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Anna Rutherford
University of Aarhus, Denmark

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Africk is a Peninsula Joyned to Arabia Petrea by a narrow Isthmus, bounded on the East by the Red Sea & Bay of Arabia, on the North with the Mediterranean Sea, and on the West & South with the Atlantick & Aethiopian Ocean. It is much bigger then Europe & lesser then Asia but less Peopleed & fruitfu1 then either. It was little Discoverd by the Ancients except towards the North which Pass'd under the name of Libya, it is equally seated under the Equator advancing either ways near 36 degrees, therefore most under the Torrid Zone here is all the generation of the Moors supposed to be the off Sprong of Ham who was cursed of his father Noah, here are many I'olaters, Mahometans & sum Christian Colonys. here are found most Monsters & variety of strange Beasts.
Kunapipi is a tri-annual arts magazine with special but not exclusive emphasis on the new literatures written in English. It aims to fulfil the requirements T.S. Eliot believed a journal should have: to introduce the work of new or little known writers of talent, to provide critical evaluation of the work of living authors, both famous and unknown, and to be truly international. It publishes creative material and criticism. Articles and reviews on related historical and sociological topics plus film will also be included as well as graphics and photographs.

The editor invites creative and scholarly contributions. Manuscripts should be double-spaced with footnotes gathered at the end, should conform to the MHRA (Modern Humanities Research Association) Style Sheet, and should be accompanied by a return envelope.

All correspondence - manuscripts, books for review, inquiries - should be sent to:

Anna Rutherford
Editor - KUNAPIPPI
Department of English
University of Aarhus
8000 Aarhus C
Denmark

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Ace of Spades. Reproduced by kind permission of the Worshipful Company of Makers of Playing Cards. Collection, Guildhall Library.

Kunapipi refers to the Australian Aboriginal myth of the Rainbow Serpent which is the symbol both of creativity and regeneration. The journal’s emblem is to be found on an Aboriginal shield from the Roper River area of the Northern Territory in Australia.
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Pope, Thackeray and Africana in Non-Standard English Playing Cards of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century

The standard English design of playing cards has been little altered over the centuries, and originated in the reign of Henry VII. It consists, of course, of the suits of diamonds, spades, hearts and clubs, with kings, queens and knaves for court cards. During the Restoration, however, and following European precedent, it was discovered by both Puritans and Royalists that playing cards could be used for educational purposes. This was done by simply modifying their standard patterns to leave room for the desired information. Disreputable 'gaming' was thus transformed into basic learning. As Virginia Wayland, an authority on seventeenth-century educational cards, has put it: 'Puritanical England was a fertile field for these cards that "were not cards" in the traditional pattern. For a populace just escaping from the severe discipline of the Commonwealth, here was a way to salve the conscience and still indulge in a popular pastime.'\(^1\) The British, nevertheless, went one better than the Europeans by also inventing political playing cards. These included such gems of satirical diatribe as 'The Horrid Popish Plot' (1678) and 'The South Sea Bubble' (1720).

Our chief concern here is with the educational playing cards. These covered a wide variety of subjects, including Astronomy, Geometry, Geography and even 'How to Carve at the Table'. Sylvia Mann, to whom our categorization of non-standard cards is indebted, labels these as 'diverting', and includes packs dealing with proverbs and love-mottoes.\(^2\) Later still, in the early part of the nineteenth century, a sub-category of 'diverting' packs, 'transformation' cards, became very popular.

Africa and Africans featured in all three kinds of non-standard packs, but particularly so in educational cards devoted to geographical information and, in a much cruder way, as will be discussed later, 'transformation' packs. Geographical cards tell us much about how the British and, indeed, Europeans in general, viewed Africans in the early stages
of the colonial era. Geographical cards provided a popular medium of information about them. Judging by the frequency with which they were reprinted, in fact, geographical cards were very popular, and quite likely attempted to satisfy a great hunger for information - and 'easy learning' - in an age of exciting new geographical discoveries for Europeans. One publisher of such cards, John Lenthall, in an 'Advertisement' which was included in the two extra cards in a pack of geographical cards had this to say about their usefulness: 'The great & Infinite Benefit of obtaining and Retaining a System of Universal Geography so easily Pleasantly, & Familiarly, is so apparent as not to need any Argument to Perswasion.'

Invariably, one of the two 'black' suits, spades or clubs, represented Africa, and Lenthall's pack was no exception: 'The four Suits are the four Parts of the World; and not without Some Reason or Analogy, the Hearts describe Europe, the Diamonds Asia, the Spades, Africa, and the Clubs America, or the West Indies.' 'Not without Some Reason or Analogy' tells us that there was nothing arbitrary about the choice of suits. Europe was evidently considered the heartland. The suit of diamonds perhaps alludes to the fabled wealth associated with the East - and this was an age of much profitable trade with Asia. It may also perhaps suggest the hard-heartedness of the Islamic East, in contrast to the supposed warm-heartedness of the Christian West. In the case of the suit of spades, however, there can be little doubt that the suit stands for the skin colour of the African inhabitants it represents. This may also be true of the suit of clubs, since the West Indies and much of the Americas were populated by African slaves.

The game of ombre in the second, enlarged edition of Alexander Pope's 'The Rape of the Lock' (1714) provides a good example of how the 'black' suits readily lent themselves to such associations even among the 'polite' readers of that mock-epic poem. When Belinda declares 'Let Spades be trumps!', for instance, the spades turn out to be 'swarthy Moors'. The game proceeds as follows:

```
Now move to War her Sable Matadores,
In Show like Leaders of the swarthy Moors.
Spadillo first, unconquerable Lord!
Led off two captive Trumps, and swept the Board.
(Canto III, ll. 46-50)
```

The association of spades with Africans was deliberate, for the card-game is described in mock-epic terms as a military battle; hence, this annotation in Twickenham edition of the poem: '...African warrior tribes are mentioned in the Aeneid and in Lucan's Civil War, iv 676 ff. Claudian's unfinished De Bello Gildonico deals with war in Africa.
Memnon (Dryden’s *Aeneid*, i 1052) is called “swarthy”.3 Belinda goes on to defeat both her opponents, but not before the Baron temporarily gains the upper-hand, as described in these lines:

Now to the *Baron* Fate inclines the Field.
His warlike *Amazon* her host invades,
Th’ Imperial Consort of the Crown of *Spades*.
The *Club’s* black Tyrant first her Victim dy’d.
Spite of his haughty Mien, and barb’rous Pride:
What boots the Regal Circle on his Head,
His Giant Limbs in State unwieldy spread?
That long behind he trails his pompous Robe,
And of all Monarchs only grasps the Globe?

(Canto III, ll. 66-74)

Here, Pope describes the standard design of the king of clubs at the time, as he was the only one of the four kings holding an orb. In calling him a ‘black Tyrant’, however, Pope also alludes, according to Geoffrey Tillotson in the Twickenham edition, to ‘the rout at the defeat of Hannibal by Scipio at Zama in North Africa’.4 That epic descriptions of ancient wars in North Africa were in Pope’s mind becomes even more evident at the climax of the Baron’s ascendency:

Of *Asia’s* Troops, and *Africk’s* Sable Sons,
With like Confusions different Nations fly,
Of various Habit and of various Dye,
The perc’d Battalions dis-united fall,
In Heaps on Heaps; one Fate o’erwhelms them all.

(Canto III, ll. 81-86)

It is always a treacherous undertaking to speculate on the sources of creativity, particularly in a poet of genius like Pope, yet it may not be too far-fetched to conclude that the great Augustan’s imagination was stimulated by geographical packs, since it was in these cards that each suit represented a continent, and quite likely stirred the imagination of those who used them, whether children or adults, aristocrats or commoners. Also, though one must be careful not to end up breaking a butterfly upon a wheel, Pope’s description of the game of ombre strongly suggests an epic struggle between the forces of ‘civilization’ and ‘barbarism’. This struggle is mirrored in mock-epic fashion in the poem itself, since it focuses upon the ‘barbarous’ act of the cutting-off of Belinda’s lock of hair. It appears, then, that assumptions about race and skin-colour, though not as blatantly racialist as they were to become in the nineteenth century, were perhaps subliminally reinforced even in standard packs.
As far as geographical cards are concerned, in the Restoration and early eighteenth century two basic designs circulated, one published by Henry Winstanley, and the other by H. Brome in 1675, and subsequently published in somewhat different versions, notably that of 1720, by John Lenthall. H. Brome’s version itself was, in Sylvia Mann’s words, ‘filched from a French pack made by Duval in 1669’. In the fascinating way it treats Africans, the Winstanley edition of geographical cards is by far the most interesting. The Winstanley cards, therefore, will be examined first.

THE WINSTANLEY GEOGRAPHICAL CARDS

Engraved from copper plates, the Winstanley cards were undoubtedly the most beautifully designed of the period. Henry Winstanley himself was an engineer at Audley’s End, one of the estates of Charles II, and the cards were published in Littlebury, Essex, which was probably where Winstanley lived. Virginia Wayland, who wrote a monograph about the cards, makes the following pertinent observations about them:

I am sure that it was not an easy task to design such a deck of cards - using only half of each card for text. ... We know so many facts about our world that it would be almost impossible to choose the few items about each country that could be recorded on a scrap of paper the size of a playing card. Therefore it becomes not only interesting but significant to see what economic, political and cultural facts in the 17th century Winstanley felt would interest the merchants and political figures of the busy, commercially expanding city of London.

The emphasis on empirical facts is certainly there in Winstanley’s own description (in the frontispiece which came with the cards) of what he intended to include in his design:

All the Principal Nations of the World Presented in their Habits (or Fashion of Dressing) with a Prospect of their Capital Citys and a Geographycal Description of the Provinces and Citys and Remarkable Places, in and Belonging or Depending to Ech Government with an observation of their Fruitfulness, Trading, Religions and as much of History of all, as Could be Contained in so small a Space.

Much of the information supplied by the cards, however, was not strictly factual, but derived from the Bible and ancient history. In the case of the African suit, particularly, it will be argued, the cards are just as significant for the images of Africans they convey, as for the strictly factual information they impart.

Winstanley goes on to explain in the same frontispiece that each of the four suits represents a continent, with each continent also having its
Ill. 1: Ace of Spades
Reproduced by kind permission of the Worshipful Company of Makers of Playing Cards. Collection, Guildhall Library
own extra symbol. Thus, Europe is represented by the suit of hearts, and associated also with roses; Asia, diamonds and suns; America, clubs and stars; and Africa, spades and moons. One can only speculate about why the moon, particularly a crescent one, was chosen but just as a crescent moon reveals only part of its entire surface, so did Europeans undoubtedly feel that Africa was largely unknown to them. In both astrology and poetic symbolism, moreover, the moon was associated with mutability, or the process of cyclical change in Nature, suggested by the lunar phases. Africa was perhaps considered as a continent where time was cyclical rather than historical for its inhabitants. It is also possible that Africa was regarded as a mainly ‘Pagan’ area, a kind of battle ground between Christians and Muslims, the symbol of Islam being a crescent moon.

To start with the ace of spades, it gives general information about Africa as a continent, emphasizing that it ‘was little Discovered by the Ancients’. About its people, it has this to say: ‘... here is all the generation of the Moors supposed to be the off-spring of Ham who was cursed of his father Noah. here are many Idolaters. Mahomitans & sum Christian Colonys. here are found Most Monsters & veriety of strange Beasts.’ The description seems to contain in embryo the essence of later, and in many ways continuing, European perceptions of Africa; that it is a stronghold of Islam, of Paganism, or ‘primitive’ religions and fertile ground for Christian missionary activity. There is also a strong echo of the Renaissance cartographers’ ‘here be monsters’ for blank areas of the world map. This anticipates the later European fascination with wildlife, mirrored in many a safari-park and wildlife documentary film even now.

