ('82:105) These 'smart young things,' Waugh, Peter Fleming, Norman Lewis, Robert Byron and co., were joined in this activity and market by other writers, such as Birtles. Collectively, these smart young people represented qualities like financial independence (despite often supporting their travels with journalism done 'on the run'), urbane life gone tropical, and a creative 'free agent' status - in all, an appealing persona in 'the grey light of the 'thirties.'

The Skaga crew shared, to varying degrees, in these attributed qualities, for several of them were journalists. In a different frame, they also stand for upper middle class, white, Anglo privilege in passage through a still colonial realm (Australia's Palm, Thursday and Aru islands, Dutch New Guinea and Indonesia, and British Singapore) of native peoples. Individually, the 'heroes' of the account stand for common attributes (liberty, youthfulness, stoicism, etc.) and for other separate attributes. Birtles, for instance, has the 'literary-liberty' cachet, the self-inscribed persona of 'fair witness,' victim (to Henery and Joan) and self-critic. As judge, jury
and transcription clerk to the shipboard dramas, her version becomes the version of events, albeit a self-questioning one. From it, I draw that the 'non-literary' Sven stands for the (male) person of action and moderated emotions, whose liberty resides in his simply being and doing. Dora Birles stands for the complex, self-reflecting (female) intellectual of conflicting impulses (loyalty, sexuality, etc.) whose liberation - earned through thinking and doing - is constantly compromised by her discomfort at just 'being.'

The heroic quality which both Sven and the author jointly stand for is stoicism. ('Oh, that sardonic tolerance!' wrote D. H. Lawrence. 'And at the same time that overwhelming obstinacy and power of endurance. The strange Australian power of enduring - enduring suffering or opposition or difficulty - just blank enduring. In the long run, just endure.' ) The difference between their kinds of stoicism (as depicted) is that, via the interiority of Birtles' account, hers is expressed in terms of psychological tensions: 'She [Joan] must speak to me about it, not I to her again, or all my laboriously acquired self-value would be lost, swept away again.' (348) Sven, depicted from an exterior perspective, has no such inner monologues attributed to him, and thus his psychological profile cannot approach the complexity of the author's. While they both endure, Sven does so as an external (and externalising) actor, of moderate emotion and uncompromised performance, dealing principally with what happens to him; Birtles endures what happens within herself at least as much as its exterior triggers.

The representation here comes unfortunately close to stereotyping: the male as 'outward' and less emotional, and the female as interiorised and predominantly emotional. Such a reading would not be the author's desired one, for she has not privileged elsewhere the masculine nor subordinated the feminine in terms of roles, ethics, intellect, physical performance or other common registers. While my reading of stereotypes can be sustained (I believe), what the two heroes stand for is stoicism depicted from contrasting perspectives; that is, stoicism seen respectively as subject (her own) and object (Sven's), and not as essentially female or male versions of the trait.
What are they doing here?

Individually, the two heroes also have separate agendas. Sven has secretly been paid by Joan's father to ensure the safety of the passage. Dora Birtles is keen to do this trip with a predominantly woman crew, to be 'the first women to undertake such a thing' perhaps, as Hillary said of Everest, simply 'because it was there.' As a happily married woman (her husband was unable to leave his position) she is also dealing with issues of separate identity, autonomy, fidelity and affection sustained over distance. In addition, she is obviously engaged in a major creative task, the recording of events and impressions on the voyage, which will be compiled into a book (as well as performing their more immediate cathartic function). She is also reporting on Skaga's progress - via newspaper articles and photographs - to an Australian public, thus opening to her readership some of the exotic and anomalous regions bordering Australia, and similar occurrences on board.

Collectively, the Skaga's people are here for a rite of passage, an adventurous testing of their physical and emotional fibres, and to pay witness to the exotic, wider world. They are equally focussed upon their own personal squalls as upon the sea, the exotic terrains and the societies which they are visiting. In this voyage they transgress borders, expectations (e.g. unmarried women on a yacht with men), cultures, and encountering an Otherness and difference which Sydney or Newcastle would never provide. This sort of travelling is '... a crossing of an invisible border,' says Ihab Hassan, 'to meet someone inside you whom you don't know (and most of the time don't want to know); just like a journey, both are transgressions of borders.' ('90b) (In turn, their presence in places like the Spice Islands [the Moluccas], has its own cross-acculturation effects, upon administrators and other local people.)

What is the nature and object of the outer search?

'It was not the idea of being heroines,' writes Birtles, 'the first women to undertake such a thing in Australia, but just the cheapest and easiest way of travelling in a floating home and seeing the
world en route to London, a more shining beacon for all of us than any Samarkand.' (vii) (my emphasis) They are embarked upon a journey to Europe (the intention was to sail all the way, but personal discord soon put paid to that) of a most strenuous and unusual nature (far from the 'easiest way of travelling'), in which the events of passage completely outweigh in textual importance the sense of destination. But London, far more than Singapore, is their object, the beacon of the real. ('Australia must be one of the few nations to use so consistently the blanket concept of "overseas" with its implication that we are here surrounded by water, while the real world is over there.' says Andrea Stretton) London may be the ultra-object of the search, but with the eruption of shipboard discord, it is soon supplanted by Singapore. The intermediate objects of the outer search are each new port, which are beads of time on the way to Singapore.

While their journey is motivated by leaving (read 'escaping'?) from Australia, to London, the outer search is not often related to this ultimate destination. The nature of the search lies in physical adventure, rites of passage, testing, and witnessing the world - but in tropical Australia and Asia, not Europe.

What is the nature and object of the inner search?

Dora Birtles' inner search may have commenced as a quest for London-as-life, for first-time achievement, intellectual and emotional clarity, autonomy and other such personal objectives, but these soon seem reduced to one of emotional survival and task completion: 'I crawled onto my bunk, narrow, hot and uncomfortable ... I felt shattered, made of thin living china that had cracked all over and that had to renew itself, cement itself together out of a too-meagre vitality. I cried for self-pity in a nobody-loves-me rage. The fatigue of still being alive' (401) The task then - and the nature of the search - becomes one of self-healing as an ongoing imperative of her voyage. Writing a diary, letters and poems, confiding, solitude and self-examination are among the devices which she employs to retain emotional equilibrium during this eight month confinement.
The diary

Birtles' off-stage diary is the literary prompt of North-West by North. There is frequent reference throughout the book to writing (letters, poems, journals, even - at the nadir of communication - notes to fellow crew members); consequently, this text does not pretend to emerge fully-formed ex nihilo, like the Buddha from a lotus, but to be the polished stone of previous rough-cut trip documents. In one of numerous comments indicating writing as a dominant element in the journey, Birtles says, 'I had another important dream ... and as an exercise in dream analysis I began to interpret it ... I spent every spare minute of two or three days on it and it grew to twenty-three tightly written pages. ... The dream interpretation made my diaries that I had thought were so absolutely blank a mere whitewashed sepulchre of the soul. Ruth got interested, she started one too ... ' (415)

As a discourse, the diary element is dominant (above the nominated others) in its self-monitoring and cathartic functions, its recreated internal monologues (and dialogues), and in the constantly personalised descriptions and narrative commentary. The inclusion of a number of poems emphasises the diary-like 'honesty' of the work. (Having made this and other references to the unabashed interiority of Birtles' overall discourse, I must add that she also pays a balancing written attention to the places and people around her, the outlines of their history, to the amateur sociology of a first-time observer of foreign parts, and to the wind, currents, waves and ship-life minutiae.)

Autobiography

The work is clearly autobiographical, in the sense of the subject delineating the important episodes and observations of this eight month period of her life. In addition, the introduction locates the voyage within the context of Birtles' earlier and later life events. ('That voyage is now only one of the significant periods of my life.' [vii]) She makes frequent reference to what she is doing in terms of the larger pattern of a life (at times in personalised,
poetic/symbolic language): 'Leaving home had flung me into the moon, into a wild, dead, and cold world, but the discipline had been good ... I had forced myself to work and I had experienced, that would stand.' (416) The reader is offered the work as a refraction of a character, within whose life the events of the voyage are refracted by that character.

The Other

Dora Birtles' proto-ethnography records penis sheaths, old tales of the live burial of aged relatives, odd vegetables, vermin, sharks, tropical despots and the other constant, anomalous variables of travel. These ephemera and phenomena along the path are the obtrusions of imperialism's general Other, the coloured (and 'colourful') non-European cultures which are colonised and represented within alien codes, including those of the author.

The desired Other for her, it may be speculated, is not a place (unless it is London), but more a condition - of restored equanimity, mutual personal respect and truth-seeking frankness. All these being out of reach as a result of Skaga's internecine squabbles, they assume a status within the work of an unattainable Other: 'What Joan thought about or wrote, I never knew, she still lived in a pearl-lined oyster shell, but did not cast any pearls.' (415) The Other of the author's own unconscious mind, as it erupts in dreams, tears, poetry, fears and desire, is constantly present.

Exoticism

'Is-this-really-me-over-here?' pieces are the spectre within a certain kind of bad Australian travel writing, in which the expatriate (having flung himself far to Earl's Court, Cuzco or Crete) gee-whizzes at length over this unique predicament. Birtles does not indulge her reader or patronise her locales in this way. While the sheaths, burial, yarns, yams, weevils, Chinese ladies, despots and what-nots do not escape her appraisal and appreciation, they are not appropriated as the 'lost Other' of European-ness, or
fetishized as 'I walked with a Macassan.' She has an eye for difference and anomaly: '... in the first kaleidoscopic impressions of that first marvellous day in the jungle ... Sakota, the Malay chief of staff, who aspired to learn English and was writing a book on Primitive Ceremonies and Magic for which he had been gathering material for fourteen years and would finish in another ten years' time.' (252) This difference is recorded in dispassionate, sometimes wry tones, but not in romantic or paternalistic oppositions.

Are the various goals achieved?

Birtles did not achieve her initial outer goal, for her party to be the first women to sail a small craft from Australia to England. London, the 'more shining beacon than any Samarkand,' she did reach, although by way of Malaya and Japan. Singapore, originally an intermediate goal - but for the Skaga collective, the terminating point - was gained with considerable heartache and nautical frustration, including a final leg of seven weeks of semi-becalmed drifting. The incidental adventures, hazards and tests thrown up by the journey, when combined, may be seen as a passage of rites, which despite the vexations and disputations of their spirits, they all passed. They had successfully left Australia - escaped.

Of the inner search, Birtles' final poem, Are we one crew?, which is the epigraph to the book, says,

'The journey of the heart is over, ended the sorrowful year,
and into the beginning of new things creeps effort crying itself
struggling to stand upright like a child ...' (413)

Her search for truthful, communicating comradeship (at least with Henery and Joan) remains as far as ever from achieved; her autonomy within marriage stands, but the marriage remains untested by any genuine physical engagement with Sven. Emotional survival has been painfully achieved (and described); task completion has contracted to gaining Singapore, not London, and is accomplished. The inner quest has inadvertently become one of self-healing as self-survival, and this process is continued after the voyage by the cathartic writing of her account of events.
For some traveller-writers, the voyage is a metaphor for separation, and this might be said too of Birtles. Throughout the voyage she is exercised by the possibility of a relationship with Sven: we learn of her internalised conflict about fidelity to her husband versus her sexual autonomy. Implicit in her frequent letter writing is a recipient, her husband, Bert. (For instance, of her dream interpretation, she wrote, 'It was a confession and should be posted.' [416]) Writing to him, as well as to herself is a structuring activity during her times of psychological disarray. Birtles' self-annotation then is not simply diary-confined, literate navel-gazing, but a dialogue with other parties. In this sense, it is an effective device for dealing with separation. Although this may seem a secondary inner gaol (not necessarily a 'quest'), it is also achieved.

Is there a 'narrative quest' involving the author's textual representation of reality?

Writing diaries, letters and poems are among the activities which the author employs to retain personal equilibrium. She also uses them to define her philosophical condition (to herself and to the reader), and conscious of the subjectivity of these declarations, at times emphasises that subjectivity. On Thursday Island she gets drunk, and represents her condition in a long 'first-person-as-second-person' stream of consciousness: 'Another cocktail. You've been working without any time off for three or four days, you've worked yourself out, the stuff you're writing now isn't good.' (223) Writing, emotional turmoil, perspective, sensations, even spelling ('Reticulous - rediculous - rediculated' [225]) are highlighted in this staccato-sentenced 'scream of consciousness.' In her ordinary descriptions the speaking position of the writer is that of the detached observer, while in narration of personal events her voice is that of a participant. As noted, poetry is also included; and, on at least one occasion she conducts an imaginary dialogue with herself. This variety of rhetorical devices and subject positions engages the reader in a conscious substitution (or insertion) of him/herself into these speaking positions. However, these limited experiments do not amount to a 'narrative quest,' only a 'narrative questioning.'
textual representation of external reality is in general presented as a 'given' concordance, and is not subjected to a self-reflexive suspension.

**Is the reader required to engage actively in this negotiation of meaning and text?**

Other than in the limited instances cited above, the reader is not required to question the textual conventions of representation, subjectivity and authorial voice.

In summary, the *Skaga*’s people represent mobility and an exotic, productive (though apparently 'work-less') liberty to a readership which is generally not able to emulate such freedom. In Birtles' account there is a dialectic at work which transforms almost immediately this 'gilded youth' cameo to one of torment and emotional excoriation, accompanied by a self-monitoring creativity - a familiar 'bohemians abroad' scenario. The inner and outer quests of the author are clearly linked (though each is radically modified from their original orientations): to reach Singapore without cracking, to undergo separation from her husband without permanent alienation, and to record it all.

In these objectives, the cathartic functions of a diary with strong autobiographical content are major elements of the record, both as an enabling device and as content to the final document. On the other hand, the exotic and the Other function as little more than background discourses to the quests, like so much incidental cultural wallpapers. In the stressing of the personal conflicts and the psychological dimension, Birtles engages the reader's empathy, up to a point. (At other times, the disputatious sailors and the author's agonizing and philosophizing over their doings put one ungraciously in mind of what Soren Kierkegaard concluded: that philosophic discussion was meaningless, for as H.G. Wells put it, reality negates it. Or, as Kierkegaard put it, existence negates it. [in C. Wilson,'78:30]).
In reporting upon her journey (a condition of transgressions) Birtles is broadcasting, as it were, from the frontiers of the unknown (the peripheries of possibility) to the urban centre (the domestic, the familiar). I noted earlier Susan Sontag's proposition that '... one of the tasks art has assumed is making forays into and taking up positions on the frontiers of consciousness ... and reporting back what's there ... ' Birtles undertakes her forays in two planes, to geographic extremes and to extremes of personal conflict. She must then return from both, physically safe and mentally sound. Not so much a 'broker in madness' (as Sontag suggests), but one in sanity, she must recuperate her self, and does this by means of writing. To herself, she is the shaman in the initiatory stage of self-healing, and then to her audience, the shaman in the subsequent stage of messenger from the Other World.
4.3.3

These Are My People
Alan Marshall
Melbourne: F. W. Cheshire. 1944. (Reset, 1957) 184 pages

These Are My People is the story of a journey made by author Marshall and his wife Olive through western Victoria during the early 1940s. Travelling for a year by horse-drawn caravan, and later by car, they gathered messages from the families of soldiers serving in the Middle-East, to be published in the A.I.F. News in Cairo. The title, the first indicator of the book's orientation, clearly indicates an authorial position which identifies with its subject matter, 'these ... my people.' This small book has no photographs, but each chapter opens with a quarter-page pen sketch, usually of a rural male face which is full of 'character.' This further encodes the work as direct (a minimum of technical mediation), unembellished, object(-as-people)-oriented, and thus a 'truthful,' account.

Who are the heroes of this work?

Noting the book's title, we may expect correctly that its 'people,' the rural dwellers encountered by the author, are its heroes. Theirs is a workaday, enduring, laconic, Aussie brand of heroism which is depicted not in any high-key register of 'heroic' achievements or dramatic attributes, but rather as in the collective qualities of a decent, productive, wise, mutually-supportive and home-grown rural culture. Within the amalgam of those collective virtues is a mythic, rural Australian heroism, born more of character and place than of individual (particularly military) deeds: 'In lonely bush places,' concludes Marshall, 'where the influences of greed and competitive living do not shadow childhood, where maturity is a flowering and old age the fruition, the men [sic] we had met had proved that mankind is good.' (182) These people and their attributes are functions of the land: "We had wandered over one little corner of the country for whose existence they [the Diggers] were fighting. In it was something of the things that helped develop their character.' (183) The people met are like 'domestic
Diggers' and heroes in a broad, nationalistic sense. In an even larger sense, perhaps the 'meta-hero' of the work is the land itself, Australia as nature and culture. (I expand further on this possibility below.) In yet another permutation on the theme, the Diggers overseas are the book's heroes in absentia.

It must also be noted that these rural folk/heroes are predominantly men, although women (e.g., as country wives and nurses) and children are also frequently portrayed in the book. Further comment on the gender relations of that period or Marshall's skewing of gender representation will not be pursued here, but these aspects do not pass unnoted as 'given' or 'natural.' In addition, the people of this work are also predominantly white, not Aboriginal, and a similar comment applies.

Within a different frame of reference, that of the reader's possible interpretation rather than of the author's deliberate inscription, Marshall himself must also be seen as a hero of the work. Like Dora Birtles in North-West by North, the writer appears as a 'subject-hero,' by way of his own recorded trials and tribulations (mechanical difficulties, broken leg, cantankerous horses, etc.) and stoicism throughout. Unlike Birtles, his journey has an altruistic dimension. While her tests may be seen as the result of a quest partly grounded in hedonism or self-oriented liberation, Marshall's quest is in the name of the collective greater good, the national war effort, with the rewards of his effort ostensibly going to the soldiers and families who are joined by his communications. Beyond this abstract dimension, his heroism also has a different concrete (or 'real') dimension to that of Birtles: he is a cripple who can only walk with crutches, and who survives en route a physical wounding (a broken leg and the risk of amputation), whereas Birtles' test is principally in the plane of emotional wounding. Marshall's wife Olive wife must be clearly acknowledged as the hero's helper in this work.

What do they stand for?

The heroes (collectively and individually) stand for several qualities, one of which is masculinity with female support. This
privileging of the masculine does not denote a Rambo *machismo* and mindless might, but more a subtle, balanced masculinity - one of inner strength as well as external. During one incident when Marshall is hospitalised with his broken leg, he and the young boy in the next bed witness a fellow patient, an Aboriginal boxer, having his finger brutally and painfully lanced by a doctor:

'... the little boy turned his head away and cried.
"Surely a big boy like you wouldn't cry," said an unsympathetic nurse. "Only babies cry. You are a baby."
"I want to cry too, old chap," I called out to him.'