The accompanying illustration appears to depict an ‘idolater’ rather than a Moor. The man holding a parasol, and a tambourine, is evidently a black man from south of the Sahara, with the ‘prospect’ of a typical village behind him, even though he is flanked by a pyramid. His pose suggests that he is about to dance, perhaps in some kind of ‘idolatrous’ ceremony.

Much of the textual information in many of the cards tends to be of an exotic nature, at least to Europeans. The two of spades informs us, for instance that in Nubia ‘is found a sort of Poison that the tenth Part of a grain will kill a man in the quarter of an hour’. Most flamboyant of all is the description of Ethiopia in the four of spades, which must be quoted in its entirety to do it justice:
ETHIOPIANS

Ethiopia Superior, or the Empire of the Abissines, and by some called the Empire of Fresiter John; is the greatest region of all Africa, bordered with several nations, only touching on the Red Sea where are the famous Ports, Suqam, &c. Subject to the Grand Seignior, this Empire lies all in the Torrid Zone Equally seated under the Equinoctial. Nevertheless, fruitful in grain, Cattle, Spices, Gold, Guet, &c. Divided into several kingdoms, Bernagazo, Sueguer, Tigree, Amara, Bagamedri, Damaute, Dambod, Myctades, Narea, Boyame, Concho, Mahaloa, Fuscoa, &c. Most denominated from their Chief Cities, except the three first which have for capitals Baria, Merwe, & Cacumo, good cities. Erroneously said to be the Dominion of the Queen of Sheba, this Emperor has no fixed seat, but in a Royal Progress over his Dominions in Tents makes a great City in all places; and is absolute Master of all things he is Christian. Most of his subjects since the time that the Burmish of Queen Candace was Baptized by Philip this Nation is more Ingenious than other Africans. Amara is a City where the Prince have their Education, to finish in Empo.
FOUR OF SPADES

ETHIOPIANS - Amara

Ethiopia Superior, or the Empire of the Abissines and by Some Called the Empire of Prester John is the Greatest Region of all Africk, bounded with several Nations only touching on the Red Sea where are the famous Ports Suaquem, & Arquico subject to the Grand Seignior. this Empire lyes all in the Torrid Zone Equally Seated under the Equinoctial. Neuertheless Fruitful in grain Catell, Spices, Gold Ciuet &c: Divided into these Kingdoms Bernagasso, Gueguer, Tigres, Amara, Bagamedri, Damute, Dambea, Cafates, Narea, Goyame, Concho, Mahaola, Fascola, &c: Most denominated from their Chief Cities, Except the three first which has for Capitals Baria, Meroe & Caxumo good Cities Errorneously said to be the Dominion of the Queen of Sheba. this Emperor has no fixed seat but in a Royal Progress over his Dominions in Tents makes a great City in all places, and is absolute Master of all things. he is absolute Master of all things. he is Christian & Most of his subjects since the time that the Eunuch of Queen Candace was Baptized by Philip. this Nation is more Ingenuous then other Africans. Amara is a City where the Princes have their Education to succeed in Empire...

This description, with its mixture of myth, legend and fact, was evidently meant to fire the imagination of the reader and, particularly in its listing of exotic products, has almost biblical resonance. As for the phrase, 'this Nation is more ingenuous than other Africans', it reveals that the Ethiopian empire commanded more respect than any other African kingdom from Europeans, apparently because it was officially Christian, and of ancient provenance. The word 'ingenuous' is particularly revealing because though according to the *OED* it currently means 'honourably straightforward; open, frank, candid', in the seventeenth century it *also* meant 'of free or honourable birth; free-born' and 'noble in nature, character, or disposition; generous, high-minded'. As for the legendary Queen Candace, she also appears as a medallion portrait, but of an evidently white woman, in some of the geographical cards published by John Lenthall.

In the accompanying illustration, which does not quite match up to the colourful text, a soldier armed with a spear, and guarding a citadel, appears to challenge a half-naked white woman with long, flowing hair. One could take Winstanley at his word, and assume that the couple are typical Ethiopians in national costume but, like most of the couples in these cards, they seem to be more emblematic than ethnographically accurate. In this particular case, the couple may represent European (particularly because the woman is white and 'unarmed') or English diplomatic attempts to become more influential in that inaccessible empire.

It is part of the artistic design of all these cards, in fact, that each one, apart from the four aces, portrays a man and a woman, in various states of implied harmony or opposition. One of the most striking 'har-
Ill. 3: Six of Spades
monious’ pairs is the five of spades, about the ‘Cafrerians’, which describes what now roughly corresponds to South Africa. On the right is a warrior in full gear, but relaxed pose, and on the left a mother holding a baby. There is a similar illustration in the six of spades, which depicts the ‘Congoans’, but here the illustration seems to be in ironic counterpoint to the text, which mentions the following: ‘a great Part is subject to Portugal who Possess the Royal City of St Salvador & haue strong fortresses in the Citys of Massagan & Cambambe and in the Isle of Loando, who furnish from hence slaves for Brasil.’

As in the five of spades, the warrior, who wields a battle-axe, seems to be in a state of battle readiness to protect his wife and child, and it is easy to imagine that their enemies are the slave-hunters, whether this was intended or not. Both cards, in any case, depict Africans as sturdy warriors ready to defend their immediate families rather than alien aggressors, and the poses are not unlike those of heroic military portraits and battle scenes of the time.

Other cards contain solid historical information both about the activities of European traders and colonizers, and about exclusively African political events. The king of spades is a good example of the former, and the three of spades of the latter.

The king of spades, which indicates Tangier, depicts a white soldier fully armed, smoking a long pipe with his left hand, and holding the muzzle of a musket with his right arm. He looks completely nonchalant and self-confident. To his right is an Amazonian black woman, with hair blowing in the wind, and holding a bow-and-arrow, but in a rather tentative manner. She looks remarkably like a Botticelli Venus. In the distance lies Tangier, its harbour teeming with ships.

No more fitting emblem of colonial self-confidence could have been devised. Tangier had been, in fact, acquired by Charles II for Britain as part of the dowry of Catherine of Braganza; hence, perhaps, the playfully erotic associations of the illustration. The text itself, however, reveals the precariousness of the strategic base: ‘... beeing often assaulted by the Moors or Arabians their Neighbours it has but small Jurisdiction up into the Country’ and it was, in fact, eventually abandoned.

The three of spades, on Mozambique, is quite detailed on political events not directly affected by Europeans. It tells us that ‘In Avan is the Kingdoms & Seaports of Braua & Magadozo with the Inland Realms of Adeu & Adel. This last part was formerly of the Empire of the Abissines, but of late Rebelling they doe Mantaine their own gouernments ... to both Empires.’ Read as a sequence, then, the cards provide an historical account in miniature of colonial penetration and indigenous politics in Africa.
Tingitana. Anciently part of Mauritania, now part of the kingdom of Fez, is this city of Tangier, at first called Tingis, built by the canaanites that fled from the sword of Joshua here Hercules overcame the monstrous giant Anteuz & Notfar off is the mountain Abyla where he placed one of his so famous pillars. It's a good town & was long possess by the Portugals but lately delivered to the English who keep & with a strong garr & being often assaulted by the Moors or Arabians there neighbours it has but a small jurisdiction up into the country, but so advantageously seated on the Strait of Gibraltar where is the only communication of the Ocean with the Mediterranean sea that when our king shall have finished the peer that is begun to secure the Harbour, he may lay a tribute on many nations, or keep the greatest trade in the world at his own disposing with a small force at sea.
Many of the cards also make copious references to Biblical events, and ancient history. Thus, the nine of spades tells us that Egypt is ‘famous for the Israelites going dry to it, & the destruction of so many Egyptians’, and the ten of spades, about Tunis, that ‘this City did rise out of the ruins of Carthage formerly Competitor with Rome’. In the queen of spades, which depicts Morocco, the strong sense of Mediterranean Africa and its historical links with the ancient world spills over into the accompanying illustration, for the black man ready to hurl a spear wears a Roman tunic, and the lighter-skinned woman holding a military banner, though only half-dressed, seems to be in Roman military uniform.

In general, the North African cards, which comprise the nine of spades to the queen of spades, compare past glories with present squalors. The knave of spades, for instance, tells us that in ‘Biledulgerid ... antiently called Lybia ... was the Temple of Iupiter Ammon famous for its Oracles and the admirable Fountain of the Sun’ but now the country is made up of ‘Inhabitants which are Barbarous & Inhuman’, ‘great Deserts Sandy & full of scorpions & wild Beasts’, concluding that ‘all is devided in Petite States this Country not being thought a great Monarchs Subduing’. The knavish figures on the card, a black woman holding a triangular parasol, and her protector, an armed white man who looks over his shoulder, while wearing what looks like a fool’s cap, interestingly enough both resemble the ‘fool’ figure in Tarot cards. The ‘fool’ in Tarot games was worth nothing. On the whole, the couples in the cards illustrating North Africa tend to be light-skinned, or one black and one lighter skinned, thus emphasizing the mixture of races in Mediterranean Africa.

The cards dealing with West Africa have some of the most disparaging comments in their texts. They comprise the seven and eight of spades. The seven of spades (‘Guinys’) mentions Moors who ‘are Rude & Barbarous, Thiefs. and most Idolaters’, and concludes with ‘the Rest little worth the Naming’. Yet this moralistic judgment is immediately vitiated by a description of Christians, which now reads very ironically, providing unwitting evidence of how far the slave-trade was not at all considered as a moral issue: ‘Although the Europeans has here Many Christian colonys, Trading with them for Gold, Ivory. Rice Cotton Skins Amber-greice. Parrats. Monkeys. Slaues. & a sort of Pepper. &c.’ The card portrays a naked black woman with very long hair bringing a parasol to a spear-carrying guard. They seem to be emblematic of peace and shelter, for the panorama behind them shows the harbour of St George De La Mina.

The text of the eight of spades concludes even more disparagingly: ‘Idolaters on the Coasts and their natures according to their Com-
Negritarian or the Country of the Negros is a great Region. Bounded on the East & West with Ethiopia; Atlantic Ocean and on the North & S: With Zadora & Guinea; Reaching from the Equinoctial 20 deg. North lat. and between the 3 & 60 deg. long. Wholly Under the Torrid Zone. One little Rain that falls here is wholesome. Nevertheless this Country is fruitful, being watered with the River Negros that overflows the best part. Making some Lakes (the Most Considerable is Guive & Boro where the Country is well Peopled) and discharges in the Ocean with many Mouths called Senega, Gambia, &c where the English & other Europeans has some Small Forts. The most Considerable Kingdoms are Tombut, Borno, &c Gago. Others are Galaia, Agades, Caffena, Gambia, Milli, Senega, &c. All Renowned from their Capital Towns, though little worth and some fertile, but a Village for their Royalty. Here is found some Gold sand & gums. Cuede, skins. &c their Religion is most martial and their might in the Country. Idolatry on the Coasts and their natures according to their Complexion.

III. 5: Eight of Spades
plexion', The accompanying illustration to 'Negritarum, or the Country of the Negros', on the other hand, depicts an African couple in rather heroic light.

As is often the case in these cards, the woman looks Amazonian, but she is in relaxed pose, as is the pose of the black warrior. As he wields a spikey club, in fact, iconographically he resembles an African Hercules and his Venus-like consort. Like many of the other cards, the eight of spades is rather ambivalent about Africans, heroically idealizing them in the illustration, and disparaging them to some extent in the text.