Later, Marshall asks the boxer ('Whirlwind Ford') how he is feeling.
"I'm tremblin' inside. You know - like when you get terribly scared." His voice broke on a sob. "That big cow thinks a man's got no bloody feelin's."" (121-122)

Not the abjured, caricatured male-ness which a term like '... privileging of the masculine' these days suggests, but an articulate, reflective and even nurturing masculinity: 'These men develop a philosophy of their own. They grope for expression, but what they express comes uncluttered by concessions to newspaper-made ideas. They never talk with the object of establishing themselves, but to express ideas. Their conversation is their character.' (182) These men (as heroes, as Australians) have numerous attributes - intelligence, humour, quirkiness, occasional meanness, individuality, heaps of 'character' and a good deal of endurance. Virtues, one might say, which predictably would be underlined during a time of national crisis by a patriotic commercial writer addressing a patriotic market. But, in their essential uprightness, or in their 'intrinsic goodness of humanity,' (183) the hero-people of this work do not stand simply for a virtuous, ahistorical population, severed from other references and structures. Above all they seem to be (as I have said) functions of the land, people who represent an autochthonous expression of the physical and moral/cultural environment itself - and who are thus whole and healthy. The book ends with a poem by the author, 'a message inspired by the Australian soil,' which enumerates a series of natural images - a 'chevron of swans,' the mallee in blossom, pelicans, gum trees glittering in autumn rain, and such - and closes with the lines:
'Do you remember these things, diggers? These are the things that made you.' By extension, these are also the things that 'made' the characters of the Marshalls' journey, and by further extension, even the people of the Australian cities. In this sense, then, 'natural' Australia may be the underlying (or overarching) hero, and a source of intrinsic national and individual human values. And in this sense too, the work may be approaching a little too closely to propaganda.

The work's human heroes (the people and their author) stand in contrast, and thus in opposition, to two prior figures:

(a) the paradigmatic Australian underdog, the noble but nobbled loner/loser (of the Ned Kelly-Anzac-Phar Lap-Les Darcy tradition): the hero wounded/defeated at the hands of the perfidious, foreign 'big guy'; and

(b) the chronically, collectively dull (psychological wounded?) Australian.

The latter is frequently crystallised by writers both local and visiting; poet A. D. Hope, for example (writing after the period under discussion, but still demonstrating the point), sees his subjects, The Australians in terms of:

'Her rivers of waters drown among inland sands. The river of her immense stupidity

Floods her monotonous tribes from Perth to Cairns ...'

D. H. Lawrence (in Kangaroo) on the same theme advises: 'Look at these Australians - they're awfully nice, but they've got no inside to them. They're hollow. How are you going to build on such hollow stalks ... they're marvellous and manly and independent and all that, outside. But inside, they are not. When they are quite alone, they don't exist.'

Marshall's people are not seen from this urban-intellectual ('cultured') perspective (When Nature equals 'purity,' Culture is suspect.) which can speak of their 'hollowness' and 'stupidity.' Instead, they are constituted as a wholesome rural society which is the incubator of the Diggers' (and Australia's) virtues, '... love of freedom, their hatred of hypocrisy, their courage ...' (183) His
people seem to me the possessors (occupants) of a source of some healing quality, the land itself. His journey is undertaken to carry something of that quality from its source to the peripheries (the theatres of war and urban life) for the inspiration and/or healing of principally its now-displaced previous occupants, the Diggers, and also for Marshall's urban audience.

What are they doing here?

The people-heroes are working, while the Digger-heroes are fighting. The 'home fires burning' are tended by policemen, farmers, families, boxers, immigrant workers, nurses, priests et al, who populate a countryside which ranges from fertile plains to mallee scrub. They work, fish, hunt, help and tell yarns to the author and his wife. In all, they sustain something known (even if only known mythically by a city readership) in its folkways and mores; and they sustain it as a site of promised return for the Diggers.

The author-hero is moving with some difficulty among his people - his horses ('Jim' and 'Morgan' - the hero's animal helpers?) and wagon are a constant source of humourous tribulation, and his crippled legs are an added hinderance. In these aspects, his journey is not an achievement of great distances or of wilderness conquered, but of confronting and overcoming the small, daily, ordinary dangers. ('... The danger of the road is not in the distance,/Ten yards is far enough to break a wheel.' said Meng Chiao.) His principal task, as already noted, is to gather messages from families of soldiers, to be published in the A.I.F. News. His literary 'national service' is extended from the gathering of these messages into the writing of the book. Both function to link a peripheral audience to a hearthland source; respectively: soldiers abroad to rural families, and a general (predominantly urban) Australian readership to their putative rural 'roots.' In both instances, the function of this prose is to ensure the awareness of continuity of values, production and community to those peripheral audiences; and more, to underline the special 'character' of both the place and its people.
Margriet Bonnin has found evidence of this characteristic (an emphasis on the special 'character' of place and people) within the broad spectrum of Australian 'descriptive and travel writing' of the 1930-1950 period: 'The writers were all concerned to show that Australia possessed something unique - something which would help to overcome the economic problems and disillusionment that were creating a sense of lack of direction in both intellectuals and the general public. They were all agreed that this unique quality, whether it be spiritual or material, could not be found in the cities.' ('80:295) If the terms 'economic problems and disillusionment' are replaced by 'military vulnerability and wartime uncertainties,' Bonnin's observation can apply quite neatly to Marshall's work.

What is the nature and object of the outer search?

Journeys commence with the self and a desire; in this case it is Marshall's desire to create '... something that would bring Australia more vividly' (3) before the servicemen overseas. (Of his self, he tells us that a picture book which he had when he was ten, which showed a bright gypsy caravan, was part of the romance of what he wished to undertake.[1]) The stated object of the outer search is to contact rural families and to collect messages, a task which seems to happen fairly automatically once the Marshalls are on the road, and which is given little comment in the work. Their route seems fairly ad hoc, and thus there is not a sense of a final destination to be gained, even though the mechanical breakdowns, animal problems, broken leg, etc, experienced during their year on the road are significant tests. The outer search may be seen as one which has a more diffuse object as it widens into a search for the character of the land - in this case, as it is manifest in the characters of the land - and for the speech of that land.

James Clifford, in Encounters with the Exotic, writes that 'A traveller's phenomenological "body" can often be quite precisely located. Certain writers are happiest with the view and conversation organized by a moving train-compartment.' ('84:638) Marshall's interactions and perceptions seem best 'organized' by his chance encounters with countryfolk, especially when he and Olive
and the horses are camping or passing near a town and have themselves become objects of some interest. He loves the sort of vernacular wit and wisdom which rolls from the tongues of these folk of his road: 'I know the value of wire. Old Dan Troop, of Echuca, told me once: "All I want in heaven is some sheep yards and a coil of wire. Never you travel without wire. The cemetry is full of blokes that didn't carry wire".' (6) This point of view (a non-patronising interest in and desire to record the 'ambience' of this Australia) determines the nature of his search. He seeks out - or is sought out by - ordinary people, particularly ones who love language or at least talking, and he commits their conversation, idiosyncracies and slang to his narrative. In this appreciation, his search is partly for an oral literature: '... when Dan Troop sat over our fire we never failed to hear a yarn told with the skill of those bushmen who, never having read a book, pass on stories one to the other till they become smoothe and mellow like the bone handles of old pocket knives.' (70)

What is the nature and object of the inner search?

In Marshall's recording of day-to-day interactions and conversations with his subjects there is an artistic and aesthetic activity beyond the journalistic task. This may be seen as the 'representational' dimension to the journey's search - the 'outer' of the 'inner.' Another dimension, albeit unstated, is the search for 'fundamentals,' roots, 'fair dinkumness' - an un-intellectualised, un-mediated wisdom: 'The knowledge that comes from looking into "auld ashes" needs no text books to proclaim its truth. This truth, revealed in companionship and crystallised in contemplation of a hundred fires, brings with it a conviction in the intrinsic goodness of humanity.' (183)

No inner search of a personal nature or reward is posited by the author. While a constant actor within his own narrative, his emotional or psychological life is never given much mention, nor is the relationship between himself and Olive grounds for reflection. Thus, there is no sense of a 'character-testing' ('make or break') quest. His personal priorities are subsumed into an externally-
focussed gathering of intangibles ('character') and ephemera ('incident') which in turn, it becomes his task to render as consumable copy.

The diary

I have noted that Marshall referred to the oral tradition of the Australian bushmen as passing on stories 'till they become smoothe and mellow like the bone handles of old pocket knives.' His imagery, of the manual and tactile 'surface' of a story, is reminiscent of that used by Walter Benjamin (in The Storyteller) in referring to a similar workplace oral tradition: 'The storytelling that thrives for a long time in the milieu of work - the rural, the maritime, and the urban - is itself an artisan form of communication, as it were. It does not aim to convey the pure essence of the thing, like information or a report. It sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again. Thus traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel.' (75:91-92) Marshall's own description and narrative has something of these qualities. Anecdotes and apocrypha feature strongly in his work: to his reworking of them clinging the inevitable traces of his own presence (in his selection and inflection), while his stories (for example, of the Irish 'Curse of Kishogue' [71], or a wedding at Wilcannia [73]) may also be seen as being 'smoothed' by their passage through many minds.

In this gracious appropriation and honouring of the vernacular storytelling tradition there is residual evidence of the diary. Marshall's diary discourse is not primarily a self-focussed (or autobiographical) undertaking, but one which records an accumulation of traces. Story gathering is one of the functions of his never-mentioned diary; another is to log poetic images ('... the pelicans beating up wind like sailing ships.' [184]); and another, of course, is to recall the daily ephemera (what the horses did, conversations about the tyres with Olive, petrol rations ... ) and dramas, such as the bait poisoning of their dog Kim.
In this mixture of the quotidian and the significant anecdote, his work in some ways resembles a journal, although without the tell-tale markers of date-lines or place indicators. Paul Carter says of the journal form that its openness '... unlike the carefully balanced moral fable or the hierarchic structure of the essay, travelled light: it was responsive to every turn in the road (of fortune) It travelled without a map: it did not imagine itself at the end of the journey looking back.' (87:71) Several points in this observation pertain to These Are My People. While it does have elements of the 'moral fable' and a strong sense in the conclusion of itself 'looking back' upon its own narrative trail, it is also responsive to the 'turns in the road' and is apparently mapless. This then is an alternative model to the inward-seeking (myopic?) diary. Marshall says of his note book that it is '... that link between the diggers and me.'(183)

**Autobiography**

In The Storyteller, Walter Benjamin proposed that 'There is nothing that commends a story to memory more effectively than that chaste compactness which precludes psychological analysis.' (75:91) Perhaps a 'chaste compactness' can be attributed to Marshall's work, for the book is neither long nor laboured; and, in any event it does not lend itself to 'meaningful' psychological analysis. The author is simply not problematic - nor is his presence in the work repressed. He is just there, working: 'I am a freelance journalist and I walk on crutches. I call them Isabel and Horace. I think they like me. We were introduced by a crook called Poliomyelitis, but enough of him.' (2) (Perhaps for some this does not preclude psychological analysis - but enough of that.)

The work is autobiographical only in the most obvious sense. The events of the author's life during this year, where relevant, are represented; the reader is informed of aspects of his relationships, occupation, health and attitudes. In the latter, as written and construed, Marshall's patriotism, love of nature, admiration of human solidarity, etc., are apparent, and thus 'autobiographical' inferences can be drawn from them, but no more than that. The
book never denies the voice of the journeyer, but is more about the journey.

The Other

Richard White has written perceptively of the 'Heidelberg School' (of painters, ca. 1890) and the early writers of The Bulletin, that they '... carried into their image of the bush their own urban bohemian values - their radicalism, their male comradeship, their belief in their own freedom from conventional restraints and presented it as the "real" Australia. They also projected on to their image of the bush their alienation from their urban environment.' (in Carter '87:282) Evidence of these traits can still be seen in the thinking of Alan Marshall, even though he was working half a century after those earlier artists and writers. In his work, the city is not the repressed Other but the ignored Other. In this book which (as I propose) generally 'precludes psychological analysis,' there seems to be little reward in seeking evidence of Others. Offstage is war and possible defeat; in the wings are sexuality (which gets scant, oblique reference through stories of sweethearts and marriages) and Aborigines (who get a brief mention); onstage is illness (as the threat of amputation), as is humour - but all these are mere walk-on parts. The Other is not a significant element here. Indeed, the direction of the narrative is opposite the norm suggested by Meaghan Morris in her observation on travel narratives. She says '... travel-writing tends to move towards a discovery of, and an encounter with, an experience of impurity.' ('88a:170) With Marshall, the movement of the journey is to and through purity, and in the end the return home to the city is described in terms of loss ('No more yarns; no more messages'), not plenitude - a reversal of the customary quest model.

Exoticism

Slang ('I'm not much chop on pies.'), story ('Speewa, that mythical station used as a setting for all the lies put over on new
chums'), idiosyncratic expression ('I was as sore as a snouted shiela'), humour (on Speewa 'they had to get two Chinese to mix the mustard with long-handled shovels'), the lyrical in Nature ('black swans and pelicans rested like yachts with their sails furled') and comradeship are the exotica which Marshall garners to his notes and narrative. These are all distinctly rural in their stamp. The exotic here is defined either by contrast to the urban (where 'people were not so friendly' [182]), or in terms of the anomalous. It is not an exotica of the foreign, threatening, or erotic, of the bizarre landscape or an impenetrable culture which must be 'conquered' by the male author. (In fact, by contrast, Marshall's text modifies some of the generic expectations of travel narrative with his distinctly gentle male authorial presence; also, he is accompanied on his quest by wife not warrior mates; and has a handicap which is simply treated as 'normal.') The 'domestic (rural) ordinary' is amplified to a semi-exotic status for the domestic (urban) market.

Are the various goals achieved?

'Producing images of Australianness is a commercial activity, a mode of entertainment, and a genre of cultural practice.' writes Meaghan Morris in Panorama. It must not be overlooked that Alan Marshall undertakes this trip not solely as an altruistic exercise in patriotism, but as a commercial activity within his career of professional writer. We may assume that the messages - 'images of Australianness' - which he gathered from soldiers' families are (a) sufficient in number, and (b) ultimately transmitted to their destination in the Middle East. (Sudan '90, Egypt '15, Tobruk '42, the Gulf '90 ... how history rehearses itself.) Thus making the exercise a success in those terms: the primary outer goal is achieved. Moreover, within this 'genre of cultural practice,' his book made it to publication - another success. Its collection of characters like Plug, Bruiser, Paddy, Dan, Pedro and 'Whirlwind Ford,' and its immersion of the reader in an almost mythical, matey realm (a Speewah of the heart) where people's 'conversation is their character' - but that character is often unpredictable ('"The Australians use newspapers for brains and their newspapers are
English before they’re Australian.” [150]) - is undeniably a 'mode of entertainment.' With it, his external goals are scored.

As I have suggested that inner goals are not a discernable element in Marshall's journey, other than as the literary shaping of the narrative, consequently there is little point in questioning whether there is success in this area.

Is there a 'narrative quest' involving the author's textual representation of reality?

For all of Marshall's interest in language-based occurrences (jokes, slang, conversations, anecdotes), he expresses none in the matter of textual representation. This for him is not problematic. The only narrative quest is the quest for narrative. (‘... while metaphor is never an innocent figure of speech, the protagonist himself is always a figure innocent of metaphor.’)

Is the reader required to engage actively in this negotiation of meaning and text?

Marshall's speaking position is as semi-detached observer (description), and a semi-involved participant (narration). As he does not subvert or self-reflect his text, the reader's conventional position of negotiating meaning is left unquestioned.

To draw these strands together, I see the people-heroes ('object-heroes') of These Are My People depicted as standing for a rural purity and national rectitude. They wear the wounds of a war elsewhere with stoicism, humour (as in - 'Things is crook in Tallarook/but they're a bloody sight worse in Bourke') and an authenticity reinforced by vernacular speech. Insofar as they are 'fixed' in their locations (wherever the author encounters them), the model of a quest journey cannot be applied to them. For the journeying author-hero, the textual discourses of diary,
autobiography, the exotic and the Other have, as usual, varying importances, though none other than the diary is of major influence in the author's quest. There is no apparent or focussed inner quest which is motivated or supported by these discourses.

My principal observation pertains to the Australian tradition sometimes described as 'To tame the land is to know it.' Marshall is several generations too late for the taming. His interest instead may be seen as 'To tell the land is to preserve it.' He attempts to preserve it and its current culture in the service of those who cannot witness it, either because of temporary separation (the Diggers) or permanent separation (the city dwellers). In this, his voyage is a metaphor for their separation and the attempt to overcome it. And, if separation can be seen as wounding, his voyage is a metaphor for healing. He journeys to carry something of the rural purity from its source to the needing peripheries.
Dust on My Shoes

Peter Pinney
(First published 1952) 241 pages

Dust on My Shoes is Peter Pinney's second book and the first in a series of six picaresque travelogues which he published up until the mid-1970s. His route here is from Greece near the end of its civil war (1947-1949), across the Middle East and India to Burma, travelling by land and living by his wits. Chapters are titled by country, each with a sub-title, so that we have Greece: Guerillas, Girls and Mined Railways; Iraq: 'Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad'; and Afghanistan: Snow, Hashish and Red Pants. Plenty of exotic and Otherness is signalled - war, Islam, anomaly, sex, drugs, madness (in this case, bureaucratically-induced) - but these are just 'flags,' not the whole story, to which there is more depth.

Who are the heroes of this work?

The hero of this work is the author; while the hero of the author is his sometime travelling companion, a young Dutch soldier-of-fortune named Marchand who at the end of the book drowns in the flooded Chindwin River in Burma as the pair attempt to cross it. ('Marchand was dead. The debonair, the cynical, the light-hearted, proud and resolute Marchand; the budding philosopher, the youthful sage, the peerless companion.' [240]) These two picaro-heroes adventure on our behalf through an Oriental Otherworld (an underworld to the reader's European-Australian 'overworld') of colour, odd faiths, corruption, venality, humour, passing friends, official foes, opportunities and death.

Pinney's self-construction is not that of a derring-do interloper lording his way through 'wog' cultures, but of the traveller-philosopher (the man of action and thought) savouring the
difference (the banalities and bizarreness) of the world at large. In Greece an old man asks him what he will do with his future, his old age, when he has no money as a result of this wasted youth? 'But I am growing richer daily, and when am old, if indeed I live to be old, I shall be rich beyond measure. I shall have a harvest of memories as shall warm my heart until I die.' (20) The tone is 'signature' Pinney, slightly florid, ironic and verging on the 'self-mock-heroic,' but it conveys his persona of the hobo-philosophe.

What do they stand for?