Far from providing accurate pictures of Africans in national costume at the time, the illustrations appear to be idealizations of African men and women in heroic pose, and close to the state of nature. A concept of the 'noble savage' does not lurk far behind in these cards, even though it was not fully formulated till much later by Rousseau. The postures of the African couples, at any rate, are evidently based on classical and baroque notions of gracefulness and heroic pose. Above all, the illustrations are undoubtedly in playful counterpoint to the texts. It appears, then, that the illustrations were probably meant to be more entertaining than enlightening about the inhabitants of Africa. The texts, on the other hand, do attempt to be factually informative and accurate, though they deal with much myth and legend. It is likely that Winstanley’s patron, the Honourable James Herbert, helped with the texts. As Virginia Wayland puts it:

His factual knowledge must have been of considerable help and a great source of security to Winstanley who does not appear to have had a formal education. Since Herbert was an Oxford graduate, it seems unlikely that he would have been as careless about punctuation, spelling, and sentence structure as is found in the text on the cards. It seems probable, therefore, that Winstanley wrote the final text based on the facts provided by Herbert.7

The instructive purpose of these cards, particularly for children, is confirmed by Winstanley in the aforementioned frontispiece:

... I shall not use many Arguments to Perswade how advantageous they May be to all Persons that will bear in mind what is said in few Words of so great a subject. ... And to make them profitable to a youth that shall desire them, I would give the one by one to him as he shall have Learn’t them by heart.

The great value of the Winstanley cards now, however, rests not only in what they reveal about the state of knowledge and presuppositions about Africa, and other continents, at the time, but also in the way a whole mental landscape can be charted from perusing them. It is almost as if they were a kind of Tarot pack, with symbols to be decoded. But
ambivalence about man in the ‘state of nature’, as represented by Africans, is what the Winstanley cards communicate most strongly.

This ambivalence, and its sources in certain rigid aesthetic and cultural presuppositions of a neo-classic cast similar to those reflected in the Winstanley cards, was vividly conveyed in Aphra Behn’s short novel, Oroonoko (1688). Here is her description of the eponymous African prince and ‘noble savage’:

But though I had heard so much of him, I was as greatly surprized when I saw him, as if I had heard nothing of him; so beyond all report I found him. He came into the room and addressed himself to me, and some other women, with the best grace in the world. He was pretty tall, but of a shape the most exact that can be fancy’d: The most famous statuary cou’d not form the figure of a man more admirably turn’d from head to foot. His face was not that brown rusty black which most of that nation are, but of perfect ebon, or polished jet. His eyes were the most awful that cou’d be seen, and very piercing; the white of ‘em being like snow, as were his teeth. His nose was rising and Roman, instead of African and flat. His mouth the finest shape that could be seen; far from those great turn’d lips, which are so natural to the rest of the negroes. The whole proportion and air of his face was so nobly and exactly form’d, that bating his colour, there could be nothing in nature more beautiful, agreeable and handsome. There was no one grace wanting, that bears the standard of true beauty."

Many of the Africans depicted in the Winstanley cards, in fact, resemble Behn’s portrait of the African prince, and it is not improbable that the writer may have known about these cards.

OTHER GEOGRAPHICAL PLAYING-CARDS

By contrast, the geographical packs published by H. Brome and John Lenthall are more drily factual in the way they convey information about countries and regions. One version (pub. 1661) is described as follows in the Schreiber Catalogue of the British Museum: ‘Each suit is devoted to one continent, the ace giving a general map and the rest the different countries which compose it. Four extra cards contain lists of these countries.’ One of the most interesting of these cards, the Roman numeral ‘X’, illustrates no less than ten island groupings, including Madagascar, and the ‘Isles of Cape Verd’. The court-cards, as in all the geographical cards based on the Duval pack, have medallion portraits, Charles II appearing on the map of Great Britain. Invariably, the queen and king cards tended to be Queen Candace of Nubia, and Zaga Chris of Ethiopia, but these figures are more legendary than historical, and look more European than African. The knave of spades, as in this par-
ticular pack, however, tended to be 'A Negro', and in this pack it illus-
trates 'West Africa'. Blacks, in other words, were never depicted as
rulers of any sort, and the implications of this are obvious. That said,
in a pack published in 1720, the knave of spades portrays a rather fine,
and expressive African face.

Geographical knowledge advanced sufficiently for newly-designed sets
of geographical cards to be produced in the later part of the eighteenth
century. Compared to the Lenthall and Winstanley packs, though, they
tend to be less interesting in design. One of these (pub. circa 1790)
was called the 'Compendium of Geography'. In his book on Old and
Curious Playing Cards, H.T. Morley describes the pack as follows:

This is a pack of 52 cards, with the usual suits, Hearts, Diamonds, Spades and
Clubs, shown at the top left-hand corner in a space about $3\frac{1}{4}$ in. square, the rest
of the card being closely printed with particulars of various countries pertaining
to the four great continents. Hearts are for Europe, Clubs for Africa, Spades for
Asia and Diamonds for America.9

The 'Preface', which was published as an extra card, just as in the case
of some Lenthall packs, also echoes Lenthall in emphasizing the pleasantly
educational function of the cards:

While Guthrie's and other grammars instruct those only who have the oppor-
tunity to study; this compendium is calculated to give those who have not much
time to read, (and particularly young persons at school) a general acquaintance
with the bigness, boundaries, population, capitals, lat. and lon. distance from
London, islands, rivers, lakes, mountains, climates, productions, agriculture,
manufactures, trades, government, religion, customs, learning, and curiosities of
every kingdom or state in the world, in an easy, sausory manner...10

The puzzling word 'sausory' may be a corruption of 'saucery' or, ac-
cording to the OED, 'that part of the household where sauces are made'.
The author of the 'Preface' seems to have meant that the cards provide
a kind of 'sauce' to enliven dry geographical facts. In keeping with the
spirit of the Enlightenment, the cards do indeed tabulate a large num-er of empirical facts. As a result, they are more prosaic than any
earlier geographical pack, particularly the Winstanley cards. They are
certainly 'closely printed', like a miniature encyclopedia, and with no
pictorial relief to relax the eye, so it is open to doubt whether school-
boys really enjoyed these. The author, however, was determined to be
scientifically accurate, declaring in a note to the 'Preface': 'Should the
scientific discover any inaccuracies, their candour will ascribe them to
some pardonable cause; & that of the public will graciously accept the
labours of the author, as an evidence of his good-will towards man-
kind.'10 The cards, then, do treat Africa and Africans very objectively
though occasionally a tone of cultural superiority creeps in. The four of spades, for instance, tells us about Egypt: ‘Relig. Mahom. and tho’ it was once the seat of arts and sciences, there scarce remains a vestige of it among the present inhabitants’. Even more disparagingly, the three of clubs, on Morocco, informs us: ‘Its government can scarcely be said to exist.’

In the nineteenth century geographical cards were more elaborately designed, and often aimed at a more exclusive clientele than during the Restoration and eighteenth century. This is the impression one gets, at any rate, when reading the ‘Prefatory Remarks’ in the booklet accompanying geographical playing-cards published by Charles Hodges in 1827:

In presenting the new Geographical Cards to the notice of the fashionable World, the publisher feels confident that he is supplying what has long been considered a desideratum by all persons of taste. Nothing can possibly be more grotesque and undignified, than the appearance of the kings and queens who have hitherto ruled with unrivalled sway in the realms of fashionable amusement, under the honourable denomination of Court Cards; so much so that, on beholding them, one cannot help wondering how they ever gained admission at any of the courts in Christendom. If the cards, here placed before the Public, possessed no other recommendation than that of supplanting these grim usurpers of regal honours, by tasteful and accurate representations of royalty’s reality, they would have a very strong claim on the encouragement of the Fashionable World; but, presenting as they do, the additional advantage of instruction to the younger members of families, by means of the accuracy and beauty of the geographical engravings, (which are executed in the first style by an eminent artist) it is hoped that their utility cannot fail to be appreciated. The principal of the work is to make pleasure the handmaid of instruction, in order that the mind may be at the same time diverted and improved. The study of Geography possesses peculiar charms for the youthful mind, even in the earliest stages of its development; and, as the power of thought expands, our thirst for knowledge is in no way more delightfully gratified, than by an indulgence in this pleasing and instructive pursuit.

Hodges evidently echoes his predecessors in arguing for the usefulness of geographical cards, but he is more methodical in his argument, taking nothing as ‘self-evident’. Also, he shows much more impatience with the standard design of playing-cards than Lenthall and Winstanley did, even obliquely suggesting that his cards could provide royalist propaganda to reassure the ‘fashionable’ world - as if standard court-cards were somehow too democratic! Above all, the consumer of these cards was definitely invited to regard them as high quality artistic products; and they were, indeed, expensive and literally gilt-edged. Hodges goes on to recommend his cards, again as his predecessors had done, for the educational benefit of children, arguing vehemently against
those who emulated the Puritans of the Restoration by condemning playing-cards as fit only for idlers. This time, however, the kill-joys seem to have been the Utilitarians:

Cards, regarded as an amusement for the young, are frequently objected to by persons whose opinions are entitled to respect: they look upon them as forming too trivial an amusement, and as conducive to no end of real utility. It is presumed, that such objections will be effectually removed by the present publication, as it will insensibly render amusement the medium of information.

Learning, indeed, must have been helped by the colour-tinted engravings of maps in these cards, which are very beautiful.

Africa is illustrated in the ace of clubs, with a large club in its centre shaped like a shamrock and green, rather than the customary black, in colour. As for information about the countries depicted, Hodges included it in the booklet. The emphasis is very much on the political system of the various African countries, and fairly objective in tone, though more condescending compared to earlier geographical cards. The description for the five of clubs (Upper Guinea) provides one of the best examples:

The Ashantee kingdom, situated to the west of Dahomey and the north of the Gold Coast, was not known to the Europeans before the beginning of the last century. The men are strong and healthy, and both sexes particularly clean in their persons. The gov’t, though monarchical in form, is, in effect, aristocratic, the king being controlled by the chieftains and the assembly of captains. Benin is a country to the east of Dahomey, the climate of which is extremely noxious. The sovereign is an absolute despot. His majesty is said to have six hundred wives. Paganism is the religion of Benin.

The juxtaposition of the last two sentences may not have been coincidental. It reflects a more detached attitude to ‘Paganism’, despite the greater flurry of missionary activity in the nineteenth century, than that to be found in the Winstanley cards.

Changing perceptions of Africans by Europeans are especially evident in the court-cards for Africa. These continue the tradition of portraying legendary rather than contemporary rulers. The king of clubs is supposed to be Saladin, though he resembles a pharaoh rather more; the queen of clubs, Zulema of Algiers, a reclining odalisque shaking the claws of a bowing parrot in dazzling colour-scheme; the knave, Moroab of Morocco smoking a very long hashish pipe. In the court-cards, at least, if not in the accompanying booklet, the ‘New Geographical Cards’ pander to Romantic fantasies about Africans, and continue the tradition
of excluding blacks not only as rulers, but also as knaves, from the court-cards.

An earlier pack of thirty-two cards, published by John Wallis in 1803, and entitled 'A Geographical Description of the World embellished with the Dresses of the various Nations' records how images of Africans had become stereotyped. One card, on 'Hottentots', for instance, has an engraved, and colour-tinted, medallion portrait of a slave in chains, kneeling and praying with a terrified expression as he looks up at the sky. Though it is quite possible that Wallis was against the slave-trade, the medallion portrait offends against human dignity. The accompanying inscription certainly seems to be very negative about some Africans:

The Country of the Hottentots is a large region in the southern extremity of Africa. The natives are extremely fond of hunting, in which exercise they shew great dexterity. They rear great numbers of sheep and oxen, but they neither sow nor plant, nor have they the least notion of agriculture. They besmear their bodies all over with fat mixed with soot, after which they perfume themselves with a powder of herbs, which they scatter over their heads and bodies, rubbing it all over them when they besmear themselves.