These heroes (subject-hero and object-hero) stand jointly for a post-War liberty which encompasses mobility, action, cultural contrast, challenge, sexual possibilities and no binding occupation; in short, a life of libertine adventure. Both ex-WWII soldiers, they are now more internationalists than nationalists (Pinney sometimes identifies himself to people, bafflingly, as a 'Taswegian'), and carry particular scorn for uniforms, administrators, border officials and bureaucrats of any nation. They are also, undeniably, European figures in motion through the Third World: individuality, 'whiteness,' wit and ingenuity versus collectivity, dark skin, tradition and inertia. Individually, the heroes are differentiated by Pinney's more aesthetic approach to experience and his literary turn of phrase, and by Marchand's fearless hauteur: 'Marchand glanced with disparaging insolence at the assembled [Syrian Army] officers. Slowly, clearly, with disgust and weariness written on his features, he began to speak.' (90)

Their lives (or at least its story) bespeak the condition of adventure, a condition which Nietzsche saw not as one of development but repetition, not coherence but illumination. (in Zweig,'84:191) These heroes move from episode to episode, repeating a rhythm of test and temporary triumph, within a pattern which is only the trail of these incidents and accidents. (Their 'coherence' seems already established; any 'illumination' seems to be no more - or no less - than an awareness of the death's edge to such a life.) 'The adventure story,' says Paul Zweig, 'does not move principally from beginning to end, but from peak to peak, reflecting
an order of values different from that of the novel.' (loc cit) These heroes live out their 'peak experience' to 'peak experience' existence in defiance of a number of minor and major obstacles - land mines, ladies of the night, immigration officials, various predatory types, their own poverty, and finally, floodwaters. The '... adventurer's fascination with risk - as a warrior, a lover, a gambler - is a way of contending with death; a will to make of death an adversary. Every risk successfully run is a triumph over death, a "self-overcoming", to use Nietzsche's phrase.' (ibid:217) In logging his 'fascinating' risks, Pinney extends in this work a literary persona (of the adventurer in triumph over death) which he established with his first book, Road in the Wilderness, the story of his experiences as a jungle fighter in New Guinea. Despite his cheek and Marchand's savoir-faire, 'self-overcoming' itself ultimately must cede its advantage to death, and so it is for Marchand, where the end of his life is the end of this leg of the narrator's journey and of his book.

What are they doing here?

They are at large and at play, pursuing that 'ontological impulse' (as Ihab Hassan calls it) to be at large, travelling. They have no apparent 'program' other than an easterly momentum, and survival (through an amiable sort of opportunism). What they do is to move, to observe (in Pinney's case, also to record) and to contend - but not as opponents of the foreign world. Unlike their many of their literary, military or administrative European forebears in the East, they have 'no particular place to go'; they sleep in native dives, mingle with local gamines, eat street food and traverse jungles where Anglo-s fear to tread. In short, without any badge of office, they personify that fall from European grace called 'gone native,' or more offensively, 'gone wog' - Burtonian 'white niggers,' minus the linguistic and libidinal espionage. ('He [Burton] spoke 28 languages, including pornography, it was unkindly said."

They are foreigners in a European sub-tradition of straddling traditions, their own and those of the societies through which they travel. This ambivalent cultural posture typically brings its subject into question, if not disrepute: Captain (later Sir) Richard Burton 'of
Arabia' and T. E. Lawrence (of the same address) were both regarded, for all their achievements, as 'tainted' by the Orient (and its reportedly unhygienic, sexually askew, idolatrous populace), and thus became outcasts even among their own kind. In the Syrian desert at a remote petroleum pumping station, one European manager barks at Pinney, 'It's all very well bludging your way around the Middle East at the expense of other people, but you're out of your depth along this pipeline.' (94) (In doing so, Pinney and Marchand were the *avant garde* of a later, massive 'Children's Crusade,' the psychedelic armies which marched through the Khyber Restaurant, Kabul and into India in the late-'60s to mid-'70s: trippers who refined 'no particular place to go' to an article of faith in personal navigation.)

Pinney and Marchand are subverting a given order, the erstwhile separation of former lord and former serf. The colonial prophylactics of skin, language, creed and money (subsumed under the quality of 'European') are no longer an effective barrier against cultural 'contagion' or the serfs' revenge; and this is exactly what our heroes want to experience. While occasionally exploiting the post-colonial cachet of their skin pigment, they are more frequently subjected to (no doubt deserved) indignities at the hands of various recently de-colonised cops, desk-wallahs and other officials - as well as to kindnesses and good humour. The membrane of difference is punctured (the European condom deflated), and both tides meet in the ebb and flow of their common humanity, although not without difficulty.

What is the nature and object of the outer search?

Pinney and his companion nominate no specific object to this journey - not even to travel together: they first meet in Istanbul, split up or wander off at several other junctions, re-meet in Delhi, and begin their extraordinary, illegal excursion through Assam into the headhunter territory of Burma's jungle. An intention to move eastwards is always apparent, but this trajectory is accompanied by no sense of arrival at any place; each new country or town being just another whistle-stop, a repeated challenge and an episodic link.
in a chain of further episodes. The nature of this promiscuous traversal of surfaces, and the repeated transgression of borders, fixed meanings and stable values, threatens Western notional forms (of life and literature) which might crave that an 'auto-teleological' principal should somewhere inhere in the narrative of a life and the life of the narrative. (Pinney's peregrinations, which extended over three decades, remind one more of the metaphorical 'life' - as a road, journey, etc. - referred to in the Indian proverb which says, 'Life is bridge. Pass over it, but build no houses upon it.,' or in Tolkein's song, 'The road goes ever on and on/down from the door where it began ...' than the Judeo-Christian 'journey of the soul' towards some final redemption, which upon reaching Heaven then halts.)

Within - and beyond - this abstraction of their trip, it is obvious that the nature of their day-to-day search involves a broad practical competency, at finding jobs (Pinney selling beans in Beirut, orchids in Delhi), keeping one step ahead of the law ('... and I'm one step ahead of the shoe-shine, two steps away from the county line ...'), trading, learning new languages and customs, etc.

What is the nature and object of the inner search?

No inner search is nominated, unless we take more seriously Pinney's remark about 'I shall have a harvest of memories as shall warm my heart until I die.' I propose that Pinney's inner challenge is to the societal assumption of its own opposite; that is, that what he is doing must lead to perdition, instability and dissolution. Emile Durkheim's term anomie (from the Greek, 'without law') was used in the 1950s and 1960s as a concept akin to alienation, to describe a condition where an individual had lost his traditional moorings and was prone to disorientation or psychic disorder. Pinney's writing reflects no such anomie or disorder, despite his slipping a large number of traditional 'moorings' (though not those of maintaining a diary and an audience). On the contrary, he is more in the Nietzzschean mould, which (in Twilight of the Idols) says, 'One perishes by no one but oneself. Only "natural" death is death for the most contemptible reasons, an unfree death, a death at the wrong

246
time, a coward's death. From love of life one ought to desire to die differently from this: freely, consciously, not accidentally, not suddenly overtaken. (in Zweig:32) The attribution by me of such literary-philosophical underpinnings to Pinney's attitudes is, of course, purely speculative. I speak of this as a model, ratified by implication only, in which Pinney's robust ramblings may be seen as an existential end in themselves.

Ruth Blair in "In Transit" - Travel Narrative as a Habit of Mind says that 'We may become interested in the person or persons observing - the voyagers; we may learn a lot about them; they may be changed by the experience related. But the goal of the narrative is not the depiction of their search for some kind of fulfilment. Ulysses is not a quester. He is simply going home and lives out, on the journey, a series of encounters with our demons.' (‘86:262) I would disagree in many cases with Blair's statement that 'the goal of the narrative is not the depiction of their search for ... fulfilment,' but in the case of Dust on My Shoes, it is correct. Pinney, like Ulysses, is not a quester (he too simply lives out, on the journey, a series of encounters with 'demons'); although unlike the classical Ulysses, as a modern (with his self as his own subject), the goal of his journey is open and diffuse, rather than for 'home.' In living out this 'series of encounters with our demons,' the traveller-writer is seen to journey on our behalf and to contend at the gates of a more vital and vivid life (even unto death) than our own picayune versions.

In a social observation it may also be noted that Pinney, an Australian, is writing for an Australian audience, and it has been said that the mark of the Australian mind is an attitude of freedom. This could be stated more correctly as 'an attitude to freedom,' that is, an attitude towards it, rather than one which is intrinsically of freedom. If Pinney's journey is freedom à pied, and if this freedom 'on the hoof' is seen as its own end, then his journey does not need a further inner quest dimension. Or, if it is a quest, Pinney's is one for the experience of the road itself and not for its end.
The diary

Peter Pinney answered an inquiry I made in June 1988, regarding any surviving diaries, writing 'Unfortunately, when I was knocking about most of my day-to-day notes were loose pages of scribble which I posted home when and as possible, in case an accumulation should get lost. Later I sifted through these notes, in the course of writing books, and discarded them. I have a certain amount of material typed when I was running a little contrabanding schooner around Central American waters, and more typed stuff concerning daily life aboard a cray boat in Torres Strait, and even a notebook about travel in Europe which no one would publish; but that's all. And in any case you may well have found my travel notes disappointing: in scribbling random notes during idle moments I was more concerned with brassily factual accounts which would provide a detailed framework for later on, when it could be enriched at leisure with the odd polished phrase and philosophical observation.' (1988)

Assuming an author of first-person material does not have total recall, or an attendant Boswell, a reader can further assume that some sort of diary (by whatever name and in whatever form) was kept - as Pinney indicates above. Thereafter, unless there are excerpts, quotations or other pointers, one can only speculate about the evidence of diary entries in a text. One position is to assume that it is all diary-sourced. While Pinney's book does not refer to or infer anything about diary discourse, I might say that none of it is diary, but all of it was diary.

Autobiography

'The picaro or picara is the reader's guide from one spot to another, the binding element in a moving episodic plot ... ' writes Percy G. Adams: '83:202) Via this 'binding element' we understand a section of the longer and only partly-written autobiography of P. P. Pinney. But not much more; the text gives away very little biographical data, and it is only by referring to the original 1952 hardcover edition of *Dust on My Shoes* that one can see a
photograph of the author, a sandy-haired man of medium height in his late twenties. Other blurbs on other books of his add to the biographical agglomerate, but we are concerned here not so much with the facts of his life as with the emergence of an autobiographical discourse in this work.

If 'autobiography is the essential act of self-witness,' as Ihab Hassan ('90b) suggests, Pinney's book is that, but in an outwardly focussed sense - like a man standing at a window, reporting principally on what is outside, while acknowledging his own reflection also in the pane. If it is also true (as James Olney says) that through writing the self and the life, complexly intertwined, take on form, assume shape and image, '... and endlessly reflect that image back and forth between themselves as between two mirrors,' ('80:22) then the work again is autobiographical. But within this metaphor, the foldback of reflections goes unacknowledged by the Pinney. For him, a Turk is a Turk is a Turk, not a creature of Peter Pinney's preconceptions and post hoc constructions. He writes both the Turk and himself into unproblematic being, each represented and witnessed by himself, but neither questioned in this identity.

I noted earlier William Spengemann's differentiation between three forms of first person non-fiction narrative: the journal or diary (a consecutive, regular record); the memoir (dealing with selected recall); and autobiography (the attempt at a 'full' survey of the events within a nominated period). Dust on My Shoes has its source in the content (but not form) of the first, elements of the second (because recall always is selective), and its form in the third, within the limited (in relation to a much longer lifetime) period represented. (It is clear that many other travel accounts might also confirm to this hybrid model.) In turn, within Spengemann's typology of autobiography, there are three distinct kinds, historical, philosophical and poetic. I have proposed earlier that travel writings at times demonstrate aspects of all three, but generally are characterised more by the third kind, 'enactment,' wherein the writer attempts an imaginative recreation of the journey instead of presenting principally a reconstruction of or a reflection upon a sequence of events. The autobiographical elements of Dust on My Shoes are in accordance with this proposition.

249
The Other

The Other, according to Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, has the attributes of 'primitive,' 'child-like,' 'irrational,' 'ritualistic' and potentially violent, some of which are manifest in Pinney's description of Baghdad: 'A hot and dusty city, a city of beggars and buzzing bazaars, an interesting and insanitary metropolis harbouring a hybrid collection of unclean and underfed humanity packed into narrow adobe cells called tenements, like bees in a hive.' (98) This is a standardized depiction of an ahistorical Oriental *soukh* (or sink), fulfilling a European taste for a titillatingly anarchic, bacterial East, which is peopled by the likes of - 'The proprietor was a very fat man with one eye. Indeed, he was so fat he appeared to have no neck, his head being a be-fezzed and conical continuation of his shoulders, and his hirsute face hid in ambush behind a wealth of beard and side-whiskers which trespassed almost to his nose; and his one eye peered out with Machiavellian craftiness from this thicket of natural foliage.' (99) (An impure Baghdad, one might say, deserving perhaps of a later extirpative, 'surgical strike.')

Travel books entertain and inform. The problem for the reader with the above images of the Orient and its denizens is that the one text does the two tasks, it entertains *and* informs, but when the former has finished, the 'information' remains. Thus, we have the sort of Other, so objected to by Edward Said, of a mendacious, voluptuous, unclean and intrigue-wracked Islamic Orient. Pinney, almost inevitably (for a Western writer), succumbs to the temptation to mobilise these *topoi* in order to colour his descriptions and dramatise his narrative.

Much further east, past the hills of Assam and Burma and their headhunting tribes, Pinney and Marchand spend months among a people (Buddhists, Christians, animists) who represent a different, more primitive Other, but one less tainted by the proximity of Europe, the machinations of oil companies and the endemic byzantine corruptions attributed to Islam. Their journey through the Other-world turns back time, as it were, as they progress from West to East, to further East, with European cultural
time (as registered in the structures of industrialisation, modernity and democracy) regressing to approximations of its own recent, then more distant antecedent eras.

In speaking of tourists and this desire to become the 'primitive,' Dean McCannell proposes that 'Tourists are moderns whose consumerist life is rife with instability and inauthenticity. Hence the turn of tourists towards naturalness, to the accumulation of artifacts of cultures they identify as authentic. This search for the other, or more precisely the desire to encounter the other may be linked to emotional stability.' (76:4) If the author's account can be seen as a representation of cultures which readers identify as 'authentic' (the account itself becoming an artifact, at one remove, of that culture), and his passage seen as one through geographical space rendered as cultural time, then, with each chapter the reader (here in place of the tourist) encounters an increasingly older, more primitive and more 'authentic' Other. This dynamic comes to an unexpected turn when the reader confronts that most primitive and absolute Other, death. In Marchand's drowning, the vicarious journey to the Other and its full spectrum of emotional possibilities are played out. Marchand 'follows the river of death downstream.' Pinney, who enters the same river but is saved, returns from beyond the threshold of the underworld to tell his tale. He plays the psychopomp (one who conducts spirits or souls across the frontier of the other world) to his vicariously, 'authentically', 'primitive' readers; his tale, the soul or boon snatched from beyond.

**Exoticism**

'While the kingdoms of freaks appear century after century on maps, exemplary races figure mostly in books of travel to utopia - that is, nowhere.' writes Susan Sontag. (84:699) And so it is with Dust on My Shoes. From Salonika to the Chindwin River, Pinney's road is peopled by riff-raff, lurk merchants, poets, pilots, girls with the eyes of Asia - the different. For, I suspect, no one buys a travel book to read about suburban 'bean counters,' pen pushers, virtuous sisters or a day in the life of an ideologically correct paddy farmer. (Although, no doubt somewhere there must be examples of Socialist
Realist travelogues.) The travel writer must attend to the exotic and the exotic is only that, relative to the reader's norms. Racism and stereotyping are two possible outcomes of casting for exotica, and Pinney's reader can find examples of these, as well as many passages which appreciate the virtues and cultural ways of others: 'Happily we had met a Greek who offered to assist us [selling clothes] ... He was a handsome and well-taught man ... with a commanding air and a flow of talk which made him an admirable salesman.' (41) Unfortunately, this sort of passage tends to erect the Noble Exception among the Rule of Freaks.

Other reports of the exotic in his work resemble participant-observer ethnography: 'These people [the Kula of upper Burma] do not bury their dead; instead they place them in coffin-shaped containers by the village gate, where they rot. On the seventh day the head is severed, and in a farewell procession the sightless eyes stare for the last time on those places the dead had enjoyed most ... as we approached the village, our nostrils were assailed by the stench of putrefaction emanating from a cluster of such open graves standing by the gate.' (184) The desert or jungle or city or palace is always amenable to 'exotification,' as are its occupants. The degree of exploitation (or misrepresentation) within that discourse of the exotic is not the point of this section, just to note that the discourse is a major one - and predictably so - in this book.

Of the erotic exotic, there is an amount, although with none of the bannable explicitness of a Henry Miller book or the twee fantasising of an Emanuelle film. Pinney has a few mild dalliances with women along the way, resists others (he says) and in the Burma jungle town lives with one for some time. The women are either demimondaines, ethnic outcasts, or in the case of Loya, the Burmese woman, a jungle 'earth mother.' Sexuality is implicit only, and although women might be 'The soft, unhappy sex.,' (40) and Pinney patronising (though apparently also 'gallant' and gentle) in his treatment of them, he also defends them, in debate, against Marchand's unalloyed chauvinism. When the latter says, 'Doubtless the women here [Turkey] are the same as their kind the world over: good, easy and bad.' Pinney counters with 'Even as men are good, easy and bad.' (40) As in many male-authored travel accounts the
women are sexualised in representation (if not necessarily exploited), while the men are not.

Whatever their status, the women, like the other subjects of Pinney's writing, are episodic phenomena, objects of appraisal, interaction and commentary. If they are *sui generis* exotic it is because the men, beasts, buildings, rivers and customs too are exotic; and all are generic functions of the narrative of 'A Journey to Exotica.' These exotics may fascinate, maim, kill or give shelter from the storm, but they do not change the traveller's character; he is the picaro dancing through their dusts.

**Are the various goals achieved?**

I have argued that there are no discrete superordinate goals, either inner or outer, that shape this journey. The author has multiple intermediate geographic goals, which are all attained, until the final river hurdle. General eastward motion, physical and psychological liberty and survival are all that count. Until Marchand dies, each of these is accomplished. After this point the journey turns back upon itself: Pinney who commenced his road alone, putting behind him the deaths of the Greek civil war is now alone again, putting behind him the Chindwin, Marchand's grave.

Pinney, the proxy picaro (to the reader as stay-at-home hero) has lived out the adventure of contending with death, and for one more time has survived to tell the tale of this 'self-overcoming.' In doing this, the reader's surrogate warrior has been fuelled not by the potential for fatal wounding but for desire realised. He is a fighter *and* a lover. ('... one must invariably look for a good time,' says Norman Mailer in *The Deer Park*, 'since it is a good time is what gives us the strength to try again. For do we not gamble our way to the heart of the mystery against all the power of good manners, good morals, the fear of germs, and the sense of sin?') In his (literally) 'vivaciousness,' the hero of Pinney's book has demonstrated for the reader an unstated goal, that living 'to the max' can be done - at least by someone else.
Is there a 'narrative quest' involving the author's textual representation of reality?

By his admission Pinney journeyed with one eye to later literature, but there is no attention drawn to matters of text or representation. This is not a self-relexive work, but one of apparent 'transparency.' Among his literary devices are the extensive use of dialogue, two well-defined characters, much visual description, historical background and personal reflection, all of which function to support the 'plot-less plot' of action moving sequentially, linearly on a horizontal axis. The road east is the organizing structure, and when the road ends, so does the book: 'Along the road to India I walked, away from the dawn, away from the river and out of the town, alone; and looking down I marvelled that there was so little dust on my shoes.' (241) These, the final words of his story becomes the first of the book, its title. This is the only occasion on which the text calls attention to itself as a construction.

The literary devices mentioned above (dialogue, characters, visual description, historical background, etc.) are not exclusively, or even principally those of a travel narrative, but also those of the novel. Dust on My Shoes reads like a 'road novel,' although without complex plotting or characterisation. One reviewer of the published journals of explorer Edward John Eyre declared that, 'We rise from the perusal of them with a feeling similar to that which follows the enjoyment of a pleasant work of fiction.' (in Carter, '87:72) Similarly, a reader might finish Pinney's book with the feeling of having read a tale of such colour, characters and drama that it might have been a novel - although saying this does not imply that its fact is fiction and the fiction is a falsehood. This is as far as Pinney's 'narrative quest' goes: he succeeds in rendering his journey into text, and it entertains like a novel, like a rattling good yarn.

Is the reader required to engage actively in this negotiation of meaning and text?

As a documentary/realist text written from a first-person perspective, there is little in the text which provokes a re-
negotiation of meaning and text. However, I will repeat here the synopsis of a 'typical' travel account (which I quoted in the Introduction to this paper) which fits closely with Dust on My Shoes. It is included here because of (a) the accuracy of its synopsis, and (b) the inaccuracy of its conclusion. 'The narrative is motivated by a series of sexual exchanges (actual or almost) or life-threatening scrapes (actual or almost) with its ultimate reward in survival. The main character, the traveller-writer, the personification of the impulse to liberty (pitted inevitably against the forces of constraint) takes a liminal position in relation to the accepted mores of whatever cultural time-place setting that he or she is discovered in the leaving thereof. He/she appears without fixed address or religion, protector or income. The narrative style is full of visual adjectives and active adverbs signifying high emotion in equally high, or contrastingly low, places. Against this schema of excess, we attempt to distance ourselves from this romantic and recurrent mise-en-scene, a literary construct reflecting 19th Century obsessions.' An active negotiation of the text means for this critic, one conclusion, an obligatory rejection of its content as a 'schema of excess,' and a disapproving 'distancing' from its operations and '19th Century obsessions.'

While Dust on My Shoes fits this template, the inductive conclusion above ignores that the book's 'obsessions' appear to be also those of the 20th century, its 'excesses' may be at least as much a function of the journey proper as of the account, and that its 'romantic mise-en-scene' engages a deeper myth - that of descent to and return from the underworld - than the critic seems prepared to appreciate. An active negotiation of a text is just that, an open-minded negotiation, which may reiterate a preferred or dominant reading of the text, or an oppositional reading, or a position negotiated on the basis of multiple semiotic and other determinants, the least valid position being one which is a foregone conclusion.

Peter Pinney's book, for all its Euro-masculine generic predictability (and despite its own attempts to modify this chauvinism), and occasional passages of prose as purple as
Patterson's Curse, remains an engaging work because it is a vicarious thriller. 'So many folk,' wrote Pinney in his letter, 'miss out on that [the joy of travelling]: they have a deadline, a schedule, a wife-and-child, a timid streak, or they're too shy or fastidious or impatient or wary to snatch at bubbles of opportunity which happen on the way.' (1988) The traveller travels for, and as writer speaks to those who are always remaining. In doing so, he underlines an aspect in my definition of the traveller: the one who is always leaving. In the story of Pinney's quest for perennial departure, the discourses of diary and autobiography are implicit, while those of the Other and the exotic are explicit.
4.3.5

Journey Among Men
Jock Marshall and Russell Drysdale

In 1961, Jock Marshall, a professor of geology, and the noted painter Russell Drysdale, along with a small group of male companions, took a long safari around Australia in two 4WD vehicles. This book is the account of their journey among men, women, children, towns and landscapes. The authorship of their text is never attributable to either one or the other, for the 'royal plural' is the preferred form of first person pronoun; but I assume the text to be a collaboration, perhaps with Marshall taking on more of the writing. The book's 52 pen, ink and wash illustrations are all by Drysdale.

The illustrations are primarily of men. Only five include females, and none of those is a European woman (one includes a European child); twelve images are of buildings, landscapes, etc. The remaining 35 are sketches of males, seven of whom are non-whites. There are maps on each of the inside covers. The front map is a reproduced detail of the team's road map, showing the Halls Creek-Derby-King Sound (W.A.) section, which has been notated with cryptic, mnemonic jottings about fuel tanks, boabs, routes, and lists. The back map is of Australia with the routes of the vehicles indicated. In the corner of the page is a insert map of Britain, whose tininess is emphasised by being drawn to the same scale as the great continent below.

There are no headings to index the content of chapters. The work begins with a prefatory (and apocryphal) Irish joke/anecdote, set in Port Hedland, and the declaration: 'This is a story of a journey among men - "characters" such as Harmonious Harry, Brandy John, The Tropical Frog, and Rob Moody who keeps the pub at Hall's Creek near the Territory Border. And behind them stand a group from the past ... whose exploits still make conversation around the camp-fires of the Australian north-west.' (7) The pronouncement of the title is elaborated; the mythology is telegraphed: this will be a work about
epithetic individuals, as eccentric as their names, in a continuum of remote landscape, masculine culture and oral history. (The title is actually misleading because the work is about far more than blokes gone bush writing about earlier blokes gone bush; it is about a multi-disciplinary appreciation of a multi-facettted local universe.)

Who are the heroes of this work?

I propose that the work has several categories of 'heroes': subject-heroes (the authors), object-heroes (the 'men' of the title) and an 'establishing hero' (the landscape).

The author-travellers (as tellers and show-ers) are the subject-heroes. They are heroes of depiction - not the depicted (other than by their own hand), but those depicting. Observation, recording and commentary is their forte. Among the party's number are a botanist and a zoologist. This collective of professional travellers (or, travelling professionals) combines the luxury of not working (in the apparent sense) with the honorific of their intellectual status, which is that of a discernment always working, but at its own leisure. Co-author Jock Marshall is less well-known than Russell Drysdale but, one assumes, is the major scribe of the text; he is here the peripatetic intellectual hero. In cases such as Drysdale's, the author's name, writes Catherine Belsey, '... evokes given essences, qualities of insight and understanding, and not the labour of producing out of the available signifying systems of language and literature an intelligible fiction.' ('80:127) Belsey writes of fiction, but this remark applies equally well to this work of non-fiction.

The late Russell Drysdale at the time of this journey was one of the major figures of Australian art (along with fellow 'Antipodeans,' Dobell, Nolan, Boyd, Tucker, et al), having featured strongly in its 'international' (that is, principally British) emergence in the 1950s. He is an aesthetic hero. His presence as illustrator and writer reinforces the artistic authority of the book, for the work is about the Australian Outback (that collective/ abstract/proper noun for most things beyond the major capitals), the very region whose contemporary iconography (in his images like The Drover's Wife,
Snake Bay at Night, Happy Jack, the Sofala series, etc.) had been created by Drysdale. Belsey writes, '... it was the Romantic movement, contemporary with the rise of industrial capitalism, which initiated the process of endowing certain texts with a worth which had little to do with mere enjoyment but depended instead on a magical and timeless value inherent only in great art.' (ibid:126) Journey Among Men has something of this 'value' or cachet, being illustrated (or 'endowed') by a great artist (and therefore illustrated by 'great art'). Its (non-industrial) topics of illustration, by extension, become images of ahistorical drovers, lubras, pearlers, landscapes, which seem 'magical and timeless' in their captured essence in the hands of the artist.

The object-heroes (the 'men' of the title) are depicted as rapscallion, rugged, enduring and 'of the place' sorts of blokes, but often with an aspect of their individuality which is also a wound. Elizabeth George, in Two at Daly Waters (the story of her life as an Outback wife in the Northern Territory of the 1930s and 1940s) notes a fascinating piece of amateur structuralism (or narrative analysis) concerning these sorts of characters: 'The Boss [her husband] says that all the real folk tales of the bush are variations on one theme, which is all about an old bushman who lived down in the Riverina district, or along the Murray, or somewhere. He was born in England and brought up to be a lawyer, but he went bush and became queer, and in the end they found his skeleton and hundreds of empty bottles.' (45:59) There is plenty of this character, or variations upon, in Journey Among Men: Billy the Lurk at Port Hedland, Brandy John (ex-Oxbridge), Old Ted at Ebagoola, and so on. The common strands are extreme isolation and alcohol, which are often raised here to a quirky but positive power, as well as the almost total, but uncommented, absence of women.

Ross Gibson in The Diminishing Paradise says that, as evidenced in early Australian literature, 'The Australian environment was seemingly designed to accommodate a society of desperate and guilt-ridden sinners.' (84:87) Such a type-casting continues in the Marshall-Drysdale work; although it must be added that a self-criticism of such focus is also built into the book in the form of a remark made to one of the authors by the Chief Migration Officer of
Australia House, London (who objects to the Outback fixation of this book-to-be): 'You ... are writing nostalgically about the Australia of Banjo Patterson, Henry Lawson and the bush balladists of the 'nineties.' (41) Despite these tendencies, the book is far from the cartoon 'matey' mythography of 'Crocodile Dundee'/Outcasts of Foolgarah/ Snake Gully/Ettamogah Pub culture, although some its characters might resemble rough sketches drawn from any of these. The written individuals (as distinct from the sketched ones) are contextualised (to varying degrees) within a realm of historical and environmental determinants (as well as their own dysomanical tendencies), and are also the subject of the authors' extensive social commentary. In addition, there is a large quantity of scientifically-informed descriptive writing on their environments, which covers matters of geology, ecology, biology and other natural history disciplines.

Environmental determinants are of major consequence in the building of these written characters. All the depicted existences take place within an enabling condition, which I call (borrowing a cinematic term) the 'establishing shot' of the landscape. The terrain and climate (collectively, 'Nature') is the sine qua non of these object-heroes (and thus of the subsequent activities of the subject-heroes): the landscape is an impersonal hero (although clearly with a life force), the 'establishing hero' as I wish to call it. Mary Eagle (in *Grounds for a Visual Culture*) proposes that '... Australia's claim to possess a regional culture rests heavily on the landscape. Even the national character (so-called) is merely a reflection of our concept of landscape. The antipodean landscape is characterised as arid, weathered, unsympathetic, un-nurturing. In particular, the bleaching, flattening light has been claimed as unique to Australia. Accordingly, the people are said to be dry, with weathered skin and worn bodies, communicative, unsentimental, enduring, lazy, irreverent and with a deadpan if macabre sense of humour.' ('90:16) The people (read 'men') here are presented as functions of this landscape - a not unfamiliar device within Australian art and literature - which can lead at worst to what Jack Ho calls a 'landscape-led characterology.'
The white men of the 'establishing heroic' landscape appear as such natural extrusions of its topography and climate that they seemingly dislodge the Aborigines as the relevant human emblems; they become the current autochthons of this terrain. In appearing so, however, these men are only the 'upper crust' (literally) of a secondary narrative which the authors construct. If the journey of Drysdale and Marshall can be seen as a narrative of motion in a horizontal, spatial axis, there is another narrative, that of the land itself, which may be envisioned on a vertical, hierarchical, evolutionary, temporal axis. This narrative of the land itself is developed in stories (and storeys) which layer geological, geographic, botanical, ethological, ornithological, climatological, anthropological and sociological events and finally, folktales and authorial commentary. Within the implicit framework of its evolution, the heroic land of this work establishes and enables all that grows from it; the most recent strata, of human life and white settlement, and their tales, seem to be tenuous additions, even though they are the primary subject matter of the book.

What do they stand for?

Marshall, Drysdale and co. stand for the cultured, competent and mobile male - the gentleman traveller-scribe, the philosophe - who has the intellectual and financial resources to be at leisure-as-work for an extended period and in remote, exotic places. This gent is a Romantic figure, but one whose professionalism, leisure and mobility also up-date him as an exemplary 'modern,' for he simultaneously represents (in Barthes' words) 'The worldly, the domestic, the wild: ... the very tripartition of social desire.'

'After years of exile in Europe it was good to be back among the cold beer and red dust on the fringe of the desert.' (9) So commences the journey narrative, spoken in situ among the eponymous Outback's flat-topped low ranges of laterite, and far from the warm beer (or jejune wine) of 'de-Natured' Europe. The authors have returned from concentric peripheries to the centre: firstly from Europe, then from Sydney, to the Outback. (This implies an interesting inversion. The metropolitan cultural 'centres' of
Europe, and even of antipodean Sydney, are displaced as the cores of value and authenticity in life by a diffuse physical zone - at the centre of which is, paradoxically, 'the Dead Heart' - which is the site of a raw, 'natural' honesty in existence for its 'men,' who are ex-Europeans, now mutated into white Outback Australians.) In doing so, the authors stand for, or embody, an afferent pulse - from the foreign, metropolitan, cultured 'outer' to the local, desert/rural, natural 'inner.' In turn, their writings and drawing generate efferent messages for transmission back to these peripheral markets: news of a truth, dispatches from the Real Elsewhere, the dinkum Other.

Henry Lawson's advice to '... any young Australian writer whose talents have been recognized would be to go steerage, stow away, swim and seek London, Yankeeland, or Timbuctoo - rather than stay in Australia till his genius turned to gall or beer. Or, failing this ... to study elementary anatomy ... and then shoot himself carefully.' (in Serle,'73:56) Over time Lawson's gall-and-grog vision has been dialectically modified by Australian writers, artists and others, so that '... In the fifties and sixties the European experience was an essential part of the training of the Australian cultural elite. It was a transformative experience ... In this myth of the departure and the return of the artist is a whole series of assumptions about the necessity of just this operation, this migration to the "home countries". No matter what one did "over there", it is important to come back and re-establish one's Australian credentials.' (Muecke,'84:142) Marshall and Drysdale in Journey Among Men are moving within this tradition, but are 're-establishing their Australian credentials' to two audiences, an Australian and an 'international' (aka British) one. (Tellingly, the book is published in London, not Sydney.) The Lawson suspicion of philistine Australia (as place and market) is replaced for Drysdale-Marshall by a re-evaluation of the place and a wider definition of market.

What are they doing here?

'... colonial artists continued to address an audience of outsiders. A tradition evolved around the exotic difference
of the landscape, light and climate of Australia. For one and a half centuries the point of view was European and the characterisation was of a European antipode.'

Mary Eagle

*Grounds for a Visual Culture*

Drysdale and Marshall are assertively post-colonial in their foregrounding of 'Australian-ness' as a positive value in their account of the physical and social geography of this land. (We need not be concerned here how these images of a regional-national 'personality' (d)evolved later at the hands of 'Hoges and Strop,' 'Sir Les Patterson,' and the Mojo and Singleton advertising agencies.) It is therefore surprising to see, today (some 30 years on), how persistently 'Eurotropic' is their focus and, specifically, how British are their reference points. Commencing with the previously mentioned insert map of Britain and the protestations of the Australian immigration officer in London, the text includes an extended comparison of the beer drinking proclivities of the English and Australians (52-53), scattered references to London streets, British banking, universities and cricket writers, and amid a protracted 'Australia - Europe' comparison, the flat statement that, 'Of all the migrants, the British are generally held to be the most desirable.' (188)

Allowances are made for the fact that some of the book's material originally appeared as articles in *The Observer, The Geographical Magazine* and *The Listener* (and, significantly, not in *The Age, The New York Times* or, predictably, *Asahi Shinbun*). However, for all its 'true blueness' (not to mention informed discussion of local flora, fauna and geology) *Journey Among Men* resembles, uncomfortably, the productions of those 'one and a half centuries' during which, as Eagle notes, '.... the point of view was European and the characterisation was of a European antipode.' ('90:16) The authors seem to continue to address 'an audience of outsiders.' Understandably, this address prolongs the tradition of emphasising the exotic difference of Australia - for who in Manchester or Mayfair wants to read of how 'naturally' English
Australia might be, even if they (and many Australians as well) find
pleasure in learning how 'culturally' English Australia's norms
(though not 'Norms') are. The authors are post-colonial in their
declarations, but like their land, only 60 years after Federation, not
really past that 'post.' What they are doing here, in terms of their
representation, is (again to borrow from Mary Eagle's observations)
constructing a physical and human landscape which '... becomes the
culture we export.' Although this composite, epithetic Outback
landscape has been artificially constructed, its 'value,' as Eagle
warns, '... has been that it is not a "concept" at all, but Nature itself.'
(loc cit)

In addition to this, the Marshall-Drysdale team is making a
journey not only among men, but also by men - thus extending the
tradition of the Australian journey (and its terrain) being the
domain of males. (It is interesting to recall that in March 1791,
convicts Mary and William Bryant, their two young children and
seven other escapees stole a small cutter in Port Jackson. Ten weeks
and 5200 km later they became the first Europeans to sail the
entire eastern seaboard of Australia, having hugged the northern
coast, even where Cook before them had sailed outside the Reef.)

Of final (and perhaps more positive) note, these authors are
recording yarns, telling yarns, repeating apocrypha, jokes and
scuttlebutt as they go. ("The desert" is always a pre-existing pile of
texts and documents, fantasies, legends, jokes and other people's
memories, a vast imaginary hinterland ...' [M. Morris,'88a:140]) This
is the counterpoint to the historical, scientific and empirical
discourses of the book. In the written character 'sketches' of the
sources of some of these yarns is a re-contextualising of the
accompanying visual sketches. The stories represent a valued rural
tradition, particularly from pre-mass media times: that of people
relying on the spectrum of vocal and gestural relays and emotional
nuances of - it sounds extraordinary today - spoken, face-to-face
discourse to supply them with both entertainment and information.
The 'rump' of this communication system survives in the tales of
Harmonious Harry, those about the black outlaw Sandemara or
'Pigeon,' the bushlore and folklore, and in the innovative argot
which calls a priest a 'sin-shifter' and dawn 'piccaninny light.'

264
Marshall-Drysdale's account does not parody the speech of 'these people' (as Barry MacKenzie might), sanitize-glamourize it (as Mick Dundee might), 'nomadise' it, nor excise it as a lexicographer or oral historian might. The authors give it voice, albeit through their own, and allow it some echo of its former status, that of the white 'songlines' of an antipodean European 'dreaming'.

What is the nature and object of the outer search?

The outer search is for the inner search, which is for story. 'Story' here may be the visual narrative of Drysdale's pencil, the geomorphology of Marshall's description, the explanation of a non-placental mammal's gestation or the account of the flock pigeon's near-extinction in Dominic Serventy's conversation, the interpolations of black, white and Asian history in the Kimberley, 'the one about the man from Marble Bar' (who went to hell, and immediately called for an overcoat), and even the authors' otiose 'default position' of homing on Albion. The project is diverse, diffuse and episodic. Its text is an accumulative, discursive production, a 1960s 'reading the country.' Like the Benterrak-Muecke-Roe text of that name, it is representative of its own time (even to the absence of an Aboriginal authorial voice), and also like it, encysted with the visions and ideologies of its authors.

Nature on this road is benign or malign, but never a real threat to the venturers; culture is sporadic, of dubious tenure, but catholic and expansive in its welcome; the vehicles are generally well-behaved; no-one is struck by ptomaine or taipan, not even a decent hangover. Tests on this quest are few: for all its 'masculinity,' the journey is not one of machismo. Beyond the general program of a vehicular circumnavigation of the continent, there is no goal of arriving somewhere, reaching or achieving. Almost all the narrative and description concerns the north-western corner of Australia, with a few brief chapters on southern regions ('the wowser belt'). What counts is not the terrain covered but the 'core sampling' of its depths; the Kimberely seems to epitomise the remote site in which such authenticity may most directly be apprehended.
What is the nature and object of the inner search?