Such a description appears to be highly reductionist, and undoubtedly worlds away from the spirit of humanistic enquiry displayed in the Winstanley cards. It may be objected that, because it neither has suits, nor substitutes for them, this set cannot be classified as 'playing-cards', however educational, but it does testify to the success of geographical playing-cards, and therefore its kinship with them, since Wallis found it worthwhile to publish his purely educational version of geographical packs.

By the end of the nineteenth century Africa was portrayed as a kind of imperial playground, most notably in a pack of 'Geographical Whist' (pub. circa 1880). It was announced as follows in a leaflet accompanying the pack quoting from the 'Bournemouth Visitor's Directory': 'Amongst the many novelties which have been introduced to the public this season is a new game called "Geographical Whist", which has been invented and patented by Mrs M.E. Farwell, of Bournemouth and Poole.' The leaflet then goes on to describe the variations in design, and justification for making playing-cards educational tools, all echoes of predecessors like Lenthall, Winstanley and Hodges:

Many persons, we know, object to the ordinary playing cards, even for use in games of the most simple and innocent character - games which they do not object to play with cards of a different design. In the new game, however, the four suits of hearts, clubs, diamonds and spades, have no existence, pictorial designs representing the four continents taking their places, and in the place of Ace, King, Queen, and Knave, appearing various representatives.
The representatives for Africa turn out to be Dr Moffat, famed Scottish missionary, for the ‘ace’ card, his son-in-law, David Livingstone, for the ‘king’, and H.M. Stanley for the ‘knave’. These worthy white paternalists evidently replace the legendary royal personages in earlier court-cards representing Africa, even the ‘knave’ overthrowing dignified portraits of ‘a Negro’ for the journalist who found David Livingstone in ‘darkest Africa’, H.M. Stanley.

As for the minor cards, they display ‘small pictorial illustrations of various towns’; ‘Nubia’, for instance, shows a panorama of steamship and dhow passing before Government House, virtually a fortress guarding Khartoum. These cards reflect how, for many Victorians at least, the age of exploration and enquiry was superseded by one of domination and imperial arrogance so far as Africa was concerned. The leaflet concludes confidently: ‘Each suit has a different colour, Africa as “the dark continent” being of course printed in black.’ Of course.

POLITICAL PLAYING-CARDS

Africans do not appear at all in the fiercely partisan political cards of the Restoration, and only very little in those of the eighteenth century. This is so even in the packs generated by the greatest financial scandal of the era - one heavily linked with the ‘Assiento’, or slave-trade in the Spanish Main - the bankruptcy of the South Sea Company. The two packs were ‘The South Sea Bubble’ and ‘All the Bubbles: The Bubble Companies’, both published in 1720. Both packs satirized the scramble for shares in dubious smaller enterprises financed by the South Sea Company. This is how the ‘Weekly Packet’ of 10 Dec., 1720 advertised the first pack:

A New Pack of Stock-Jobbery Cards containing 52 Copper Cuts representing the Tricks of the Stock-Jobbers, Humours of Exchange Alley, and the Fate of Stock-Jobbing. With a Satyrical Epigram upon each Card, by the Author of the South-Sea Ballard and Bubble Cards. Spotted with their proper Colours, so that they may be play’s with as well as Common Cards.

The advertisement also contained the following epigram:

In future Times ‘twill hardly be believ’d
So wise an Age should be so deceiv’d,
By empty Bubbles; but too late we find,
That Avarice and Price have made us blind.”

All sorts of follies were certainly satirized but, ironically, not the slave-trade itself.
Two of the cards, however, reveal that black servants were hapless witnesses of how the Bubble corrupted personal relationships between their masters and mistresses. In the knave of hearts, one servant brings a billet-doux from his mistress to a beau in his study: ‘Sr. Here is a Letter from Madam.’ The beau replies: ‘Carry it back again. Stock falls, tell her I’m not well.’ The accompanying verse explains:

A South Sea Lady having much improv’d,
Her Fortune proudly Slighted him she Lov’d,
But South Sea falling, sunk her Fortune low.
She would have had him then, but he cry’d no.

In the ace of spades, we find a beau ready to leave the country, and telling his servant from his row-boat: ‘Jack carry this letter to my whore.’ The servant, not surprisingly, looks somewhat agitated. That, though, is the only hint that the beau owes some responsibilities to him. It also says much about attitudes to blacks at the time that the beau can call his former lover a ‘whore’ to his black servant’s face.

‘All the Bubbles: The Bubble Companies’ was advertised as follows in the Post Boy of 20 Oct. 1720:

This day is Publish’d A New Pack of Playing Cards containing fifty two Copper-Cuts wherein are represented as many several Bubbles, with a satyrical Epigram upon each card, applicable thereunto; The Lines by the Author of South-Sea Ballard and Tippling Philosophers: The Cards made of Superfine Paper and engrav’d by an able Artist; spotted with the proper Colours so that they maybe play’d with as well as Common Cards.12

As this pack concentrates on the fraudulent companies rather than the greed of the share-holders themselves, one would expect some comment on the slave-trade, but only the queen of hearts has anything to say about it. The card illustrates ‘Cureing Tobacco for Snuff’. It depicts two slaves sifting the weed for snuff, with one of them poignantly rubbing his irritated eyes, and an overseer apparently about to sneeze.

The caption reads as follows:

Here Slaves for Snuff, are sifting Indian Weed,
Whilst their O’erseer, does the Riddle feed,
The Dust arising, gives the Eyes much trouble,
To shew their Blindness that Espouses the Bubble.

How far this card was intended to criticize the moral blindness of those who invested in companies based on the slave-trade, or merely the inadvisability of investing in snuff as a short-lived fad or even a noxious self-indulgence is difficult to determine but the two slaves appear to be
A South Sea Lady having much improv'd,
Her Fortune proudly slighted him she lov'd,
But South Sea falling, sunk her Fortune low.
She would have had him then, but he cry'd no.

Facsimile

III. 7: Knave of Hearts
A certain Gold-Smith, when the Stocks run high,
set up his Coach his Pride to gratify;
But South-Sea falling, left his Coach at 'Change,
And Shipping took, the distant World to Range.

Facsimile

Pray Sir, have you seen my Master?
Jack carry this Letter to my Whore.

III. 8: Ace of Spades
Curving Tobacco for Snuff

- They're slaves for Snuff, or Selling Indian Weed.
- Whilst their Persecutor does the Riddle Seed.
- The Dust arising, gives their Eyes much trouble.
- So does their Blindness that Espouse the Bubble.

III. 9: Queen of Hearts
sympathetically portrayed. Wittingly or unwittingly, nevertheless, the queen of hearts in this pack makes the most direct comment on the actual economic source of the South Sea Bubble.

**TRANSFORMATION CARDS**

In the nineteenth century Africans featured prominently in ‘Transformation’ cards, but in a debased manner largely absent from Restoration and eighteenth-century cards. ‘Transformation’ cards, according to Sylvia Mann, ‘derived from the idea of “transforming” an ordinary pip card into a wider picture, it being one of the rules that the pips must form part of the overall design and also remain in their original position on the card’. Unlike educational cards, ‘transformation’ packs were essentially rather frivolous and, according to the same authority, ‘It is quite probable that this artistic exercise began in a humble way as a late 18th century parlour game, possibly English in origin, in which competitors vied with each other to produce the most interesting or artistic design’. They were very popular throughout Europe, especially in the early years of the nineteenth century. According to an American authority, however, ‘The English, who are supposed to lack a proper sense of humour, have far the cleverest of these to be found in any country’. They resemble, in fact, visual equivalents of the ‘ethnic’ joke, from which a racialist element never lurks very far.

One of the worst examples is the five of clubs in a pack designed and published in 1811 by I.L.S. Cowell. It portrays ‘The Hottentot Venus/Shoving her agility’. The card depicts two leering military figures behind her, and two in front of her (they wear four of the clubs as hats) as she performs on stage. Her performance consists of playing a banjo, which is the fifth club, while wiggling a particularly large part of her anatomy. Even the institution of slavery in the American South was regarded as sufficiently normal to provide a context for crude jokes - and this at the height of the anti-slavery movement in Britain. This is evident in the similar, and no doubt rival, pack published by S. & J. Fuller, also in 1811. It presents the following exchange between slave and overseer:

‘Sambo, you can not have counted all those stones in ten minutes.’

‘Yes Masse me have dere ten hundred fifty thousand million. Massa if you no believe count em. Massa count em yourself.’

Less virulent, but also inspired by slavery, were some of the ‘transformation’ cards designed by the novelist William Makepeace Thackeray
The Hottentot Venus showing her agility.

Ill. 10: Five of Clubs
for his own amusement, and posthumously published in *The Orphan of Pimlico* (1876). Thackeray had met blacks on his visits to America, but only as slaves. He concluded a revealing letter from New York, and dated 5 Sept. 1848, for instance, this way: ‘But here the first gong sounds for dinner, and the black slave who waits on one comes up and says, “Massa! hab only five minutes for dinnah! Make haste. Get no pumpkin-pie else.” So unwillingly I am obliged to break off my note...’

His cards, however, employ American blacks derived not from life but from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* ‘humorously’ to re-design traditional suits. Thus, in the five of spades, ‘Lubbly Lucy Neal’ earnestly plays the piano for two white men. Her puffy face with a wide mouth makes up the central spade; her hands, and hats worn by the whites, the outer ones. The caption for the three of hearts, which is horizontal, like a stage set in design, informs us that ‘Little Eva is crying in the corner’. An overseer wielding a whip in the same card bullies Uncle Tom mercilessly. His face forms a heart with a cigar sticking out from its pointed edge, and the faces of Little Eva and Uncle Tom are also hearts. Like all of Thackeray’s card designs, the three of hearts seems more of a *jeu d’esprit* than a comment against slavery. In that vein, Thackeray excelled himself in ‘Dandy Jim of Souf Caroline’, which graces the two of spades.

On the eve of the American Civil War, and black emancipation, ‘Dandy Jim’ crystallized the metamorphosis of the African in European eyes from dignified ‘noble savage’ to feckless, rootless alien, even if an amusing one.

**CONCLUDING TRUMP**

Geographical playing-cards and the ‘Transformation’ packs of the nineteenth century very much reflect changing attitudes towards Africa and Africans in Britain from the Restoration to the Victorian period. There was virtually a sea-change from a sense of wonder to one of cultural superiority. The Winstanley packs portrayed Africans as an early version of the ‘noble savage’ myth. They constitute a unique blend of pictorial artistry and engraved ‘factual’ information which had, unlike the Lenthall packs, no real successors or imitators. Moreover, they appear to be designed to be ‘read’ in sequence. Africa in these cards emerges as timeless, exotic and dotted with precarious European outposts. They portray the African as man in the ‘state of Nature’, but with some ambivalence, as sometimes the African couples look less like ‘noble savages’ than Hobbesian defenders of their own territory. Less pictorial,
Dandy Jim from Souf Caroline

III. 11: Two of Spades
and more purely cartographical, Lenthall cards, and their successors and
imitators, retained the 'noble savage' image in the knave of spades.

While both types of geographical packs were designed to arouse curi-
osity and a desire to learn, 'Transformation' cards had no instructive or
pedagogical purpose, and probably reinforced racial prejudice. Africans
in these cards are represented as grotesque caricatures of 'the Negro's'
physical traits and supposed lack of moral stature. It could be argued
that Europeans were caricatured just as much, or that the cards were
basically frivolous, and therefore not to be taken too seriously, but their
implicit acceptance of slavery, evident even in Thackeray's designs, re-
veals their basic racialism.