'The reality of nature in Australia was so much more terrible, more starkly godforsaken, than anything even a war-torn Europe had to offer; and Drysdale was, in effect, the first to have seen its metaphoric significance as the wasteland of our century.'

Peter Fuller
_The Real Importance of Nolan and Boyd_

After the Second War, a number of artists were drawn, like Hans Heysen before them, to the centre of Australia, '... finding it not so much a place for heroic nationalism as a site for more personal, psychological dramas.' (Johnathan Watkins,'88:24) Drysdale was prominent among these, and his images of isolated figures in the heat-blasted landscape lend themselves to readings such as Fuller's 'the wasteland of our century.' On this occasion, however, Drysdale is not the solo, visionary 'eye' grappling with the Zeitgeist of the Interior, but a collaborator, a fellow-traveller with scientists, an illustrator and translator rather than a 'metaphorician.' He is not seeking the 'terrible' or the 'starkly godforsaken,' but is placing before the public a re-framed, popular culture version of several 'official' discourses. With Marshall, he renders journalistically and in figurative imagery a multi-disciplinary 'window' on the north-west. The austerities of the various '-ologies' of the team's '-ologists' are leavened, made 'accessible,' with example, anecdote, illustration and historical notes.

This is the inner search revised, lightened, re-vitalised. It is not in pursuit of a crass 'heroic nationalism,' but does bear resonances of the agenda which Margriet Bonnin identified as prominent in between-wars Australian travel writing. The writers of that period advocated (as quoted elsewhere), '... a new civilisation based on modern technology, which would take advantage of the economic and spiritual benefits that they felt the inland had to offer. They also sought to prick the consciences of Australians in the hope that action would be taken on the preservation of the natural environment.' ('80:ii)
The diary

The inner cover-frontispiece map which opens the work consists of hand-scribbled, fountain-pen annotations ('route of western party, Jock, Dom, Ivan'; 'wonderful water - eight miles of it in Geike Gorge') which firmly establish the twin 'primary source' materials of the account to follow: the analog map and standing behind it, the referent earth. The orthography of the annotations 'signs' the work, and suggests a lateral (rather than sequential) visual diary. Within the text proper, obvious diary references, such as datelines, driving distances, specific times, etc., disappear completely. The narrative and its interlinear descriptions and digressions are punctuated by the 'visual diary' of Drysdale's sketches. As I have noted, there is generally no way of attributing parts of the text to either author, and there is no use of 'I'; as a result, any sense of the personal diary is further diminished, even though one presumes that the authors maintained trip journals or diaries. The book might be seen as 'secondary' to the diary's 'primary source' - and the land, progenitor to both.

Autobiography

'Having constructed a life, does one then begin to live within that construction?' asks Ihab Hassan ('90b), in considering how the public persona of a widely-published travel writer (such as Paul Theroux) may begin to 'round' upon its own creator and to determine his future projects and projections. Russell Drysdale (then at the height of his artistic fame) is by far the more famous of the two authors (even though the book is 'by Jock Marshall and Russell Drysdale' - in that order); the association of Drysdale's name and images with the book is a very strong selling factor. Against this consideration, Drysdale (and Marshall) resist any temptation to further 'personalise' (or 'personalitise') the book.

Almost all personal and biographical information about the authors is assiduously avoided. A reference like, 'Once we had been brother commanders together.' (40) tells us that one - but which one? - of them had served - once, somewhere - with the
immigration bloke from Australia House; and also that, beyond that, it's just not relevant. The work is an impressionistic biography of the country, not an autobiogaphy of its subject's biographers.

The Other

There is often a dialogical relationship with the Other, and the question 'who is representing whom?' can be asked. In this case, the principal Other - in my opinion - is the Aboriginal population of the areas travelled. They are pictured, graphically, as a child, an ancient pipe-smoking woman, a piccaninny, stockmen, a near-naked 'desert tribesman' and a similarly suited 'tribal outlaw' (with spears and shield), and as a clothed couple, of whom the barefoot 'lubra' is diffidently retreating behind the man. Though this treatment is open to further analysis, there is nothing either unsympathetic or patronising in these representations. The combination of them shows a range of types and individuals. If the omission of the 'ordinary' Aborigines of town or camp seems a particular 'construction,' it must be noted that the white figures also are constructed in this way, principally as stockmen, drinkers and curious 'bushies,' not as 'ordinary' town folk. Needless to say, neither the Aborigines nor the local whites represent the authors.

It is in the text that the whites are allowed to contribute to a dialogue; their stories are replayed into print in direct and indirect quotation. Raised to this power (of speech), along with the preponderance of attention upon them, the whites cannot be construed as Others, but as exotics. The Aborigines are spoken about and for, and do not speak themselves. They are accorded dignity but not tongues. Their Otherness, like their being, seems a function of the land; and the land here is a conflation of notions - vast, blazing-hot, water-less, dramatic, empty, sere ... The Aborigines then, who once were able to survive technologically unadorned in this, stand for Nature incarnate - but also they stand aside. The white settlers seem to represent the incarnation of a Nature and Culture mutation which, as focus of this work, and as the self-evident dominant element within the depiction, gives them the status of (as I claim) the 'relevant, current autochthons of this
terrain.' Regardless of their former potency or residual fascination, the Aboriginal Other is now displaced to just 'the others.'

**Exoticism**

Recurrent items which, taken together, construct a discourse of the exotic throughout *Journey Among Men* include desert tribesmen, Japanese-Malay pearl divers, Oxbridge 'soaks,' drunken bore-sinkers, 'doggers' and 'death-adder men' ('it is reckoned they will bite your head off if spoken to before noon'), roustabouts, non-placental mammals, wombat stew, and places named Ooldea, Ebagoola, Kanowna, Kalgoorlie and Pardoo Sands, and so forth. Keeping one Anglotropic eye firmly fixed upon its place of publication, the text is replete with these and other icons of the exotic, which operate all the more effectively upon their distant audiences because of that distance.

It has been noted that, paradoxically, '... as the devotion to the "good life" of increasing comfort, even luxury, became a feature of Australian life during the fifties and sixties, the previously disturbing focus on the extremes of barrenness was accepted and then promoted as the essential national landscape.' (C. Dixon and T. Smith, in Watkins,'88:29) Marshall-Drysdale focus upon these 'extremes of barrenness' and the extremes of behaviour which are adapted to it, although (I emphasise) not in order to simply 'exotify' these subjects (by over-dramatising or trivialising them) just for the sake of it. The emphasis on these exotic extremes in Nature and Culture might be seen as contributing to an exposition which has a specific end in mind, a re-evaluation of these remote zones.

**Are the various goals achieved?**

The goals of the inner and outer quests are conflated into a concentric and concurrent inner-outer search for 'story.' The book itself is evidence of the primary success of this operation, although the reader will negotiate a position on the quality and significance of the content. Germane to the authorial project is a re-evaluation of
Australia's remote zones, particularly the north-western, Kimberley region. The unique 'authenticity' of the zones is established for a remote (urban, metropolitan) readership, in order that the scientific, human and economic assets of the inland and its far perimeter might be better understood (and presumably, nurtured) by that metropolitan readership. Travelling gets the authors from episodic point to point, but is not an important structuring element in the narrative. In fact, 'journeying' is an incidental activity to the major activities of paying witness to the land.

Is there a 'narrative quest' involving the author's textual representation of reality?

Like most books in this sample, its 'narrative quest' does not question the encoding or decoding of its subject matter. It acknowledges 'conversation around the campfires of the north-west of Australia' (7), as well as those 'in pubs, cattle stations, luggers, etc., as the source of the stories and jokes which are interleaved within the narrative and descriptive passages. But thereafter, this apocrypha is grafted seamlessly into the text. The authors are, among other things, print raconteurs - we are indebted to their collective ear (and pen) for the preservation of these matters - and (again) their quest is, among other things, for this oral literature. But, the quest for material and its representation is recessed behind the narrative of events and description of place.

Is the reader required to engage actively in this negotiation of meaning and text?

A New York Times travel editor summarized his paper's formula for good travel writing as: 'You must use all the devices of the writer's skill to keep readers interested - a hook beginning; a "billboard" to tell them what the article is about near the beginning; word pictures, which is what travel writing is all about; what it looks, smells, tastes like ...' (in Zobel,'87:191) A quick perusal of the Marshall-Drysdale preface finds evidence of the hook, the billboard
and the word pictures; absent are the synaesthetic devices (of read what this cold beer tastes like, or see what the campfire smells like), replaced for the moment by the shaggy-dog tale of a local 'sin-shifter' and an eternal triangle of 'bush Irish' characters. All these devices are used in the service of a textual representation of reality which draws attention to itself only in its very first line (the inverse of Pinney's last line as book title): 'This is a story of a journey among men.' (7) (This momentary 'stepping forward' by the narrator is as old as Homer: '... the tale which I beg the Muse to help me tell ...') Thereafter, the story proceeds unselfconsciously, unreflexively, as a tale told by one voice (as two), full of fact and reflection, signifying directly. Predictably then, the reader is not required to actively negotiate the meaning-text nexus.

Paul Taylor notes "... while Australia is so patently an artificial culture, so continuously colonised and so ambivalent about its past and present, its culture maintains an imaginative purchase on the future, a potential for storytelling and a stock-in-trade of temporary self-images which are literally bought and sold. Cynicism about our stocks-in-trade is unqualifiably a major contributor to ... Australian culture at large." (in Watkins,'88:29) Journey Among Men is a rendition of Australian 'stock-in-trade' self-imagery from a non-cynical perspective (and perhaps, period). It may be hypothesised that if, like Harold Fletcher, the authors had not written-up their trip and published it until the 1980s, the book might be very different. Women and Aboriginals would, presumably, be represented otherwise. The 'national development' agenda realised in the dramatic industrialisation of the Pilbara and offshore oil fields would give rise to a further set of ideas, ideals and appraisals. And the prototypical 'Billy the Lurk' and 'Whispering Smith' could never again appear so innocently quarantined from popular culture's hunger for celluloid heroes.

The book, as it is, embodies both common and uncommon perceptions of its time - and others still of this time, although cynicism is not one of those. Its contiguous goals (in a single quest) are strongly supported by diary primary material, but very little by
an apparent diary discourse; they are mobilised by a sense of the exotic, but far less so by autobiographical content; the Other which is 'present' is in a glimpse of Aboriginality (while the 'absent' Other may be Asia with its reputed avarice for these spaces full of emptiness and wealth). All these discourses support, in their respective strengths, a portrayal of a place more than of a journey quest for accounts of people. The journey is only the incidental, enabling activity, the vehicle of the narrative, not its point. Despite the work's title, this is primarily 'a portrait of a place,' and only secondarily 'a journey among men.'
4.3.6

**Tracks**
Robyn Davidson
London: Granada. 1982 (First published 1980) 250 pages

Donald Horne described the European exploration and settlement of this continent as '... the imperial procession of the white people across Australia'. It is almost impossible for the traveller in Australia to jettison this burden of history and responsibility, for no matter how near or far one roams, *someone else* still calls that part of Australia home. (The 'someone else,' the Absentee Other-as-Landlord - who is yet, if ever, to collect the rent - is, of course, the Australian Aboriginal.) Robyn Davidson is part of this 'imperial procession'; and in her book *Tracks*, she attempts (unlike many traveller-writers before her) to come to terms with that Aboriginal ownership of the land - and with the multiple alienations of the traveller from these traditional owners, from their white co-occupants, and from aspects of her own personality. In 1977 Davidson, then aged 27, trekked more than 1700 miles west from near Alice Springs to the Indian Ocean, with four camels and her dog, Diggity. *Tracks* (first published 1980), a *National Geographic* (May 1978) cover story and *Tracks II: The Last Camel Walk* in *Australian Geographic* (1986) are the legacy of that journey, as are the dubious fermentations by the press on the legend of 'the camel lady.'

Of the latter, Davidson is especially irked, although her publishers have rubbed its mythic touchstone in their packaging of the paperback: 'Her epic adventure ... to the dead heart of Australia in pursuit of a dream - to cross the desert alone ... an ancient, secret land ... magic ... Aboriginal tribal elder ... Afghan herder ... tracks to the discovery of the self ...' The paperback's cover shots show her silhouetted at sunset as a woman alone with her exotic mounts, and a close up of her attractive, youthful face. Decry *and* profit as she may from this marketed myth, the contradictions of embracing both press and quest were never beyond her. In signing with *National Geographic* and its photographer, she understood - and deplored - the Faustisan bargain ('a sell-out' as she says) she had made: her
search for solitary insight, the clear place within the self where the camouflage of culture might fall away to reveal something speechless and sane, was paid for by the 'image industry,' which impelled her on *their* quest for vicarious authenticity, death-defiant adventure, epic *Bildungsroman* copy and telling photographs.

*Tracks* has 31 photographs, 17 of which feature the author, principally tending to or riding her camels. Other than the cover shot, these photographs do not glamourise her, although there is an unavoidable (and why should it be avoided?) sense of drama and romance in her leading her beasts across the mouth of a skull-like cave at Uluru, riding down an empty road with the Olgas rising high upon the horizon behind her, surrounded at Docker River by Pitjantjara children, and finally, tall in the saddle with her family of camels beside the foaming Indian Ocean. Other shots show the work of feeding, coaxing, hobbling, injecting, unsaddling and saddle-making, plus friends, helpers and dwellings. The one map charts her trek across half a continent. An epigraphic quote from Doris Lessing, which speaks of a woman crossing a desert in a dream, signs the book into appropriate literary, feminist and transpersonal discourses, as does the approbatory review excerpt by Lessing herself, highlighted in red on the back cover. The 'tracks' of the title are going to be, clearly, more than just footprints in the sand; they will be like 'the tracks of my tears,' where 'down the highway, down the tracks/ down the road to ecstasy/ I followed you beneath the stars/ hounded by your memory and all your raging glory.'

**Who are the heroes of this work?**

Without doubt, the hero is Robyn Davidson, for, all literary constructions and deconstruction aside, all press myths, feminist myths, self-effacements and backlit beauty dismissed, her physical journey is remarkable, as is the strenuousness of her self-confrontation along the way. There are secondary heroes, especially Mr. Eddie, an old Aboriginal gentleman (in the truest sense) who accompanied her part of the way; in a broader, romantic sense the Aborigines in general are for the author collective heroes, although this collective does not function as such within a journey narrative.
Typically, a questing hero has helpers, and beside Mr. Eddie, several of Davidson's friends in Alice and out west, and even her hinderer (then lover), the National Geographic photographer Rick, function as helpers.

What do they stand for?

The privileging of masculinity so often seen in Australian culture, and particularly in its literature of exploration, doesn't get a look-in here. Some men are alright - Sallay the Afghan-descended camel expert, Mr. Eddie the Aborigine, Rick the American, one or two allies in Alice and the west - but otherwise, the white Australian male, local or touring, is depicted as, well, a vernacular 'dickhead.' ("He is biased, bigoted, boring and, above all, brutal." [34]) As he stands, unsteadily, for nothing of worth - and worse, for everything crass, drunk, racist, sexist and mediocre - is the Others, the women, the blacks, the 'foreigners, who represent authenticity and strength. Davidson, as a self-defined and volunteer 'exile' (one of those 'uprooted' beings in an 'unnatural' state of existence, according to Joseph Conrad), constructs herself as an Other, an urban, educated, female (who is in retreat even from the connotations of these aspects) with a purpose, amid this meretricious masculinity and the parasitism (in her view) of tourism. She stands in opposition to one set of 'qualities,' and thus, for their antithesis. She is the (aspiring) repudiating hero, who has usurped a previously privileged male role that men have demonstrated themselves no longer morally capable of filling. She is the female hero and the feminist hero.

Although she recognises '... the self-indulgent negativity which was so much the malaise of my generation, my sex and my class' (50), at times this negativity, when deployed to deride her bête noir, tourists, resembles the bourgeois traveller's hatred of herself in other bourgeois travellers. Without softening her attitude to the press, tourists or white society, she eventually recognises that she, for some, is at times indistinguishable from those 'tribes': 'The Aborigines there [Docker River] sorted travellers into two sections, tourists and people; I realised that to them I had become a tourist.'
(149) This hero is a compromised one, but in being so—as well as being angry, tearful, fearful and flawed with a fragile, sometimes hysterical psyche—she is a modern Romantic hero, though not a classical one.

'The Romantics,' writes Susan Sontag, '... construe the self as essentially a traveller—a questing, homeless self whose standards derive from ... a place that does not exist at all or yet, or no longer exists; one consciously understood as an ideal, opposed to something real. It is understood that the journey is unending, and the destination, therefore, negotiable. To travel becomes the very condition of modern consciousness, of a modern view of the world—the acting out of longing or dismay.' ('84:699) Much of this fits Davidson. 'She is 'questing, homeless,' seeking a place (where culture might run clear from earth to sky, so to speak, infusing the human stratum between with values which reflect both spirit and soil) that 'no longer exists' and which is now seen in opposition to the 'real' world (of 'scientific delirium madness,' inebriation, material poverty or excess, and spiritual alienation) through which she traverses, 'longing' for wholeness and 'dismayed' by her own external and internal ruptures.

One dimension of particular modernity in her Romantic hero is the ecological quester (an updated version of the Tarzanic 'hero-in-Nature'?). Robert Hughes (in What Americans Don't Know About Australia) notes that '... it was only in the 1970s that a new and tender popular regard for Australian nature, in its wild beauty and utter uniqueness, took hold among the young. The idea of wilderness liberated the American imagination and made possible that vein of transcendentalism which, from Emerson and Thoreau onward, became one of its richest strands. But in colonial Australia ... space was the wall ...' ('87:51-52) Davidson not only 'penetrates' that wall (like an heroic male), but does so with one eye to its 'wild beauty and utter uniqueness' (and the other to her own vulnerability), rather than to assertive bush-bashing, record-setting or territorialising. She is also seeking more than simple aesthetic delight or a sense of immersion in Nature for the sake of immersion. Hayden White has observed that, to people aware of their fall and exile (such as that of Australia's original white settlers), Nature had
to assume '... the aspect of a chaotic and violent enemy against which man must struggle to win back his proper humanity or godlike nature.' (in Gibson,'84:37) Though Davidson is acutely aware of her white culture's ongoing 'fall and exile' (from integrity, grace, ecological harmony), Nature here for her is no longer either the 'chaotic and violent enemy' of earlier Australian explorers (nor, on the other hand, a pastorale of colour and tone) but instead, is something like the meta-organism of balance and cosmogonic signification which has sustained its Aboriginal stewards for millenia, and might do so too for whites - if only they knew how. Understanding her own ineptitude, she admires the skills and communality of the Aboriginals among whom she travels, wishing to be accepted by them.

What are they doing here?