The Wallis pack of 1803 could be considered as a collateral descend-
ant of the Winstanley cards in its creative designs and instructive
purpose, which was reinforced by the elimination of suits. Though less
racialist than the 'Transformation' packs, however, it nevertheless por-
trays Africans as either cringing slaves or, at best, flamboyant, lion-
hunting barbarians.

In the Lenthall pack and its successors and imitators it was generally
the face-cards which were most significant in the 'African' suits. Con-
sequently only the knave, usually of spades, portrayed 'A Negro' or
genuine African. The other suits portrayed legendary rulers. This tradi-
tion continued with the face-suits of nineteenth-century geographical
packs, either in terms of colourful Romantic fantasy, as in the Hodges
pack of 1827, or as 'imperial' packs. Significantly, the latter eliminated
Africans altogether, and replaced them by European colonial figures, as
in 'Mrs Farwell's Geographical Whist'.

The change in European attitudes to Africans is perhaps most starkly
illuminated by a comparison of the frontispiece that was issued with
the Winstanley cards, and the wrapper which adorned 'Mrs Farwell's
Geographical Whist'. The frontispiece depicts four royal figures drawing
attention to Winstanley's introduction to the cards, and holding a cur-
tain suspended from a geographical globe. It is a grandiose, and suit-
ably baroque design in which the African stands out. He is the lower
right-hand figure holding a parasol but, unlike the others, he looks
away and does not wear a crown. Consequently, of the four, he looks
least royal. He also differs from the others in wearing what appears to
be a Roman tunic rather than Stuart attire. Nevertheless, though he
does not wear a crown, or wield a sceptre as the allegorical woman
representing Europe does, his costume lends him a kind of classical
dignity. By contrast, 'Mrs Farwell' banishes the only genuine African in
her pack to the wrapper. The African points humbly to his own conti-
nent, while an American Indian and Turk smoking a pipe look on. A
helmeted Britannia holding a trident presides benignly over the scene.
This represents a radical demotion of the image of Africans in European eyes compared to the allegorical but dignified black figure in Winstanley's frontispiece.

NOTES

2. Sylvia Mann, *Collecting Playing Cards* (New York, 1966), p. 120.
4. Ibid., pp. 173-74.
6. Wayland, op. cit., p. 3.
7. Ibid., p. 10.
10. Ibid., p. 134.
15. William Makepeace Thackeray, *The Orphan of Pimlico* (London, 1876), no pagination. Some of Thackeray's card designs are also illustrated on p. 218 of the Hargrave volume noted above.

NB: This article is based on the playing-card collections of the British Museum Department of Prints and Drawings, and of the Guildhall Library, London. Grateful acknowledgement is hereby made to the staff of both institutions, as well as of the Senate House Library, University of London, who have been truly unstinting in their assistance. I am also indebted to David Dabydeen for his Socratic interventions.
From Metastasis to Metamorphosis: The House of Self in the Novels of Randolph Stow

Architectural tropes are commonplace in the tradition of psychological enquiry. Freud himself considers the house an apt image for the human psyche, when he refers to the process of repression and sublimation as an elaborate play of trap doors; in the main, his theory of psychoanalysis is polarized along a vertical axis which stretches from cellar to attic. Not dissimilarly, Jung develops an architectural metaphor when broaching the subject of the collective unconscious:

We have to describe and to explain a building the upper storey of which was erected in the nineteenth century: the ground-floor dates from the sixteenth century, and a careful examination of the masonry discloses the fact that it was reconstructed from a dwelling-tower of the eleventh century. In the cellar we discover Roman foundation walls, and under the cellar a filled-in cave, in the floor of which stone tools are found and remnants of glacial fauna in the layers below. That would be a sort of picture of our mental structure.¹

This connection between house and self has also been approached from the angle of phenomenology in G. Bachelard’s The Poetics of Space, and some of M. Foucault’s ideas would be pertinent to a post-structuralist study of the architectural metaphors produced in discourse, and (more particularly) in literature.² Most characteristically, though, in the context of post-colonialism the house metaphor receives a specific treatment which differs from any previous use of it by Europeans. Indeed, the architecture of self depends on concrete cultural determinations; and it is clear that the vertical/palimpsestic construct outlined by Freud/Jung resists translation from one culture into the next. In other words, it cries out for deconstruction. It may well be worth, for example, comparing Freud’s vertical structure with a quip made by Janet Frame, which presupposes an altogether different structuring of the mind: ‘The average New Zealander possesses no staircase leading to the [emotional] upper floor; indeed no upper floor...’³ As to Jung’s archaeology of the soul, it finds a subversive counterpart, in the Australian corpus, in the one-
storied weatherboard mansion charted by David Malouf in *Harland's Half Acre* and *12 Edmondstone Street*. Raised on stilts above ground level, Malouf’s house is apparently cut off from ‘Jungian’ sediments of history. It does not follow, however, that history is a prerogative of the European consciousness. On the contrary, the area ‘under-the-house’, a dimension of darkness wedged between the sloping ground and the wooden floorboards, is evocative of an ‘alter/native’ history more uniquely embroiled in the Australian soil: ‘Cinders have been spread over the topsoil, but if you scratch a little you find earth. It is black, rather. And if you scratch further you come upon debris, bits of broken china, bent forks, old tin pannikins, encrusted nails and pins, which suggests that habitation here might go back centuries.’

Although arguably akin in spirit, the archaeological metaphors developed by Jung and Malouf differ significantly in concrete terms. Thus, in the post-colonial context, the house/self nexus crystallizes into a quite different configuration from the one projected in the shadow of European history. In other words, emancipation from European culture is encoded in architecture, particularly in the gesture it makes towards the vernacular. In Australia, Russell McDougall points out that this architectural adaptation to environment assumes the form of a quite unique quality of sprawl, which opposes the vertical. Sprawl typifies not only the way in which the buildings agglomerate in boundless suburbs, but also their inner structure which extends horizontally into the verandah, a ubiquitous feature in Australian architecture. The verandah, as unclosed structure leading into the world ‘out there’, makes for some transition between an imported structure of European design and the intractable bush beyond. This is why McDougall calls it a ‘blurred boundary for civilization in the wilderness’, the ‘symbolic furthest reach of Empire’, which focuses the encounter between Self and Other. In this respect, it is significant that David Malouf thinks of the verandah as evocative of the native (nomadic) way of life: ‘As for verandahs. Well, their evocation of the raised tent flap gives the game away completely. They are a formal confession that you are just one step up from the nomads’ (p. 11). The suggestion is clear: the constitutive openness of the verandah forces the dweller towards ‘othering’ or indigenization. This dialectic relationship between house and inhabitant is further circumstanced in *12 Edmondstone Street*, where the openness of the house ‘makes the timberhouse-dweller, among the domesticated, a distinct sub-species somewhere between bushie and brick-and-mortar man’ (p. 11).

This interplay between settler and environment (between Self and Other) hits a note of variation from the established tune of colonial history, where the conqueror’s self-image tends to be maintained, not modulated. In this respect, the work of David Malouf finds a resonance
in the strain towards revision discernible in the writings of Randolph
Stow, an author also inclined to debate about the pros and cons of in-
digenization. In *To the Islands*, for example, Heriot's peregrinations in
the bush can be interpreted as a ritual voyage of initiation into the
native way of life, with Justin (an Aborigine) officiating as high priest
throughout. Towards the close of his journey, as he settles to die in a
funerary site dedicated to a local God, Heriot has recanted his Christian
faith (symbolic, in all of Stow's work, of imperial expansiveness) and
has achieved some insight into the sacred mythology of the natives. The
tension between European and native imageries is further explored in
*Tourmaline*, a novel in which Stow contrasts the townspeople's sustained
hankering for water with Dave Speed's readier acceptance of drought,
more in keeping with the parched actualities of the land. Speed's capa-
city to survive on a minimum supply of water makes him, like Alistair
Cawdor (the protagonist in *Visitants*), 'a black man true'. It is none-
theless typical of Stow's tentativeness that Cawdor, like Heriot, should
reach this ultimate stage in his development at the moment of death
only. Indigenization, whose value as an antidote to imperialist patterns
of behaviour is being probed insistently, generates its own problems.
Indeed, Cawdor's fearless exploration of alien cosmogonies asks for such
self-abnegation, such surrender to strange ontologies, that it transforms
the Other into a potential invader, a housebreaking 'visitant'. It is in
relation to this difficulty that I intend to examine the function of the
house image in Stow's novels. As I said earlier, the house is a symbolic
border between antagonistic orders of existence, suitable for staging the
encounter between Europe and its Others. But there is more. The house
metaphor proves an auspicious avenue of approach also in that it per-
vades all Stow's novels, including the last two he published, *The Girl
Green as Elderflower* and *The Suburbs of Hell*. These two books provide
Stow's corpus with an unexpected coda, as they are set in England and
appear to evade the political dimension investing the earlier work. This
disconcerting shift in perspective seems to induce a *mise-en-crise* of a
method of critical enquiry devised to highlight the political stimulus in
literature to the exclusion of all other aspects. Whether or not it can be
called a retreat from the political sphere, the extent of Stow's trajectory
is nowhere clearer than in his treatment of the house metaphor, which
overarches his work from first to last.

Undeniably, the political impulse informs much of Stow's early work.
In *A Haunted Land*, his first novel, the story of Andrew Maguire's sus-
tained determination to found a dynasty to bear his name can be read
allegorically as a survey of the vagaries of imperial power in a distant
land. How devastating such power can be, is suggested in the prologue
when the character called Jessie returns to Malin homestead, some fifty
years after the events recounted later, to find a scene of desolation and waste: ‘They have left nothing here for me.’ The sterility of the imperial enterprise is further testified, in The Bystander, by Patrick Leigh-ton’s failure to engender an heir to take over Maguire’s estate. This failure to subsist accounts for the plethora of derelict homesteads with which Stow’s universe is fraught. Rob Coram, the protagonist in The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea, envisions his own native country as a place haunted by the bones of the explorers, by ‘sheep-skulls in the dead grass’, by ‘ruined houses and abandoned land-mines’ (p. 234). Ruin proves as much a condition of the land as heat or dust. This state of affairs is best epitomized by the numerous ghost-towns scattered through Stow’s West-Australian landscapes. For example, when he strikes a friendship with a youth called Mike Ashcroft, Rob learns that he ‘had come to Geraldton because his town had died ... in the night’ (p. 196). The evocation of the ghost-town again calls to mind the work of David Malouf, particularly a passage in Johnno which may usefully be mentioned here:

I was reminded sometimes of ghost-towns in the north that had once had a population of twenty thousand souls and were now completely deserted - the houses one morning simply lifted down from their stumps, loaded onto the back of a lorry, and carted away to create another town a hundred miles off. In my childhood I had often seen houses being carried through the streets, creaking and swaying on the back of a truck.

Interestingly, the complete absence of foundations to these houses makes them akin to the shacks in Tourmaline, where the townspeople inhabit ‘shanties rented from the wind’. The epigraph of the book, ‘O gens de peu de poids dans la mémoire de ces lieux’, reinforces the sense of a loose attachment to a place best untroubled by human presence, little amenable to architecture. In terms of Jung’s archaeological structure, the suggestion is that Tourmaline’s people are deprived spiritually of the nourishing potentialities of a rich fertile past. In this sense, the Law presents his fellow citizens as people without a history, at least not a history rooted in the place. Hence the fractured topography of their minds: they dedicate themselves to cultivating a myth of abundance totally at odds with the determinations of local climate. Also, Tourmaline’s allegiance to the wind (rather than the earth) testifies to the utter transiency of the town’s condition. Though it has not, accurately speaking, ‘died in the night’ (p. 55) like the neighbour township of Lacey’s Find (swallowed in a sweep of sand-dunes), Tourmaline ‘lies in a coma’ (p. 8) of frustrated expectancy, in a condition of reprieve bound to last until the close of the book, when a dust-storm obliterates it from the map: ‘There was no town, no hill, no landscape. There was nothing’
There is undisguised irony, of course, in the fact that the agency of Tourmaline's destruction assumes the shape of the long-expected flood: 'It was like swimming under water, in a flooding river. Dust sifted into my lungs; I was drowning' (p. 173). In this respect, the town shares the fate of Lacey's Find, whose 'two-storied hotel' disappeared under a 'gentle tidal encroachment' of dunes (p. 33, my emphasis). The point is clearly that European imageries, symbolic of alien convolutions of thought, prove to be destructive in the last analysis. However, it is important to notice that Stow's sustained concern with apocalypse, with the wastelands of the imperial imagination, conveys a sense not only of the irrelevance of derivative images, but also of the necessity for an epistemological revolution by virtue of which the ruins can become a viable structure. This re-membering of the episteme, I would like to argue, is an endeavour which engages Stow's attention again and again. A further look at the image of the house/ruin will clarify this point.

Wilson Harris alerts us that there exists 'a curious rapport between ruin and origin as latent to arts of genesis'.¹⁶ In To the Islands, Stow plunges the reader into the heart of this ambivalence from the outset, as Heriot is presented, in metaphoric terms, as a broken rock: 'He saw himself as a great red cliff, rising from the rocks of his own ruins.'¹⁷ Heriot's essential duality is expressed in a nutshell in this evocation of a character at once whole and fragmented, rooted in debris but rising with rock-like solidity. This initial duality continues in the novel, as attested by the abiding ambiguity attached to the ruin metaphor and to the related concepts of construction and destruction. As the leader of a Christian mission in the North-West of Australia, Heriot is involved in the construction of a new building destined to house a school. That the mission should thus be in full architectural expansion has an ironic significance, for Christianity is presented throughout Stow's work as an inseparable part of the imperial enterprise, and Heriot's long-standing devotion to serving the system has always translated itself into unashamedly authoritarian proselytizing. He himself asserts: 'I'm the only one of the builders left' (p. 42), to gloss over the fact that he was a Bible-basher quite ready to use the whip when necessary. Such construction, however, based as it is on coercion, proves to be 'ruinous' (p. 33). The destructiveness endemic in the monuments of Empire makes it urgent to 'forestall ruin by embracing ruin' (p. 43). Undoubtedly, Heriot's decision to 'pull down the world' (p. 43) and to take flight into the bush can be considered in these terms, as a necessary rejection of hegemonic values prior to releasing oneself into new modes of being. In this respect, it is significant that Heriot's 'murder' of Rex, the crucial incident which immediately induces his voyage of expiation, takes place
under the walls of the building in construction. Indeed the lethal stone aimed at Rex with mischievous intent is referred to, with biblical reverberations, as ‘the first stone’ (p. 44); and it was probably taken from ‘the skeleton of the half-erected building’ (p. 43, my emphasis), in telling indication that the time had come to let go of fossil values. In this sense, the ‘first stone’ emerges as an important structural turning-point: it triggers off the dismantling of the edifice of Empire and the reconstruction of self in which Heriot engages from this point onwards. It is appropriate also that, towards the end of his journey, Heriot comes across a ghost-town with ‘a familiarity about the scene that troubled him’ (p. 105): the abandoned mission of Gurandja, a prey to dust in the desert, is a kind of mirror-image of the mission-station he has just deserted, but one in ruins, which provides a measure of the progress he has made towards relinquishing ingrained ‘ruinous’ attitudes.

The duality inherent in this concept of ‘ruins’ becomes apparent. On the one hand, the ruins/runes are a dead inscription of culture in the wilderness, which signifies the inaccuracy, and in the last analysis the destructiveness, of fossilized unselfquestioning systems of thought. On the other hand, however, by embracing ruin to forestall ruin one resuscitates the possibility of exploding monolithic conceptions. The ruin then becomes the emblem of the self-violence that is necessary to go beyond complacent, self-asserting epistemologies. One can guess, in the light of this duality, why Stow should have felt attracted to Taoism in Tourmaline, his next novel: the philosophy of the Tao provided him with a ready-made system of thought where opposites can coexist without clash.18 It is worth signalling, incidentally, that Heriot’s ‘first stone’ finds a counterpart, in this novel, in the Taoist ideal of ‘being a rock to be shaped by winds and tides’ (p. 148). Again, the image of the rock/stone is subjected to a duplicitous process of transformation, perceived at once as formative (‘shaped’) and erosive (the ‘winds and tides’). This ambivalence lasts until the last page of the book, which (for all its catastrophic content) ends on a note of possibility. When the red curtain of dust lifts on the storm-blasted town, it is to reveal a major redispersion of categories since the Law’s prison-tower (the epitome of verticality, hence of centrality to the European episteme) has shifted towards the edge or boundary:

There was no town, no landscape. What could this be if not the end of the world?
Then the wind dropped for half a minute. And I saw my tower, the boundary of Tourmaline, waiting. (p. 174)

Regeneration, then, is the other side to the coin of catastrophe; ruin adumbrates new construction. This duality arises again in Visitants. The
house on Kailuana island, where MacDonnell the planter has been living as the only white man for several decades, was built entirely after the Dimdim (occidental) fashion: the natives find it strange.

When I first came from Wayouyo I said to Naibusi: This house is too hollow, too loud. Because a house among palms is like a house at sea, and the leaves are in it all around you, night and day. A house should be like a cave, I said, closed and dark. But Naibusi said: No, that is not the Dimdim custom. They like the wind in their houses, she said, and to look out on the sea, and I think he listens to the palms, because he planted them in the time when he was strong and young. (p. 5)

This is a typical instance of cultural conflict encoded in architecture. In his strange house of imported design, MacDonnell looks emphatically, emblematically white: 'He was white like a woodgrub, and something of the same texture' (p. 33). This makes him a representative of Europe, of a comic sort. It is sadly accurate, however, but quite in keeping with this ambassadorial status, that he should pretentiously refer to himself as 'The King of Kailuana' (p. 113), despite the presence on the island of the worldly-wise Dipapa, whom the natives venerate as paramount chief of the tribes. Moreover, the internal organization of the household replicates the hierarchical structure of power inherent to imperialistic rule: Naibusi, in more youthful times MacDonnell's mistress, now attends upon him as a domestic: a characteristic combination of sexual and political domination. In view of this, it is appropriate that Dipapa's rebellion against the authority of the 'King' should be directed at the house itself, which he attempted to bring down during the war, albeit unsuccessfully (see p. 157). Yet, despite this failure, the novel suggests that the house (called 'Rotten Wood') is doomed to collapse. Like the buildings in Tourmaline, it is deprived of proper foundations: 'The stilts on which the house stands drop pale gobbets of themselves on the chicken-raked mud' (p. 7). Consequently, its apparent stability is deceptive: 'Under the palms, the house lies turbulent and still' (p. 8). In this sense, it contradicts the native conviction that 'a house endures' (p. 5): 'Rotten Wood' is eaten by the termites from within and, from without, it is 'signed by rain with marks of a daily kind, like time' (p. 7). The house, then, is a potential ruin. The stigmata of rain and mildew point to the predictable moment when it will cave in, 'as suddenly as Jericho, with a slow dank crunch into mud and leaves in the rain' (p. 27). As in To the Islands, ruin here paves the way to new vision, and to self-transformation of a sort. Cawdor, a regular guest in MacDonnell's household, identifies with the house: 'It is like my body is a house' (p. 183), and disappears with it. 'My house is bleeding to death' (p. 183), his last reported words in the novel, anticipate his suicide and

But an additional complication has crept in with Visitants, in so far as the ruin metaphor is compounded here into a structure of openness (versus closure) as well. As opposed to Dipapa's palace-house, which is 'shut like a safe against light and air' (p. 82) as a protection against sorcery, MacDonnell's house is wide open to the gaze of everyone, so much so that the natives have ample opportunity to examine, 'through the hole in the cookhouse wall' (p. 42), Cawdor's shell-white buttocks under the shower. Furthermore, the openness of the house makes it participate, on quite intimate terms, with the warm ebullient life of the rainforest which surrounds it. In fact, the presence of the forest impinges enough to affect the quality of the light inside the house: 'The light falls through the shutters green with leaves' (p. 5), as well as its rich sound life: 'The palms above the house submerge the rooms in their surf of sound' (p. 7). This consubstantiality with the surroundings is even described in terms of literal intrusion: 'The palms wander in the bare wooden passages, in the gaunt living room wide open to the sea. Sudden gusts send them streaming, grey-green plumes against a grey-blue sky' (p. 7). By some effect of pathetic fallacy, the openness of the house to the elements of bush, sea and sky reflects what I have called Cawdor's indigenization, his agreeable disposition to the native customs and language, which justifies Naibusi's reference to him as 'a black man truly' (p. 41). Like the ruin metaphor, then, the image of the open house points to the powers of the unlocked imagination to bring about genuine transformation of self. This is clearly illustrated in Tourmaline too, by the openness of Dave Speed's habitat. Unconvinced by the townspeople's idealization of enclosed 'buildings ... shaded with vines' (p. 74), Speed endures the local conditions unsheltered, with the same 'tolerance of deprivation' (p. 67) as the natives, in an open encampment 'radiating out to the horizons' (p. 67). This instance of absolute horizontality opposes the blindness to landscape entailed by the Law's prison-tower, or by Kestrel's hotel (an important centre of the town's social life), which is also depicted as an enclosed space: 'The window-panes were painted over' (p. 10). In this context, the openness of Speed's 'house' provides a release from the imaginative captivity of the colonial consciousness, represented in Tourmaline as locked inside the prison of inadequate patterns of thought. Clearly, the house in Visitants can be seen in this light also. It is kept open to the palms and winds as a token of a cultural acclimatization comparable to Speed's venture. Moreover, it enhances the visionary faculties since it allows the inhabitant 'to look out on the sea' (p. 5), in explicit contradistinction to the stock image of imaginative confinement in Stow: the Shot Tower of
Geraldine in *The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea*, whose carceral vocation is aptly identified: 'It was old, it looked old as the Tower of London' (p. 235), and which accordingly commands 'an endless view of nothing at all' (p. 236). Clearly, then, the structure of openness and the image of the ruin fulfil a similar function: they are both metaphors for the ruthless cultural disinvestment which Stow advocates as the necessary first step towards genuine exploration of alterity and the new vision that must ensue.

Yet there is a problem here. For while *Tourmaline* and *To the Islands* present indigenization as 'possible and indeed desirable',\(^{21}\) as an exacting but viable alternative to firmness of identity, in an important respect *Visitants* denies this possibility. For one thing, whatever his disposition to openness, Cawdor remains remote all through the book from the events reported, which he skims 'like a wooden figurehead' (p. 180) with unbridged, pathological detachment. There is even a sense in which Cawdor is physically absent from the scene all the time, since the narrative consists of a retrospective, investigative police report prompted by his own anterior death. For another, Cawdor's openness seems to induce nothing but a vision of despair, quite a far cry from the positive reconstruction of self one would expect. Although his suicide can be viewed as an attempt to pull down the prison of himself and establish some contact, 'down the tunnel' (p. 179), with a reality of sorts, it is nonetheless an act of sheer destructiveness by which he topples the platform of encounter with the Other, to expose its all-too-common foundations in fear and violence: 'It is like my body is a house, and some visitor has come, and attacked the person who lived there' (p. 183). The novel then comes to a close in a surprising, tightly fastening deadlock. Stow's relentless exploration of otherness in *To the Islands*, his non-committal contrasting of discrete cosmogonies in *Tourmaline*, give way in *Visitants* to a resolution, final in aspect, of all the conflicts purposely left open before. It will take an entire book to reverse the gear and restore the possibility of difference, way back from Cawdor's cosmic vision of undifferentiated matter, where the infinitesimal mirrors the infinite and atoms fall through space like stars.