This hero is in retreat from the cities, from white Australian culture, and away from the coast. (Peter Porter notes somewhere that our Australian explorations are always inwards, away from the sea). Davidson's retreat is into the '... dry, red parchment of the dead heart, god's majestic hidey-hole, where men are men and women are an afterthought.' (20) The direction of her initial movement (symbolically towards the centre, and more darkly, towards 'the dead heart,' prior to her expedition outwards from this zone) is significant, for, as Robert Hughes expounds, 'We have no myth of the frontier in the American sense: the idea that great space is optimistic, that you become freer as you head westward ... all that is utterly alien to Australian experience ... The traditional lesson in Australia is that space kills ... The idea of wilderness liberated the American imagination ... But in colonial Australia, which was a jail, space was the wall: a transparent labyrinth thousands of miles thick, whose sole function was to imprison. Hence, in the nineteenth century, our imaginative writing (and the popular attitudes it drew on) tended to circle around the central image of the bush and the outback as a ghastly blank. ('87:51-52) Davidson's deliberate movement into and through the entrapping membrane, the annihilating zone of that 'ghastly blank' (which swallowed escaped
Australian Travel Writing

convicts, explorers, Leichhardt, Lasseter, Wills, Burke ... ) is a movement into a location where white competence and symbols falter and atomise, and is thus all the more threatening. Like its own antipode, Antarctica, it is 'a zone of annihilation of meaning, of culture, and frequently of bodies.' (Helyer, in Weiss, '86:80)

For the author this journey is also a chance to approach Aborigines, not as a welfare worker, missionary, observer or journalist - that is, as a white actor or activist - but, romantically, simply to 'be' with them. This is but one aspect of a separation (from her 'own' place and people) which seems dominated by the drive to find psychic/spiritual renewal in the austere and testing emptiness of the desert. ('Desert, purity, fire, air, hot wind, space, sun, desert desert desert.' she intones. [49]) It is as though, out here in the void, would be realised something essential, which may only be perceived after her 'Shedding Burdens' - which is the title of Part Two of the book.

In this drive to penetrate beyond the known cultural and geographic frontiers of her world-so-far, Davidson's quest soon moves beyond adventure ('The trip had never been billed in my mind as an adventure in the sense of something to be proved.' [50]) and into the transpersonal and sublime: 'The self in a desert becomes more and more like the desert. It has to, to survive. It becomes limitless, with its roots more in the subconscious than in the conscious.' (192) It is of this quality in some women's travel writing that Evelyn Juers (in To the lighthouse: women's writing on travel) hypothesises that, 'For all their exertions and sacred duties we are never far from an equation between travel, romanticism and sublimation, and religion. For all their freedoms, there is something nun-like in the dedication of many [women] travellers.' (90:46) Davidson's spurning of patriarchal white society (especially in Alice and in encounters with tourists) embodies a nun-like self-quarantine from its contaminants, and a similarly nun-like spiritual ambition. Her contemplative 'retreat' is, as I have noted, away from culture; her 'novitiate' is the desert, Nature. Her novena will last six and a half months. In these terms, she may be nun-like; but, more specifically, in the isolation and initiatory passage of her solo 'vision
quest' she resembles strongly the universal shaman neophyte, or in local terminology, the 'clever man' - or 'clever woman'.

What is the nature and object of the outer search?

Tracks commences with what Paul Fussell calls 'the conventional I Hate It Here opening.' (80:178) However, quite unconventionally, Davidson's extends for almost 90 pages: the hatable 'Here' expands from Alice Springs, in concentric circles, to encompass European Australian in general and the floating empire of tourism ('Touristan,' so to speak) in particular. Thus, it is amply established that, like the classic quester, she must leave behind this lack, in order to go to other ways, better places of being. The superficial trajectory is to cross half the continent, alone, on camel. In personal terms it is meant to be '... the hardest and most worthwhile thing I had ever attempted.' (149) One integral aim of the journey (as already noted) is to be among Aboriginal people; travelling in the desert is to be '... a way of getting to know them directly and simply.'(49).

If the object of the outer search is to safely reach the Indian Ocean, the nature of its execution encompasses a complex of demanding tasks and skills acquisitions. All that it takes for a complete novice to know about camels, desert survival, travelling logistics, and more, were Davidson's external demands. It took her two years of preparation for this journey.

What is the nature and object of the inner search?

'The Wild Colonial Boy is selling used cars.' said Robin Boyd. According to Davidson, in 1977, a prosperous, somnolent, Frasernian Australia elicited 'self-indulgent negativity' from the members of her generation, sex and class, although not all of these by-now mild colonial boys and girls had the perspicacity to recognise it as a malaise, and even fewer had Davidson's almost desperate sense of 'lack' which sought to transmute this malaise into a quest for significance and replenishment. While her notion of 'natural'
solitude as integrity, compared to white cultural contact as contamination, is a common one, her program for embracing the former and eschewing the latter is among the most radical of those attempted by any of her generation, sex or class.

The object of her internal search is never articulated directly, and this is not surprising, for within the 'double quest' model (as proposed by Kalter), the secondary, inner quest may be metaphorical, or occluded and only realised later. Quests, states Kalter, may express searching for objects abstract and inaccessible, life-giving and death-dealing; they embody the urge to express the inexpressible ('76:23) In the course of the secondary quest, the unexpected is discovered, and it proves to be more important than the original object of the primary quest. ('76:5) Robyn Davidson writes: 'I had ... been vaguely bored with my life and its repetitions ... had been sick of carrying around the self-indulgent negativity ... So I made a decision which carried with it things I could not articulate at the time.' (49-50) The inner goal, I suggest, is her desire to find the power to change her life: 'And it struck me then that the most difficult thing had been the decision to act ... One really could do anything one had decided to do ... one really could act to change and control one's life; and the procedure, the process was its own reward.' (50)

The diary

In an earlier chapter it was noted that, coinciding with the rise of Puritanism, the diary became the substitute for the confessional. (Abbott,'84:11) It was also noted that, in the 18th century, keeping a journal did not necessarily mean that the daily entries were written solely for the diarist's own eyes; it was common practice to keep a journal as a form of correspondence with others. (A. Hassam,'88:32) Tracks performs both of these functions, speaking in a sustained manner in the twin modes of self-to-self and self-to-witness. The term 'travel confessional' may sound disparaging; however, in applying it to Davidson's work I do not do so prejudicially. The work carries strongly that interior, self-to-self/self-to-witness transmission of strenuous personal
confrontation and declaration (and even a 'nun-like dedication') which all qualify it as a 'confessional' discourse. One common literary vehicle of such a self-revelation is the diary, but in including such content, Davidson avoids the formal diary devices of datelines or a telegraphic style.

In reality, it seems that she did not keep a very diligent diary. She says, 'letters were the closest thing I kept to a diary.' (197) And elsewhere, "This writing of letters ... helped in recording events and emotions at the time. My diary was a mish-mash of these letters, most of them never sent, and uninteresting sentences like, 'Is it July or August, anyway, lost camels this morning" The there would be a month with no entries whatsoever.' (202) Clearly, she wrote many letters, and at points in the book includes excerpts, the longest of which runs to four and a half pages. But, it is the content not the form, epistolary or otherwise, of the diary discourse which is the relevant factor. On many occasions she reproduces the interior monologue of her thoughts. When lost she thinks and writes (to herself, then to us): 'I sat back and watched myself perform. "OK. First of all you are not lost, you are merely displaced, no, no, you know exactly where you are so stifle that impulse to scream at the camels and to kick Diggity. Think clearly. ..."' (121) That continuous interior monologue/dialogue addresses matters practical and personal and constitutes the diary discourse. In this sense, the whole book is an extended, re-worked diary.

**Autobiography**

*Tracks* is strongly autobiographical, focussing on a two and a half year period of the author's life, but referring also to her 'pre-camel' past, as well as briefly to her 'post-camel' present of writing the account in London. The intensity of her diary discourse supports the chronological unfolding of the events over the 1975-1977 period in Davidson's life, so that a broad 'inner' and 'outer' image is constructed. By some definitions, this period may be too short to constitute a true autobiography; nevertheless, even by these standards, *Tracks* would be an intense and extended chapter in her larger (and perhaps unwritten) autobiography.
It is unnecessary to cite here the specific though sketchy references made to her past (as a student, places she lived, family details, etc.) or to reiterate the ample detail of places, people, events in Alice Springs and then upon the track of her journey. As ever, there is strong emphasis upon her internal changes. These are crucial autobiographical markers: 'Changing to this view of reality had been a long hard struggle against the old conditioning. Not that it was a conscious battle, rather it was being forced upon me and I could either accept it or reject it. In rejecting it, I had almost gone over the edge. The person inside whom I had previously relied upon for survival had, out here and in different circumstances, become the enemy.' (191) This steadily-held internal focus and the commited exegesis upon it are reminiscent of Dora Birtles' writing in North-West by North, and perhaps may be a distinctive feature of some women's travel writing.

By the use of this sustained internal focus, Davidson's tracks go far deeper than the 'Beryl in Peril' school of women's travelling (as Evelyn Juers calls it), and into the area of travel as psychodrama. Repeatedly, the author depicts her own progressive psychological vulnerability. '... my fragile mind was obsessed to the point of dementia ...' (43); 'Rick was flabbergasted at the mood change - from the dizzy heights of joyous success to the gloomy pits of hideous doubt and self-hating in half an hour.' (100); 'I can see now that that time in Docker was the beginning of a kind of mental collapse ...' (144); 'I woke in limbo and could not find myself. There were no reference points, nothing to keep the world controlled and bound together. There was nothing but chaos and the voices.' (153) Davidson's autobiographical content, like much travel writing's contains elements of the 'historical' type (concerned with self-explanation) and the philosophical (has the form of a self portrait) but is most strongly of the 'poetic' strand in that it employs 'enactment' over mere recollection and may be likened to psychodrama.

This is travel as psychological disintegration, and later, as reintegration. The model is similar to that of the shamanic initiate's vision or power quest in the wilderness, during which s/he undergoes a critical (real or symbolic) near-death experience prior
to replacing the atoms of the old ego with the symbolic crystals of a
wiser, enlightened self: 'I was filled by an emotion I had not felt
before - joy. Those days were like a crystallization of all that had
been good in the trip. It was a close to perfection as I could ever
hope to come. I reviewed what I had learnt.' (216)

The Other

I noted earlier that the Other, in Freud's original formulation,
was primitive, child-like, irrational, ritualistic and potentially
violent. These dubious attributes are similar to those of Davidson's
Central Australian white man: 'His enjoyments in life are limited to
fighting, shooting and drinking.' (34) He is the dominant 'civilised'
force turned dark, involuted to destructiveness. As I have also
noted, there are in contrast to this corrupted figure, other Others -
women, Aborigines, some foreigners, some white males - who
represent integrity and strength. However, the sense of what or
whom is 'Other' to which 'Other' becomes blurred as clear
relativities between categories are eroded.

There is no unambiguously positive or heroic actor to this work.
The author-hero (or 'subject-hero' to use my earlier terminology)
stands in a self-defined 'Otherness' (as urban, educated, female
rebel) to the local patriarchy, who are negatively 'Other' than what
they should be, and to her own society in general ('... so
archetypally paranoid, grasping, destructive ... [195]). The
Aborigines ('... the other, so sane' [195]) are the repositories (for
her) of most desired values, but Davidson is rarely able to join their
circle. They remain the untapped Other, the one to whom/which she
aspires. They are 'primitive' only in the sense of being ancient and
earth-connected and to a degree 'ritualistic' (such as in dance), but
they are not child-like, irrational or violent. 'Eddie ... was healthy,
integrated, whole. That quality radiated from him ...' (161) The
Aborigines seem to be, for the author, what George Alexander refers
to when he writes: 'For the white people here the black has
functioned as a kind of limit-instance of Anglo-Saxon
representation. Their visionary tradition of animals, gods, totems
and cosmic cycles have been experienced as the furthest limit of what the white could see, hear, understand ... ' (85:36)

In this dialogical relationship with the Other, who is representing whom? Davidson represents the Aborigines in words, as does Rick the photographer in his medium - an intrusion which on several occasions the Aborigines resent. (The only 'representations' which they receive are some polaroid prints.) Davidson herself becomes willing/unwitting victim to this mass media obsession with the exotic Other, as photographs and stories of the 'camel lady' circulate: 'It would seem that the combination of elements - woman, desert, camels, aloneness - hit some soft spot in this era's passionless, heartless, aching psyche. ... And wouldn't it be my luck to pick just this combination. ... I was now a feminist symbol. ... I was now a mythical being who had done something courageous and outside the possibilities that ordinary people could hope for. And that was the antithesis of what I wanted to share.' (231) A curate's egg of contending moods, resentments and insecurities, she is unable to anticipate, or to accept the attentions and distortions of the press, even though she has 'gone to bed' (literally) with National Geographic. At times, she seems child-like, irrational; although this alone does not make an Other.

The author even manifests the Other of her own psyche on several occasions. That is, her 'guardian' of her conscious mind is overwhelmed by the circumstance, and the unconscious emerges. Once when lost and in extreme fear of dying she seems to split into three 'voices': a mocking, hating one, another calm and warm, and 'the third voice was screaming.' (153) During the extended walking meditation of trudging 20 miles a day, month after month, she found herself remembering in minute detail long-forgotten 'People, faces, names, places, feelings ... It was a giant cleansing of all the garbage and much that had accumulated in my brain ...' (187)

**Exoticism**

'Woman, desert, camels, aloneness' versus 'this era's passionless, heartless, aching psyche.' The oppositional clusters
which Davidson cites accurately identify the figure and ground, respectively, of the book's exotic discourse. To the former we might also add Aboriginality, the literature of self-conquest among the elemental 'desert, purity, fire, air, hot, wind, space, sun ...' and National Geographic. From this set of media-enhanced desert exotica, it is not too far-fetched to find a historical 'desert campaign' parallel: in this mythologising of the exotic personality, American photographer Rick Smolan plays Lowell Thomas Sr. to Robyn Davidson's T. E. Lawrence in the Gibson rather than Arabian Desert.

Having said that, it is only fair to also note that Davidson asserts a strenuous resistance to the absurdities of 'the camel lady' image; in her own version of events she is far less florid than the press is, and is certainly not self-aggrandising about any 'extraordinariness' of what she is doing. Nevertheless, the exotica of it all - location, beasts, native companions, quest - cannot be dismissed and reduced to the 'ordinary.' In such passages as 'Eddie was a dingo-dreaming man ... He knew every particle of that country as well as he knew his own body.' (174) she attempts to contextualise the exotic without patronising her subject or inflating the idea. Meanwhile, there are extraordinary, apparently numinous events on her way. For instance, weeks after her dog Diggity has taken a bait (like Alan Marshall's before her), and Davidson has shot him, while sleeping she dreams of the dog circling her camp. At the same moment Rick arrives at the camp to apparently see Diggity on the outskirts.

In all of this is a difference so much in contrast with the norms of her previous (and, one assumes, subsequent) existence and with those of the work's readers that it is disingenuous to deny the exotic. To Davidson's credit she does not exploit this discourse beyond its own inevitable power of engagement. In doing so, she gives us a glimpse of another world, which is only co-incidentally exotic, a personal Utopia ('I didn't ever want to leave this desert.' [195]). And, as has been said, 'A map of the world without Utopia is not worth imagining.'
Are the various goals achieved?

The prime object of the outer search, the Indian Ocean, is attained. Another aim of the journey is to be among Aboriginal people, to get to 'know them directly and simply.' This is achieved in part, particularly when the author is accompanied for a 200 miles, three weeks' walk from Docker River, N.T. to Warburton, W.A. by the companionable Mr Eddie. It is also defeated in part by Rick taking unauthorised photos of Aboriginal activities at Docker, and Davidson as 'an accomplice' is relegated to tourist status: 'It seemed that one of my main aims, to be with Aboriginal people, was now unattainable.' [145]

Of the inner search, much might be said. Davidson encountered normally inaccessible dimensions of her personality, and the 'life-giving and death-dealing' events of the road; these are the unexpectedly expectable exigencies of survival travel. Her inner goal, I have proposed, is for the power to change her life by shedding some of the dross of her own dissatisfactions and complacencies. ('She woke knowing that if she was to cross the desert she must shed burdens.' - from Lessing's epigraph.) The journey and the book are testament to that success. Davidson's 'self-overcoming' (to use Neitzsche's term) of her initial ineptitude, her psychological fragility and then the whole Gibson Desert, is only one dimension of her achievement. She is at pains to point out that the chains and habituations of the personality are greater impediments to liberation than inexperience, physical difficulty and far terrain: 'I had understood freedom and security. The need to rattle the foundations of habit. That to be free one needs constant and unrelenting vigilance over one's weaknesses.' (216)

Progressing from this sense of personal liberation and the broader lessons of her experience, she draws a moral point which is directed towards an audience who may see 'the camel lady's' exploits as greater than their own capacities: 'The two important things I did learn were that you are as powerful and strong as you allow yourself to be, and that the most difficult part of any endeavour is taking the first step ...' (247) This 'moral-making' is in my opinion more gracious than gratuitous.
Is there a 'narrative quest' involving the author's textual representation of reality?

Davidson's speaking position is rarely that of the detached observer; most frequently it is of the emotionally involved participant. Even so, this privileging of an 'internal perspective' does not in itself engender a parallel 'narrative quest' re the representation of reality. On a few occasions (such as those noted in my previous reference to her letters and diary) Davidson draws attention to the writing of the trip; but the only specific reference to this writing having determinants (of audience and structure) comes half way through the book when she says, '... I was allowing myself to get more involved with an article about the trip than the trip itself ... I was beginning to see it as a story for other people, with a beginning and an end.' (140) This is no more than a hint that the represented journey might be an artifact of authorship. Generally, the textual 'alibi' of naturalism's 'this really happened' stands in front culture's implication of 'this was really written;' and no further questions about signification are asked.

D. H. Lawrence said that Australia had a central desert, and that every Australian had also a desert at his (sic) own centre which he seldom entered. We have become accustomed to the (self-)image of the taciturn souls of the centre of the continent. Thus, it is with pleasure that we read an Australian in that region who confronts so forcefully this syndrome of the 'inarticulate speech of the heart' of the continent and of the self. This becomes Davidson's 'narrative quest' for textual representation; it is a quest for the cathartic and the interpretative, but not the semiotic.

Is the reader required to engage actively in this negotiation of meaning and text?

Oppositions between media and reality are emphasised from time to time, the most telling of which is when Eddie raises a hand and says to Rick 'No photograph.' 'When we had that photograph developed,' writes Davidson, '... there was a woman [herself] smiling at an old Aboriginal man, whose hand was raised in a cheery salute.
... That one slide speaks volumes. Or rather lies volumes. ... Brilliant images, exciting, excellent, but little to do with reality. While I love the photos Rick took, they are essentially of his trip, not my own.' (185) Here that the author is signalling that any reader, anywhere, is required to engage actively in a negotiation of meaning and representation. However, that invitation to negotiation is not extended specifically to her narrative exegesis, nor to the epistemological problems of writing across cultural boundaries.