Stow has confided in an interview that *Visitants* and *The Girl Green as Elderflower* could best be seen as the panels of a diptych, 'intended to complement one another. What Clare is recovering from is obviously much clearer if one has read *Visitants*. And similarly the fate of Cawdor in *Visitants* doesn't look quite so irreversible if one has read *Elderflower*.\(^{22}\) Crispin Clare, the protagonist in *The Girl Green as Elderflower*, is a former anthropologist who had to leave the tropics with a bad case of cerebral malaria, and who now convalesces in the ancestral family cottage, in a small Suffolk village called Swainstead. Like Cawdor, he
experienced madness and attempted suicide; and like him he is obsessed with a vision of the universe which equates the microscopic and the macrocosmic scales: 'Clare pushed aside his emptied pot and looked at the circles on circles stamped in drying beer over the shining wood of the bar. So inside atoms. So in all space. The everlasting terror of a process without term.' His story is one of recovery in at least two senses of the word: it traces at once 'the rebeginning of his health' (p. 3) and a retrieval of difference, of all the discrete orders of existence first excluded from consideration in his levelling world view. Interestingly, the site of Clare's renewed interaction with otherness is his medieval cottage, conceived as blurred boundary between inside and outside. At the start, though, the cottage emerges as an instance of the house/prison. Its isolation from the surroundings is indicated by its name (the Hole Farm), and it is clear that Clare conceives of it as a redoubt against the outside world: 'The cottage had only one door. When it was closed behind him, he stood for a moment with his back to it. The drawbridge was up' (p. 34). However, Clare's seclusion is not complete; 'unused to white men's houses' (p. 4) after his sojourn in the tropics, he has kept the habit of leaving the bedroom window open at night. In fact, he goes so far as to align the bed in front of the window, 'so that by moonlight he could look down the clearing of the abandoned fishponds ... to the Sylphides-like wood which closed the view' (p. 3). Through this opening, he contemplates every morning the landscape's day-to-day transformation from wintry bareness to springtime luxuriance, a process which mirrors his own gradual spiritual rejuvenation. Thus, the window emerges as a symbolic channel leading into the world 'out there', back from alienation and sequestering of self. This renewed relationship with reality is described in the novel as a gentle intrusion of spring through the framed opening, which contrasts with the disruptive invasion of the rainforest in Visitants: 'At the edge of each window the apple tree, agitated by bullfinches, intruded branches of tight flushed buds.... He thought, on one such morning, listening to the cuckoo, that his provisional happiness had put down roots, that the fact of it would endure' (p. 65).

This outcome has nonplussed post-colonial critics, who felt some surprise that Stow's protagonist should finally achieve a sense of place in an innocuous environment like Suffolk, which (compared with Stow's previous settings) can hardly obtain as an embodiment of the Other. Also, disturbingly, Stow's romanticization of the colour green in this novel contradicts his indictment of this attitude in Tourmaline. Furthermore, by exalting the English countryside as 'insistently literary' (p. 72), he appears to privilege 'legendary Europe' above Australia, as if the latter had failed indeed to 'earn the right to be written about in
books’ (Merry-Go-Round, p. 205). In short, some uneasiness derives from the impression that Stow has sold out, with The Girl Green as Elderflower, on the common cause of writing back to the Empire, in explicit recantation of his former avowed political faith. As an attempt to recuperate the novel for the Australian curriculum, Robert Sellick suggests, among other plausible interpretations,\(^4\) that Clare’s dependence on twelfth-century Suffolk legends to mythologize reality in Elderflower can be construed as an instance of post-colonial ‘abrogation and appropriation\(^2\) of the textual/cultural authority of the metropolis. To my mind, though, it is precisely against the spirit underlying such appropriation that Stow’s work militates. My suggestion is that by reading The Girl Green as Elderflower as a eulogy of difference, as a celebration of ‘the variousness of everything that is’ (p. 127), it is possible to transcend the surface contradictions in Stow’s work which I have just delineated. However, this cannot be done unless one acknowledges the important structural part played by Clare’s cottage as a symbolic hinge articulating the different layers of experience which he is trying to retrieve. I have shown how the open window allowed Clare to regain a grasp on the outer Suffolk landscape; in a metaphoric sense, the cottage opens the door onto more, imaginary, landscapes of self. Through its name, ‘The Hole’, the cottage is associated with those ‘certain hollows or pits’ (p. 115) which provide entrance, in the last of the medieval legends, to the underworld of the Antipodes ‘or the Antichtones, who live south of the equatorial ocean’ (pp. 129-30). In this respect, even while it makes for some atavistic response to the land of his ancestors, Clare’s ‘home’ keeps unsevered his connection with the tropics and the mad fever he suffered there. Moreover, the farm is also the site of his meeting with Matthew Perry, whose Jewishness and homosexuality make an apt incarnation of the Other. Mat’s resemblance to Clare is made clear through a series of images, which reverberate in chained succession. His wild sensuality accounts for his appearance, in Clare’s transcription of the second tale, in the guise of a mute merman netted in the sea; a man/animal hybrid, his grey eyes and shaggy chest nevertheless identify him as Perry’s alter ego. When tortured by his gaolers in a dungeon, the Wild Man from the sea is hung by the feet: an immediate echo of Clare’s own attempt to hang himself in the southern hemisphere, and of the Tarot card in which he recognizes himself, the Hanged Man, who ‘seems to be hanging from the earth, between two trees’ (p. 20). Thus, Clare’s cottage, as a doorway to all kinds of ‘antipodes’, gives him access, in imagination, to spheres of reality previously eclipsed from his cramped sense of normality: madness, speechlessness, foreignness, sexuality, animality, death. The latter, in particular, comes into consideration at the end of the first story, when Malkin (the
benevolent child-spirit) leads the master of the house to the gate of death, guiding him with 'the call of a cuckoo' which resonates 'somewhere out beyond [the] window' (p. 61). This recalls Clare's own window, from the vantage-point of which he too listens to the cuckoo:

The cuckoo had for Clare of all touches the most magicianly, the most transforming. When he lay in his bed in the early mornings, looking out from his pillow over the clearing of the old fishponds, the cuckoo with its frail assertiveness expanded everything, till the wood grew huge as the ancient manscaring forest of High Suffolk, and the sound was a tender green. (p. 65)

The expansion of landscape evoked here comes to encompass death, which Clare can now contemplate with equanimity, as when he sees a dog devour a pheasant: 'What at one time would have sickened him he could now once more take with calm. It was the way of the green god' (p. 68). As Clare himself perceives, the pheasant is 'the constant visitor which had marched so masterfully under his windows' (p. 68): and like the cuckoo, this 'visitor' has lured him into crossing an important threshold (or window-sill) of awareness. In this sense, the novel provides the announced demonstration that 'even a situation like Cawdor's is not irredeemable' since Clare's achieved dialogue with his subterranean 'visitors' opposes Cawdor's failure to communicate with the extra-terrestrial 'visitors' from the stars.

This reading, far from invalidating the post-colonial approach, has much conceptual bearing on the question of the inclusion of difference in the context of post-colonialism. That this should be but one interpretation among many, however, is in keeping with Stow's determination to have, like Amabel/Mirabel in the last story, 'so many truths to tell' (p. 134). In this respect, The Girl Green as Elderflower offers a model of interpretive ambivalence which reaches back to Tourmaline, across Cawdor's vision of 'post-human wholeness' in Visitants. The novel's bifurcation of meaning is grounded, most importantly, in the ambivalence of Stow's fascination with green, which can be read either as a sign of political nostalgia for the imperial metropolis, or as a pervasive symbol for the Other, perceived not as monstrous but as a subtly tinted version of Self, in a dialectic relationship where each contains the green trace of its opposite. The same kind of elusiveness informs much of Stow's last novel, The Suburbs of Hell, where the Self/Other dichotomy (established with the house metaphor in terms of inside versus outside) is further subverted. This novel completely undermines the notion of the safe, cosy, closed house that is presented in the first chapter when Harry Ufford, the protagonist, is seen enjoying the privacy of his living-room: 'What he felt was warmth and freedom, the privacy of his own special place, the comforting profusion of all those things, so lovingly
chosen, which he had carried home to mark his patch. Harry Ufford, at forty-seven, ... was at home like a cockle in the mud.’ In their fear of the random killer roaming about the district, the inhabitants of Old Tornwich, Suffolk, retire to the protection of home, and set out to tremble behind their thick medieval walls. Young Greg Ramsay, in particular, barricades himself inside the house where his older brother has been found dead, inexplicably shot in his own living-room. His desire for protection assumes the form of an obsessive concern with his own spatial integrity: ‘He became increasingly disturbed about the postman, and formed the habit of always waking before he came. It worried him that this stranger could intrude objects, could even perhaps intrude his hand or arm, out of the world into his private space’ (p. 64). Ironically, though, the house is presented consistently as an inadequate demarcation from the domain of the Other. The renovated Georgian mansion in which Ramsay seeks refuge is ‘draughty as arseholes’ (p. 13) and, like indeed most buildings in the town, exposed to the howling northeasterly ‘searching out every chink in the close-packed houses’ (p. 61). Also, the entire town is built upon a dense network of underground passages carved in the legendary days of smuggling, so that each house is susceptible of being burgled through the cellar. This state of affairs has implications that reach deep into consciousness: ‘Something like this changes you, somehow. When you think of your house, normally, you think of doors and windows that lock and walls that are solid. But suddenly you find yourself thinking about window-panes that break and bolts that don’t hold and smugglers’ tunnels into the cellar’ (p. 29).

Finally, the fragility of the house of Self is epitomized in the novel by Death’s supernatural ability to read into the inner lives of those he prepares to take, a mental burglary more often than not accompanied by an actual case of housebreaking.

The various metamorphoses undergone by the house metaphor throughout Stow’s work yield no easy generalization. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the author’s ‘strategic location’ with regard to his own material is imaged in the successive guises assumed by the house in his fiction. As I have suggested, the ruin metaphor embodies the undigested legacy of colonialism; therefore, in To the Islands, Heriot’s decision to forestall ruin by embracing ruin testifies to a kind of retributive logic which taps, quite disturbingly, the very imageries he seeks to discard. It is significant that Heriot’s symbolic attempt to destroy the rock of himself, at the end of this novel, should be depicted as an instance of ‘the momentousness of his strength, his power to alter the world at will’ (p. 125): he subscribes to the ethos of Empire even while struggling to erode the monolith. Unsurprisingly, then, the image of the ruin is associated with the prison (one thinks of the Law’s tower in
Tourmaline, which is derelict), as a kind of confession on Stow's part that even a militant imagination like his own remains fettered to European ideology. Stow has once commented on the 'sense of imprisonment' which he perceives as omnipresent in his country's literature (from Clarke's His Natural Life to Stead's For Love Alone to the novels of Patrick White), and which relates back to the land's actual past as a penal colony. Though he acknowledges the existence in Australia of a counter-myth of 'newness and freedom', the ruin/prison image can be read as the architectural representation, within his fiction, of the carceral space which still circumscribes the post-colonial consciousness.