In conclusion, I am of the opinion that the various discourses (diary, autobiography, Other and the exotic) are each strongly deployed in Tracks in support of the author's telling of her quests, inner and outer. (There are other discourses - feminism, exploration, rebellion, literature, sociology - which also operate within the text, although not necessarily to support the quest function.) The quest motif is the principal narrative and meaning-structuring device of the work, and is present in a full 'double quest' aspect. The book is arranged in four parts, which may be read as approximating a traditional three stage quest narrative structure. Part One is Stage One of the heroic quest: after lengthy preparations on the threshold of adventure, the hero's separation or departure. Part Two and Part Three form an extended Stage Two of the classic journey: trials and victories of initiation. In Tracks, these trials extend into Part Four, which eventually becomes Stage Three: after gaining the goal, the hero's return and reintegration with society.

In returning, reintegrating and publishing, Davidson is a participant in that 'imperial procession of the white people across Australia.' For, despite her firm intentions that it be otherwise, her journey, as read about in Tracks and National Geographic, also participates in a process by which in Australia, as Mary Eagle argues, '... the arts parallel the economy: both sell the land.' This is the true Faustian bargain of the writing, regardless of for which, if any, sponsor. The book represents objects and subject, and 'sells' not only itself and its author, but also its principal object, the land, in terms of its mystique, expansiveness, cultural and climatic extremes
- in short, its Otherness. When writing disavows the effects - for instance, the increased interest in Alice Spring camel safaris for tourists - that it produces in the real, it hides behind what Meaghan Morris calls 'the descriptive alibi.' (‘88b:176)

The book also sells its subject, the author. 'Camel trips,' says the last sentence of the book, '... as I was about to have confirmed, do not begin or end, they merely change form.' (247) The process of attempting the trip may have been, as she suggests, its own reward, but another, much protested one, has been for Robyn Davidson the clinging mantle which she has written for herself of 'the camel lady.' (Expect one day to see in Alice the plaque, the medallion, the doll and perhaps even The Camel Lady Motel.) As author of what is already a classic of Australian travel literature, and thus, as a contemporary 'desert seer' - within a Western culture, whose prophets have from the desert traditionally come - she will simply have to live with the honour in her own country. By way of a perverse alchemy she has achieved an unrequited social integration through literary fame.
4.3.7

The Log of the White Wog
Jack Ho
Unpublished. 1989. 150 pages

'Looking out at the road rushing under my wheels
Looking back at the years gone by like so many summer
fields
In 'sixty-five I was seventeen and running up One-O-One
I don't know where I'm running now, I'm just running on
  Running on - running on empty
  Running on - running blind
  Running on - running into the sun
  But I'm running behind.'

Jackson Browne
Running on Empty

Travellers, says Ihab Hassan, may be seen as '... metaphors for
our own time, as emblems of some of the special complexities and
dilemmas we face geo-politically, socially and existentially in a
world that has become exceedingly interactive, where the cross-
cultural and cross-colonial intersect.' (90b) And so too might be
seen Jack Ho, with his erratic journeys, a 'no particular place to go'
itinerary, his self-doubt, libidinous landscapes, scrambled, veiled
voices and 'scratch-a-hippie-and-you'll-find-a-Porsche' work ethos.
(The dispossessed children of the Western bourgeoisie manage to
restitute their bourgeois status by transferring their relative
domestic poverty to places of absolute Third World poverty.) Jack
Ho has lumped these fragments of 'nomadic' autobiography under
an odious title, The Log of the White Wog which covers episodes in
Australia, the Pacific, California, Mexico, British Honduras and
Nicaragua during the period 1966 to 1969. The book tries to evoke
the personal adventure, and alienation, of being 'on the road' in the
late 1960s - an era of comparative innocence for both the road and
its travellers, before mass and packaged vagabondage set in.
The narrative is presented as a so-called 'Diary of Voices,' so that the usual first person voice of the travel writer is relieved or brought into question by sections or chapters in supposedly another's voice. Other sections consist of diary and letter excerpts written in the third person. In this splitting, blurring and recombining of frame, narrator, author and characters, the book is experimental in form. In other ways (e.g. a linear chronology, discrete short story-like chapters) its components are fairly conventional, and the changes of voice do not become 'work' of too distracting a kind from the narrative progression. The book's introduction acknowledges that author 'Jack Ho' is a pseudonymous construct. The signal here is that such recollective writing, even when posing as an 'authentic' personal diary, may still be a fiction of sorts. The assumption of bone fide 'factuality' is openly subverted, even the if events portrayed may be actual ones.

Who are the heroes of this work?

'Cultural modernism ... [has] so transformed former concepts of "the hero" that it's now hard not to agree with Lionel Trilling's "test" for an attractive degree of "modernism" in a contemporary novel or play: "Do you want to be the hero? If you do, the work is bad".'

Paul Fussell

War

Taking the word 'hero' with a grain of salt, this book's subject-hero is, by default, the author Jack Ho. Jack achieves, makes, utters, becomes nothing heroic, other than inscribing himself as subject of the account of these peregrinations. He may be a journeyer and a journal-keeper, but it is hardly an heroic career; a point which is emphasised by the writing-over of his own name with an oddly tautological, Zen-joke pseudonym, which, if heard in Nepalese, means simply 'Jack is.' His sometime travelling companion, Crane (Charlie Raine), is of comparable status, also a bit of a wastrel, heroic only by dint of being there, in contention with the mad (or made-mad) roads to Mexico and other places, rather than with the
insouciant bars of an Australian suburb. They render suspect the possibility of heroics, the status of the traveller-as-hero; if Ho had a better grasp of humourous writing, the pair might be heroi-comic, but even this is not so.

It is notable that there are few women 'characters' (and certainly not heros) in this account. This may reflect the fact that an unskilled, single travelling male, or a pair of travelling males, generally moves within a male milieu (trucks, mining camps, pubs, etc); and within the conservative gender culture of Latin America in particular, may experience very few opportunities to mix with women and families. Another observation is that the females in this work (as in Peter Pinney's) are most frequently mentioned in the context of their relationship with males (though not necessarily with the 'heros'), and those relationships range, predictably, from romance to prostitution.

What do they stand for?

They stand for the ontological impulse to travel, to immerse and to test themselves in the sensorium of the world, and for the compromising of this 'noble' tradition. Coy vocational alibis of 'study,' 'self-improvement' and 'sightseeing' are not even entertained on their quest. In a cultural era of sex and drugs and rock n' roll, and in their own personal age of the compelling relevance of such an orientation (or dis-orientation, à la Rimbaud), their sometimes dissolute Grand Tour was truly of its era and their time. This need not be glorified, nor abjured. It was just what one might do, if so inclined or impelled, and, to that extent we can acknowledge Ho for presenting a fairly frank record of it.

The journey and its tests are, as befits the second half of the 20th century, on two fronts, the inner and outer frontiers of Ho's hitherto limited experience. The reportage is characterised by, as I have noted, an unguided itinerary, self-doubt and 'scrambled, veiled voices,' and also, as the work's preface (or 'Prelog') admits, by '... juvenalia, bad verse, worse postcards and other people's anecdotes ... the rough notes of a story which emerges eventually, and only, as
a literary construct - or re-construct ...' (4) To appropriate a self-validating label, Jack Ho might be seen, in part, as a postmodern figure, who, in his turn, appropriates fragments of locations, languages, history and cultures into his jour, journey and journal. In an erratic glissando he moves over the surfaces of these multiple sites, sounds, images, significances, metaphors, metonyms ... towards whatever end desire desires, and down-loads its residuals to his text: 'All meaning and every goal having disappeared, it becomes possible to wander through civilizations as if through vestiges and ruins. The whole of mankind becomes an imaginary museum ... We can very easily imagine a time close at hand when any fairly well to do person will be able to leave his country indefinitely in order to taste his own cultural death in an interminable aimless voyage.' (Owens, '85:161)

Tourism is a particular sign of our age, and Ho is a tourist (at least in the eyes of others, though perhaps not his own). He is an agent of privilege who has utilised that status and simultaneously minimised it ('We have become the terminal strangers.' [87]), so that the standard transgressions (of borders, cultures, languages) permitted by tourism become, when pushed by him to extremes (hyper-transgressed?), his rite of passage, the testing, questing journey of this era. As travel and autobiography are emblematic of the modern world (and now are acutely so, because the world is so interactive), Jack Ho in travelling and 'autobiographing,' is also a modern figure. But a self-subverting one, for he styles himself 'white wog,' one who feels an outcast among all castes, lower and higher, lighter and darker.

In ambulans solvitur - in walking it is solved. If, as is sometimes said, to travel is to learn and to heal, then there is more motivating this excursion and tome than just an alienated pilgrimage to the temples of anarchy and prodigal excess. Even if he didn't actually walk very much, the hero is apparently 'solving' (or salving) through motion his identity questions, erected by 20 years of stasis in a white-bred world. The work is his auto-Bildungsroman. His 'ex-stasis' (or ecstatic) presence amid places not his own suggests himself as a figure within a parallelogram of two cultures (the opposite sides of which can never meet), against the
ground of autobiographical quest discourse. This property - the ecstatic (lit. 'out of place') journey through an alien terrain, the healing quest - and the retelling of the hero's adventures, place Jack Ho also within another tradition, that of the Romantic traveller-writer. In short, Ho may be seen as an amalgam of the Romantic, the modern and even the postmodern traveller. He stands for the pastiched person in time, the traveller as a composite being, embodying the antecedents of his own cultural phylum, plus the self-conscious mocking of them.

What are they doing here?

Being a 'hero' is a relative and temporary honorific. The specifics of doing what, for some, was heroic in the late '60s - 'hitting the toe' to unhygienic climes, smoking dope beneath the noses of swarthy narcos, pursuing a noisy chemical and hormonal tantra, feigning poverty in Boys' Own backwaters of the Caribbean - may no longer be seen as 'heroic,' to the point of even being condemned as a petty swashbuckling self-indulgence of an egregious kind. On the other hand, the rite of passage of leaving the nest for a larger sky is perennial.

Being a self-described 'wog,' a self-perceived underdog, Jack Ho considers himself far from heroic in the places he reaches. (To be a poor Gringo in Mexico - ah, that is Montezuma's revenge.) The role reversal is not only cultural, but at times physical; used to unquestioned good health and even better medicine, Ho and Crane are suddenly subject to the mortifications of the flesh, the 'Tijuana Two-Step.' (But, '... do we not gamble our way to the heart of the mystery against all the power of good manners, good morals, the fear of germs, and the sense of sin?' Mailer) This confirms a further diminution in whatever 'heroic,' healthy self-image they may have originally set out with. In their palsied, disillusioned non-heroism, they seem dedicated, desperately, only, to being on the run ('... when you're 21 and on the run to and from yourself ...' says Jack. [118]) - but from nothing tangible. Nor to it.
What they are doing is seeking a 'self-disappearance' which is frequently expressed in terms of fluid or liquid imagery, such as 'dissolution' and 'evaporation.' As Bob Dylan expressed it (in *Love is Just a Four-letter Word*):

'I said goodbye unnoticed,
pushed forth into my own games,
drifting in and out of lifetimes
unmentionable by name,
searching for my double, *looking for complete evaporation to the core* ...'

Or, as Pete Townshend spat it, with ambivalent anguish (in the song *I am an Animal*): 'I shall be immersed / queen of the fucking universe.' Or again, as Charles Nicholl concluded his *Borderlines*, far more gently and equanimously: '... I seem to feel the events of the journey drifting away, faces and places going off into the mist, until there is nothing but this little bare room ... and the girl's voice calling softly, but I can't answer her right now, because this is *the day that experience flows away*.' (*89:238*) (My emphases)

What is the nature and object of the outer search?

For Ho, the outer search is for various sequential destinations: Queensland, Perth, Hawaii, Mexico City, Isla San Andreas ... all these are intermediary states within a broader condition of being *elsewhere*, or 'Anywhere But Here.' The nature of the search involves maximum mobility and minimum expenditure ('... tenacious in our belief that experience can't be bought, but, if you have to pay, well, the less you pay, the weirder the experience will probably be. [78]) Other qualities of the search include taking on physical work (particularly on boats) in order to travel farther, cheaper, wilder; and, for Ho - like any aspiring travel scribe - to record his impressions of the subsequent events in letters and diaries (the superannuation of the traveller's misspent youth).
What is the nature and object of the inner search?

'Why do some people seek a mirage of the miraculous awaiting them at the next bend in the highway while others hope only for postcards and clean sheets?' (86) asks the narrator, rhetorically implicating himself in that search; not simply for the Gurjeiffian-Ouspenskyan 'miraculous,' but for the (characteristically late 20th century) aporetic 'mirage of the miraculous.' Ho then proposes a Furphy of a Mecca, something (or -where) which he calls 'Quahoochibah.' It is '... the Cure ... at the conclusion to all lines of vision ... place where all secrets are solved ... of houris, nectar, perfect verse and perfect surf ... somewhere visited at least once by everyone ...' (86) He questions whether it is just a chimera of his own naming (that is, his own creating), a '... no-such place or possibility ... binding one to the ... receding mirage of deliverance?' (87) This constitutes a standard mystical version of the trail's Grail, a place/condition/ dimension/image of numinous deliverance, which is the inner object of his travelling - even if it is proposed in his trademark terminology of doubt, distance, irony. He seeks Enlightenment - but as a 'twentieth century schizoid man' cannot bring himself to fully believe that such a condition exists.

In another paragraph, in almost shamanic-initiatory terms (this time stripped of the ironic self-distancing), he describes the nature of his inner journey as, 'This drive to dissolve the self out there on the knife-edge of the night and to sneak a vision of the workings of the universe.' (87) He seeks Enlightenment - and as a 'twentieth century schizoid man' cannot bring himself to fully dis-believe that such a condition exists.

The diary

One form of the diary is the chronicle, 'a continuous register of events in order of time.' The Log of the White Wog is discontinuous, but in other ways it embodies aspects of the chronicle, as described by Hayden White (in The Content of the Form). White writes that the chronicle '... usually is marked by a failure to achieve narrative closure. It does not so much conclude as simply terminate. It starts
out to tell a story but breaks off *in medias res*, in the chronicler's own present; it leaves things unresolved, or rather, it leaves them unresolved in a storylike way. (87:5); and '... the chronicler represents [historical reality] as if real events appeared to human consciousness in the form of unfinished stories.' (loc cit). *The Log* fails to reach overall narrative closure, although its component chapters, especially those written in short story style (as distinct from those written as ersatz diary entries), do reach internal resolution. The work may be seen to 'have its bets both ways.' On one hand it is apparently (or opportunistically) postmodern in its refusal of a final narrative closure (in the way that might be expected of a novel), but is in fact conforming to a different set of generic expectations, those of the conventional chronicle. In having resolutions to its nuclear units, it is again quite conventional, in terms of the short story genre. While there is often episodic closure, the concatenation of these episodes is principally into a open sequence in which real events appear 'in the form of unfinished stories.' (In this, Ho's diary/chronicle might resemble also an adventure story, which as Paul Zweig noted '... does not move principally from beginning to end, but from peak to peak ...' [74:191])

Hayden White also notes that 'Common opinion has it that the plot of a narrative imposes a meaning on the events that make up its story level by revealing at the end a structure that was immanent in the events all along.' (87:20) In *The Log* there is no such retroactive revelation of a meaningful structure immanent in earlier events. Instead, the conventional quest narrative, with its promise of boon and/or personal enlightenment, is at the end derailed, ignored as the 'plot' thins into yet another boat journey to yet another tropical nowhere, followed penultimately by an anecdote from some other continent (no explanation is offered of the passage from one to the other), and ultimately concluded by a letter of seventeen years later, from some other person who has not previously figured in the main account. No meaning-imparting structure is revealed, except that a chronicle is only a chronicle, and that a journey is only a journey - and so is a quest.
At one point the author turns upon his own creation, the diary, and personifying it, parodies its closed-circuit 'Dorothy Dix' dialogue by addressing his lament to the text itself: 'Diary! O dear Dorothy Diary! The muck you have to put up with ...' (24) In addition to the use of extreme self-reflexivities like this, The Log breaks free from the standard diary form by its use of letters, intercalated commentary and text attributed to others. It exploits the apparent collision of these texts, with the authorship of all being cast into doubt. But even in this is another convention: '... the artlessness associated with the diary form' (as Abbott puts it) and the use of the diary strategy have become 'a formal attribute of the absence of form.' (84:19) The Log also resembles '... the modern quasi-diary, the diary thought rather than written,' (A. Hassam,88:45) but only partly so, because so much of it is in self-consciously literary discourse (quotes, puns, assonance, etc), rather than in emulation of a simulated 'thought' discourse, with the latter's stream-of-consciousness, cut-up or other devices of psychological representation.

I have said nothing here of Ho's diary discourse in terms of content, that is, as personal revelation, confession, reflection, catharsis, etc. At times these elements are abundant in The Log (particularly in the specifically 'diary' pages), at other times less so. Regardless of the form, there is a persistent privileging of the internal self-to-self monologue which constitutes a 'confessional' diary discourse, and even when attributed to Crane's (presumed) diary, the passages stylistically resemble the voice of Jack Ho. (Is this then a quasi-diary of quasi-voices?) In reference to the generic expectations (within diary works) of such personal content, I include, without further comment, two fitting observations from H. Porter Abbott (in Diary Fiction: Writing as Action) on the nature of the diarist. 'The writer: what is he like? He is intelligent. He is sensitive. He is acutely introverted and self-conscious. He is alienated. He has no gift for social life. He is either in love or obsessed with the fact that he is not. He is poor. He is powerless. He is young, in his twenties or early thirties. He is alone. He is prone to melodrama. He is doomed.' (84:16) 'How does the diarist write? Intermittently. His style is unregulated. It ranges from the purple to the colloquial. It is marked by false starts and abrupt stops, by
blanks, and by logorrhea. It speaks in the present of present emotions. It is as self-conscious as its author, anxiously reflecting upon the words by which it manifests itself.' (loc cit)

'Like a mockingbird the pseudonymous account borrows the song of a real traveler.' says Robert Rotenburg ('86:149) However, The Log, regardless of its shortfalls, elisions and gaucheries, is clearly the song of a real traveller - or at least, really the song of a traveller - that is, it is not 'borrowed.' Moreover, it is not necessarily the song of more than one traveller. What is odd (or downright false) here is not so much the authorial pseudonym, but the apparent collaboration, which, while posing at polyvocality, reads more like a deliberately faked collaboration. Passages, such as the following one, attributed to Crane, seem at times, stylistically, so 'Ho' that the reader may be forgiven for thinking s/he is invited to suspend disbelief in the existence of the putative 'Crane': 'Every tree seems to bear light. Water is falling somewhere near. The earth glows like a dream which draws you on to touch and be touched by it. An unbearable sensuousness emanates from the land, as though one could almost feel its thrumming heart.' (88) Plainly, this is 'Ho-embellished' prose.

Maryanne Dever notes of the collaborative literary enterprise: 'In spite of a passing acquaintance with Derrida there remains among some critics a desire for the presence of a speaking subject who will function as the unitary origin of his/her discourse, where voice becomes a metaphor of truth and authenticity, a source of self-present 'living speech,' as opposed to the secondary, 'lifeless' emanations of writing.' ('90) Narrators, Ho and Crane 'second guess' this critical desire by compromising the unitary origin of the text in a collaborative offering, and then 'author'-narrator Ho further compromises the disingenuous binary origin, so that the text's status as 'metaphor of truth and authenticity' is even more dubious. Or, as both speaking subjects may well be collapsed into one, the text is tentatively restored to a unitary origin, and the probable factuality of the diary discourse becomes the possible fictionality of the quasi-diary.
Origin and individuation, says Deever, are subverted in collaboration, which is an open-ended performance, and the resulting manuscript a ludic discourse. Ho (if indeed he is also Crane) shows that origin and individuation may also be subverted in non-collaboration, and also that, in giving the diary the possibilities of multiple personalities, the chances of an 'open-ended performance' and 'ludic discourse' - even if only in a 'one man band' - are thrown open. Collaboration, concludes Deever, '... subverts the paradigm of authorship with which ... we still generally work, namely that the author, a coherent, pre-existing, historical and didactical entity precedes or authorizes the text in hand. We are here denied that fiction of a single, authoritative and legitimizing voice and are confronted instead with the inherently unstable, multiple or fragmented character of a collective subject. The author here becomes the site of excess.' (my emphasis) Ho's use of two pseudonymous authors, who are probably one, confronts the reader also with the 'inherently unstable, multiple or fragmented character' of a single subject. The author here, or at least his diary, indeed becomes the site of excesses.

**Autobiography**

'Production of my fragments. Contemplation of my fragments (correction, polishing, etc.). Contemplation of my scraps (narcissism).'

Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes

The Log of the White Wog is conspicuously autobiographical in that it 'logs,' albeit discontinuously, a series of events over a significant period in the life of Jack Ho. (Autobiography as 'travelography': the self's journey as the self's journal.) But, it is an inattentive autobiography in not giving information on his background, education, family, politics, race, religion, height, astrological sign or other anchors of social identity. Here, autobiographical discourse does not function to 'frame' an explanation/contextualisation of the hero's earlier life. Worse, the
autobiographer holds the enterprise in such suspicion or suspension that he refuses to correctly name himself, and moreover, gives no good reason for his alias. The reader, of course, constructs a hologram of the man from the little revealed: he is in his twenties, Australian, literate (enough), capable of manual work, single, probably of hirsute appearance, indulgent, an ironic Romantic, a would-be swashbuckler (who never quite gets there), introspective ... but otherwise, he is an undeveloped image, a Polaroid of incorrect or incomplete chemistry, precluding instant 'fixing' in the reader's imagination. Ho seems again to be having his bets both ways: the diary which is not a diary, of the collaboration which is not a collaboration, becomes the autobiography which is not an autobiography. The construction 'Jack Ho' is a fiction in and of itself. Its only real presence is a fiction. The character 'Jack Ho' has no existence beyond the text: it is the text which has created him, and the same for 'Charlie (Crane) Raine.'

While confounding one (modern, Western) set of expectations, this quasi-autobiographical piece of writing may be only doing (or not doing) something more 'natural' to other cultures. 'The concern, which seems so natural to us,' writes Georges Gusdorf, 'to turn back on one's own past, to recollect one's life in order to narrate it, is not at all universal. It asserts itself only in recent centuries and only on a small part of the map of the world.' (in Olney,'80:29) Ho resists one narcissism, that of the objectified 'big picture' autobiography for another, the impressionistic, miniaturised self-portrait written in hints, hates and road maps. One suspects that he would subscribe to the point of view which queries whether autobiography goes '... against the vital instinct and flow of life - to stop it, to step aside in an excess of self consciousness - if a healthy life lives rather than reflects?' (Hassan,'90b) In fact, as Crane writes of Ho '... it takes him hundreds of times longer to write it than for anyone to read it. How many hours of writing get sacrificed to the memory of a little action? How much possible new action is sacrificed to writing-up so many old memories?' (117)
The Other

'... but he that harkens Eastwards
hears bright music from the world where shadows are;
where shadows are not shadows.
Hand in hand a man's word bids them rise
and smile and stand and triumph.
All that glorious Orient glows defiant of the dusk.'
Algernon Swinburne

Oh, that the apprehension of Otherness, and the discussion of it,
were as simple as implied in Swinburne's lines in honour of Richard
Burton (one of the great trackers of 'the Other Manifest' - in culture,
clime, language, religion and sexuality). If, as has been suggested
earlier, 'alterity is ineluctable, a function of consciousness itself,'
Swinburne's hope that 'shadows are not shadows' when 'a man's
word bids them rise' seems plain naïve. Instead, one is confronted
with Otherness (and the fascination 'for it) which bears 'the
doubleness of taboo': '... attraction and repulsion contend; ... desire
declares and inhibits itself.' (Hassan,'90a:412) And so too it is in the
world and pages of The Log of the White Wog.

In an epoch where thought and double-think, signifier and
signified leap-frog each other towards an ever-receding certainty in
signification, Ho writes within the literary psycho-social
expectations established by writers such as Gide, Mann, Kafka,
Rilke, Robbe-Grillet, for whom '... the foreign setting is not the Other
but the Other that already exists within the Self.' (Hirsch,'81:4) The
Other is doubled to include the self, as much as vice versa. ('We, the
composed of many different things.' as Virginia Woolf wrote.) So, Ho
doubles his self to construct the text's dubious 'collaborator,' Crane,
who in turn must have his own Other, collectively and individually,
but who, also, cannot simply be read as Ho's Other, just an other. Ho
does most of the representing, not only of Crane, but of the world at
large. In his polyvocality he simulates a dialogical relationship with
Crane, but - like most travel writers - not with the Other.

Their collective Other is a world of excess - machete attacks,
tortured bowels, cops, drugs, jokes, anomic, doubt, linguistic
alienation - into which they immerse themselves in a ritual of bourgeois exorcism. For Ho, individually, alterity is expressed in doubt of voice ('So, why'm I writing this roadsong - and to whom?' [115]), and in being (as Abbott says) obsessed with the fact that he is not in love: 'The Queen of Hearts, it seems, always rides in someone else's car.' (8); '... the dark mirror eyes of a beautiful Semitic-looking woman. They remind me of my separation from something, of the broken arc between me and contact with such beauty.' (49); and, '... I realise how much I've been wondering - hell, no, worrying - if I'd ever find myself next to a girl again: heaps. And here she is, my sweet angel of redemption ...' (119) A common lament; but, is the Other that can be named the true Other?

It is probably axiomatic that for the traveller the principal Other is somehow of place, for whatever attraction and repulsion contend over, whatever desire declares and inhibits, for the traveller travelling they always do so. ‘Over There.’ Jack Ho moves across his landscapes, sensitive (to greater or lesser degrees) to them, but never wishing to settle in any place, standing still (as best he can) on a moving point, not even in pursuit of the asymptote of the perfect Other place, knowing, tat tvam asi, that (as Hirsch said) ‘the foreign setting is not the Other but the Other that already exists within the Self’ - and yet still wondering, where below ‘... the spokes of the star-wheels turning ... for me, real life lay?’ (27)

**Exoticism**

‘We’ve seen the stars, a wave or two - we’ve also seen some sand;
although we peer through telescopes and spars,
we’re often deadly bored as you on land.’

Baudelaire

The Log loves the exotic: the road to Queensland as heaven and hell, twisted denizens of the Haight, the venality of the Caribbean Gulf Coast, and so forth. The work’s people are often functions of their place and its already established stereotypes. Thus,
Queenslanders are mug cops, beach girls, shonky lawyers; Territorians are helpful country types or long-haul psychopaths; Americans are scammers and buffoons; Belizeans, sleazy, humourous, ganjetic; Mexicans poor, rich or insane; Nicaraguans poor, generous and incompetent. There seems to be some room for exceptions - American Darlene in Mexico City, an old driver near Mataranka, another one near Mazatlan, a border guard and a pastor in British Honduras - but generally, this world is peopled with contentious bosuns, dopers, fruitarians, vulgarians, street hoods, street girls, suspicious keepers of equally suspicious hotels and captains of leaky boats. The landscape is equally extreme - jungles, deserts, coasts, slums. It is, of course, like the whole book, a literary construct, based on generic conventions of conflict and colourful anomaly. Antecedant to this, in the realm of the real, this universe is based on, firstly, the expectations and provocations of our heroes, and secondly, on such 'exotic' incidents standing clearer in the writer's recall than the smile of a stranger, the anonymous drivers who give lifts without incident to the hitch-hikers, and the one hundredth Chiclets chico, and so on.

Paul Fussell writes that the first principle of the successful travel book is '... never be boring, no matter how boring the experience.' ('80:196) It is incumbent upon the travel writer to freight the exotic with significance, and Ho succumbs to this generic expectation, as well as to his own youthful fascination with the same. Paul Theroux says 'I think that not sufficient attention has been paid to the boredom of travel, to the tedium, to the difficulty - not the difficulty in terms of being in life threatening situations, but of being bored to death.' (in Geise,'89:27) It may be expected that our heroes had their interregna of boredom and frustration, in between deserts, seas, deals and dreams, but memory and editing conspire to 'disappear' these passages.

Are the various goals achieved?

'What goals?' one might ask. Ho's outer search for various, generally un-nominated destinations is achieved: maximum mobility with minimum expenditure is attained. He survives
dysentery, drugs, attacks of machete or boredom, sunburn, shipwreck (of the most minor kind), and probably a dozen other unnoticed calamities, thus fulfilling in some sense a few of the swashbuckling dreams with which he may have departed. At this level, his quest is successful.

His search for the miraculous, or the 'mirage of the miraculous,' 'Quahoochibah,' is defused into a 'no-such place or possibility ... a receding mirage of deliverance.' The personal Grail of enlightenment, which might have been the inner object of his travelling, is subverted by the self-protecting terminology of doubt, distance, irony. The shamanic-initiatory 'dissolution of the self ... to sneak a vision of the workings of the universe' is never really approached because he does not have the cultural or ritual framework through which to undertake such a possibility. 'Dissolution' comes at times too close to 'dissolute.' At this level, his quest is not successful. There is no dramatic epiphany, only a series of smaller, non-mystical epiphanies. At the literary level, he breaks the paradigm of Departure-Initiation-Return, because his initiation is not ritual, realised or transforming in the classic and sublime sense of a boon found, grasped and taken; instead, his initiation (such as it is) is profane/mundane, ill-understood, non-heroic, and he continues to wander, unrealised, out of the work's open-ended non-closure.

Ho might like to have been like Basho, who, at his best, '... travelled, above all, to renew his own spirit, strewing verses as he tramped along, one foot in this world, another, he said, in the next.' (Hassan,'90a:413) Instead, he is closer to the more sombre Basho who wrote

'Determined to fall
A weather-exposed skeleton
I cannot help the sore wind
Blowing through my heart.' ('66:51)

He is even closer to the disillusioned lyric of exactly his own era and age, where ...

'In 'sixty-nine I was twenty-one and I called the road my own
I don't know when that road turned onto the road I'm on
Running on - running on empty
Running on - running blind
Running on - running into the sun
But I'm running behind.'

Is there a 'narrative quest' involving the author's textual representation of reality?

'Certain pleasure is derived from a way of imagining oneself as individual, of inventing a final, rarest fiction: the fictive identity. This fiction is no longer the illusion of a unity; on the contrary, it is the theatre of society in which we stage our plural ...'

Roland Barthes
The Pleasure of the Text

There is always a tension in representation of the subject - between the reported doings of the 'correct' writer (a semiotic and ideological construct, a super-ego alias of the ego) and 'telling it like it is' (also a conscious, epistemological construct); that is, between saying it with the probity of hindsight (the repression of the 'ideologically incorrect' libido) and the frankness of admission (or 'damn the damage control'). There is also the tension between the author and narrator. Jack Ho takes on these tensions, which are inherent in the 'problematised' narrative's quest for solid ground upon which to make its stand vis-a-vis the 'authenticity' of representation.

Without attributing to The Log any accolade as dubious as 'a full and frank disclosure,' one can acknowledge that the quest here has been, in part, for that old vulnerability called (yes) 'vulnerability,' even if achieved (or half-achieved) through the lies of another name, other voices and half-truths. ('A man will lie more plausibly if he will mix in some actual truth.' Strabo) This however, is not so much to do with the 'author's textual representation of reality' as with his representation of himself - and that we know to be a pseudonym, and perhaps a false polyvocality. Nevertheless, far
from a sanitized, approbatory abstraction called 'desire' and somewhat closer to the opprobrium of an actual 'desirer' acting in the down and dirty world, Ho's narrative quest is also a challenge to a certain fashionable rectitude which from its moral high ground demands the suppression of any whiff of sexism or racism. ('... "racism" explains too little or too much. In any case it earns instant moral credit for whoever cries it loudest.' [Hassan,'90:419])

Moving from content (as such) to content as form, the experimentation with a multiplicity of viewpoints (whether 'genuine' or otherwise), including the fictive identity of the narrator, is simply the first step in breaking a mould of single, fixed-ego perception. As Proust said, 'The only genuine journey, the only Fountain of Youth, ... to have other eyes, to see the universe with the eyes of another, of a hundred others ...' (in Hirsch,'81:172) This is hardly achieved in The Log, but at least in 'the theatre of society in which we stage our plural,' the work attempts some ludic, poetic risk. In seeking like the Devil to quote scriptures which might suit himself, Jack Ho could draw some strength from Jacques Delaruelle's words (in Inner contemplation and outward appropriation): 'Burdened with clichés plundered from various academic fields whose haphazard coalescence is usually termed 'theory,' contemporary artists really need to be poets. To remain aware of their feelings, to see with their own eyes, and maintain some conviction about their activity, they must restore freshness to the language of forms and invent ways out of a semiological impasse. Like poetry, art is a way of experiencing things anew and a means of dissent against received ideas, not the expression of grand world-views, or abstruse principles.' ('90:17)

The Log's author may accept, postmodernistically, the essential marginality of human existence rather than seeking the self as the centre. Meantime, its narrator (and hero) obviously has not managed to 'decentre the centre,' and is engaged (indulging) in his Romantic quest for classical personal 'closure' (i.e. opening, i.e. revelation) and his modern quest for narrative closure (i.e. a good beginning-middle-ending), but, inevitably, the centre cannot hold. Reifying the experience in writing, enclosing it as an artefact, is no longer credible, even for the author. The diary of the quest for
textual representation of reality bombs out. The hero exits, stage anywhere. The author follows, opportunistically, stage somewhere else; and the narrator disappears behind a coda, a letter from someone else.

Is the reader required to engage actively in this negotiation of meaning and text?

From the opening frame of the 'Prelog' ('According to novelistic convention, a frame is more real than what it contains.' [Martens, '85:144]) onwards, there are sufficient changes of voice ('framer,' Crane and Ho) and speaking positions of writer (Ho as narrator, diarist, letter writer), that any stretches of 'detached observer' writing are subverted in their unquestioned credibility.

At work is a dialectic between the reader's expectations (such as established by Murray Laurence's *High Times in the Middle of Nowhere*, a successful Australian example of playing the 'travel tales' genre 'straight') and the dislocations of Ho's text. Not only is the author dislocated into a pseudonymous, pseudo-polyvocal narrativity, but the device at times seems so transparent that the text approaches a parody. The word parody is used here not in its current restricted meaning of a kind of stylistic joke, but in its older, etymological sense which '... suggests a text that stands alongside other texts in critical or ironic imitation of them ...' (M. Campbell, '88:127) Such texts attempt to create alternative structures or fictions which imply the old forms and which encourage readers to draw on their knowledge of traditional literary conventions when constructing a meaning for the new text. (Waugh, '84:4) Ho does not seem sufficiently skilled to only 'imply' older (and newer) forms; he recreates them, as in the short story chapters of *The Rust Queen, a Paleface on Love Street* and *A Mad Beautiful Place*, to name but three. Significantly, the work's last major piece, *The Good Ship 'Pirate'*, abandons experimentation for conventional narrative process. His 'ironic imitation' of newer literary forms, such as the polysemous structure of Kundera's *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, again demonstrates insufficient wit or skill to imitate or overtake the model.
For the reader accustomed to engaging in a negotiation of meaning and text, there is another level in experimental work, negotiating meaning and text and theory, and this is also true of The Log. Speaking of avant-garde texts, Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes says: 'Their obvious quality is an intentional order: they are concerned to serve theory. Yet this quality is a blackmail as well (theory blackmailed): love me, keep me, defend me, since I conform to the theory you call for; do I not do what Artaud, Cage, etc. have done? - But Artaud is not just "avant-garde"; he is a kind of writing as well; Cage has a certain charm as well ... but those are precisely the the attributes which are not recognized by theory, which are sometimes even excruciated by theory.' Ho, as often, is having his bets both ways, or every way: some of his chapters are plain old-fashioned in their structures, others are simply unstructured, while others are experiments in the multiplication of narrators (hardly a new trick); and yet, overall, he seems to be the 'site' of some contention (blackmail?) between attraction to and repulsion from postmodernism. ('Postmodernity has a Janus face, an ambivalent capacity to generate its own opposite out of its raw material ... Writers who increasingly abhor the endless ennui of stories without subject, plot, beginning and end are looking around for genuine narratives.' [Feher,'89: 10])

In conclusion, I will consider very briefly how the various discourses support the hero's incomplete quest. Insofar as 'Each trip is a repetition, the uncovering of an origin that itself has behind it another origin,' (Hodge,'90:394) Ho allows the inner and outer quests in this open work to blur and blend. This is no simple double quest structure of a parallel inner event yoked obediently to an external objective. Because almost the opposite holds true - that is, the external objective often lacks definition because the internal one always does - the narrative maintains its quest momentum in a sporadic manner, with the inner erupting and the outer erupting. The hero (or heroes) never get any closer to the Holy Mountain, to the end of the Road, to origins, or even to the end of the book. The work just ends. The Road goes on.
But, in most good travel literature there is a dialectic between the mundane and metaphysical. (Hassan,'90a:417) (The reader will decide whether this is 'good' travel literature.) And in this instance, the diary and autobiographical discourses give ample rein to each of these sides of the author/narrators. The Other and the exotic, as in many travel works, overlap, though in attaining the latter, here the former seems always out of reach; each propels both the narrative and the participants through the mundane and the would-be metaphysical. That no closure upon the object of the second quest - an inner, spiritual enlightenment - is attained is not a 'failure.' Traveller-writer as Romantic shaman is only part of the identity of Jack Ho. He is also of this era, the late 20th century, and as Umberto Eco argues (in The Role of the Reader), in any century the way that artistic forms are structured reflects the way in which science or contemporary culture views reality. ('79:57) For Eco, the poetics of the open work are peculiarly relevant: '... it posits the work of art stripped of necessary and foreseeable conclusions, works in which the performer's freedom functions as part of the discontinuity which contemporary physics recognizes ...' (ibid:58)

Perhaps the problem rests on a version of the Heisenbergian uncertainty principle; an awareness that 'for the smallest building blocks of matter, every process of observation causes a major disturbance,' and that it is impossible to describe an objective world because the observer always changes the observed. (Waugh,'84:3) Similarly, it may be impossible to describe (or conclude) a double quest, because the quester always changes the 'quested.'