However, Stow inscribes himself in this literature of enclosure only to subvert it better: to open it up, as it were. We have seen that the image of the open house in *Visitants* purports to do exactly this. It commands a vista of the outside world somehow preempted previously by the self-captive gaze-confining vestiges of the European imagination. Nonetheless, the lineaments of openness sketched in this novel ultimately prove unsatisfactory too. Unrestricted receptiveness to the Other appears to bring about no curtailment of the logic of conquest and assimilation. Clearly, Stow had to evolve a more elaborate tool for representing a moment of sufficiently 'distinctive encounter' with the Other; my suggestion is that the house image in *The Suburbs of Hell* provides a model of qualified fluidity between in and out apt to bring into play precisely such controlled, mutual penetration of Self and Other. It is a paradox, of course, that Stow should return to the site of Jung's vertical, palimpsestic history to found this new cultural construction, having probed the hidden depths of Australian experience so relentlessly in *Tourmaline* and *The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea*. All the same, I hope to have shown that his 'European' novels, particularly *The Girl Green as Elderflower*, evince a complexity of roots sprouting from a veritable 'visionary counterpoint of resources' or cultures. It may be, then, that in order to keep writing truly 'oppositional fiction' (to modify Said's phrase), Stow must constantly shift the ground that supports it. Whenever 'the paradox of a green flush' (Elderflower, p. 136) colours his work, it is in accordance with an aesthetic of metamorphosis or mutancy meant to defeat the monumentalization of history (whether European or Antipodean) into rigid, cancerous excrescences (ruins). In this sense, the subversion of categories effected by his last two novels applies to Stow's strategic location as well; he creates for himself a fugal discipline which allows him to escape from the retaliatory and thus self-perpetuating politics of 'abrogation and appropriation'.
NOTES


5. David Malouf, *12 Edmondstone Street* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1986), p. 44. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.


7. Ibid., p. 219.


12. Randolph Stow, *The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1986), p. 80. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.


18. For a summary exposition of the Tao's principles in conjunction with Stow's work, see Paul D. Higginbotham, "'Honour the Single Soul': Randolph Stow and his Novels", *Southerly* 39 (1979), 378-92.

19. The novel is set in the Trobriands, off the east coast of Papua.

20. To my knowledge, the term was first used by Helen Tiffin in 'New Concepts of Person and Place in The Twyborn Affair and A Bend in the River', in Peggy Nightingale, ed., *A Sense of Place in the New Literatures in English* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1986), pp. 22-31.


23. Randolph Stow, *The Girl Green as Elderflower* (New York: The Viking Press, 1980), p. 32. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.
28. Randolph Stow, *The Suburbs of Hell* (London: Dent & Sons, 1985), pp. 3-4. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.
29. A concept defined by Edward W. Said in *Orientalism* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 20; paraphrased as ‘the way [the author] seeks to contain, represent and speak on behalf of a space which is outside the European space’ by Gillian Whitlock in “‘The Carceral Archipelago’: Marcus Clarke’s *His Natural Life* and John Richardson’s *Wacousta’*, in McDougall and Whitlock, op. cit., p. 66.
32. A similar point was made with regard to Clarke and Richardson; see Whitlock, op. cit., p. 61.
34. Ibid., p. 18.
35. Edward W. Said proposes ‘oppositional criticism’ as the mode in which criticism is most itself, ‘in its suspicion of totalizing concepts, in its discontent with reified objects, in its impatience with guilds, special interests, imperialized fiefdoms and orthodox habits of mind’. See *The World, the Text and the Critic* (London: Faber, 1984), p. 29.
I should have known, loving a Rhinemaiden
I’d marry more than a lyrical bit
of the chorus. Even your parents’ address
- Parsifalstrasse - was a warning. Yet neither myth
nor opera is your domain. Something else
anchors you here, no matter how far
you go from it with me. History
as love, perhaps, of a steady turning of stones
in a landscape heavy with stones that impress
what they conceal.

For you it’s printed
with their words: stories cross and divide
among alders, vineyards, stretches of untouched
wood. Like tributories of a bishopric
or of the Rhine, they embrace
cloisters, castles, schools - schools of philosophy
music, arts and arms. And the school
you succeeded your mother to, which
our daughter also one day will attend.

Despite the stones, and the crushing weight
of arms - from Caesar’s, who crossed the Rhine
a few minutes march from here, to the pulse
of U.S. helicopters every day -
this valley is less tangible
than its earth, and reaches further.
Between history and love, it lives in the changes
of your mood when, thoughtful and homesick
you’re among my friends, my familiar landscape
wrapping you in its exile, and
in your tears at times, when we make love.
This is the valley's embrace, as our daughter signalled I don't know how, but drawn by the force of where she came from, races to hug us both, as we hold each other and kiss. No matter how old she grows, how far she travels this, I pray, won't leave her alone. That's how the Rhine flows in your veins.

I love you as best I can, but I can't replace that, what you left to live with me - a stranger too beside your river, though a little less than most, I hope, as our daughter holds our hands.

THE CHAIRPERSON'S OFFICE

The Chairperson's office is the one office without a nametag. It contains a desk, a personal computer, some filing cabinets and a Chairperson.

There are two phones on the Chairperson's desk. One goes via a secretary to the outside world. The other is wired directly to Hell. This is the phone the Chairperson wants disconnected.

He has spent several months arguing with his secretary, with the head of Personnel and with the telephone authority. They all maintain a direct line to Hell cannot be disconnected.
The Chairperson disagrees and has sent several memos to that - but no other - effect. Right now he’s angrily signing directives, stabbing into the space of that first shrill cry.

FOR ROBERTA

I’ll bet, Roberta your first sense that something was wrong in that plane didn’t steer your thoughts to me.

At 12,000 feet you couldn’t drown and your mind reeled back through your past to how our lives sadly, badly untwined.

I’ll bet your thought went to those you loved then, buckled in the small and malfunctioning plane and the ground below

I bet was closer than you guessed, a mountain erupting seconds ahead and you and your thoughts clutched on an instant of panic.

Then nothing but flames and fragments in an unvisited fraction of Africa.

And if I claimed I didn’t care that in that terrible impact with reality you didn’t think of me
I'll bet, Roberta
you'd rise like an avenging angel
to scourge me, nightly
with pure grief, and scorn.

Stephen Oliver

TAKE A WALK

Disturbed movement in alleys. A shift in wind direction. Further off over roofs, patches of light. It is the signals that, pushed out, are coming back in across the buffed zones and upended days, down the familiar track of childhood, the neighbour yelling from behind hedges, destination of the stone sure. Somehow we soften into the sum of all we haven't done, seated high on windy terraces, one step from that which may have occurred, outlined there in silhouette, hurtful against the sky. The birds celebrated as you dressed with stealth though you'd gone long before first light took you.
MANNED MISSION TO THE GREEN PLANET

Behind some night bush Rousseau green, some dwelling in one place, some in another, it had been agreed between us by courier and hesitation to meet in the village centre at mid might. The first figure to emerge was to be greeted thus: America comes to interpret its humour: the hurried reply: and community halls abound. Back and beyond our allotted frequency, The Generals who had not been posted gathered over another Power Lunch. After the brief and the oiling of rifles we set forth across the causeway, through the marble green of foothills, and into the grey of higher ground. The thought, like a saffron scarf caught on a thorn bush seemed even now on the closed off terrain a crusade of sorts, kept us ahead. Amply, unnumbered rivers plashed into the battery green of immeasurable hollows. So it was that we became inseparable, spirit creatures to the forest life, the journey boundless, the orders which concerned the depot, unread.

A FAR NOISE FROM NEAR THINGS

That which has gained a little further, high enough to curve out the earth, the diminished rainforests of Brazil, the hole in the ozone above Antarctica, the lessened bushtribes of Africa, the years pushed out by light, the greenhouse globe over photographed is how we picture ourselves back, falling. Or rice paper moon in the

Sky and cloud, a dream of snakes. A fallen leaf against the skylight. A leaf against the skylight fallen, so.

And we then who engage the light take ourselves to the work of aerial attention the Ancients were part of, and by it, remembrance of time, but atomistic. The seasons knew us as we learned. Our lessons learned well, too. Around the roulette wheel of the world, through the yellow pages of the sun flicking over decades what migrations made,

from the micro-chip to Star Wars, digital sex to right wing abstinence, eclipse of personal vision, limitation of immediate memory, the object of our desires objective love, love at several removes in our falling. Sangsara.

The great lesson came in a sudden hurt of killing, our first knowledge reflected through caves ochre-images of the slain. We began worship, measured time, and built against the shock, the pain. These sentiments amongst the tumbled blocks of older verse are gone from the heart, the darkest galaxy, and memory alone promotes sorrow.

It is today always, green as a computer screen and elsewhere, unrecorded, the high surgery of the super nova which
never exploded now, but once.
Child dream. An abandoned railway
siding overgrown with nettleweed, hide
out for a wizard. Backdrop of gentle
slopes, elms at distance. Adolescent
visions of Irish burrows, hollowed
darkness, whisperings, a wish to locate
the signal in self back in time.
This resides still. Downwards and over
the garden (a dark, humped square)
my neighbour shadows through dropblinds
before a startled TV. Dirtied cloud
frames a full moon that is sideways in
this movingly. Gravity takes hold
and accentuates. Gestures weigh in their
orbits. Bright as cufflinks, radio
telescopes revolve on red tablelands
to uncover one more sacred site between
the stars. A brain based society
ornately tracks the lusty technologies
and the years recognise our whereabouts.

In the beginning wooden paddles echoed
from atoll to island. Air whitened,
thunder reverberated. A riot of leaves
under malarial rain. Then came the
creak of rigging, came the off-shore
companies, came synthetic drugs and
salvation, and finally, came migration
back to Vanuatu, Samoa, Tonga, Nuie
to light up the rim of the Pacific.

The hour turns, an electric train flicks
blue flashes over suburb and hoarding,
brick arch and emptied streets.
The day's news ceases amongst the satellites. And high enough to curve cut the earth Argos is falling across the Southern skies, dragging her keel across some coral harbour where, fitfully, the gracious guns of goodwill ride at anchor.

David Kerr

RETURN OF THE LINGUIST
(For Jack Mapanje)

'Malawi's only semanticist' your letter self-scoffed. Jokes aside, this place, with lost seams of gossip and taboo-coated rhetoric lodged deep in fissures, needs your skills - wild pick-axing or delicate chiselling for fossilized signs.

It needs the deftest rinsing in gallons of sweat to sieve a single gem of meaning.
The Not-so-objective-correlative. 'Germany' in the Work of Four Antipodean Women Writers

In 1938 under the long shadow of fascist Germany and the obvious signs of another great war impending Virginia Woolf published *Three Guineas*.¹ In it she made the connection between the private life (women kept uneducated, financially powerless and in fear of the 'family') and war. In the voice of the woman responding to the man who has asked 'How can we prevent war?' she refers to women's fear, men's anger at their attempt at self-determination, and declares: 'fear and anger prevent real freedom in the private house; ... fear and anger may prevent real freedom in the public world: they may have a positive share in causing war' (p. 148).

Woolf later depicts a figure 'of a man; some say, others deny, that he is Man himself, the quintessence of virility', a figure of military dictatorship, with a landscape of civilian carnage behind him, which she offers, not to 'excite once more the strong emotion of hate' but to suggest 'that the public and private worlds are inseparably connected; that the tyrannies and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other' (p. 162). *Three Guineas* was received very badly by the men in Woolf's circle, and its thesis generally ridiculed or ignored. But other women writers have made the same connections she makes, if not in her overt form of an elegantly argued essay.

Between two and three decades earlier, four Antipodean women, 'Elizabeth' von Arnim, Katherine Mansfield, Henry Handel Richardson and Hilda Freeman, writing of the period before World War I focussed on Germany and highlighted the sexual oppression of women. All four share similar aversion to aspects of German personal, social and cultural life. Each woman's ironic eye is on the 'tyrannies and servilities' of the 'private house' whether she is focussing on these exclusively or not. Germany emerges in the work of all four as a correlative, of varying levels of objectivity, for the relegation of women to servile status. Militarism, national or racial intolerance and cruelty are foregrounded to varying degrees in the works in question. The link between sexism and militarism or racism varies from implicit to explicit.
Of these four women from Australia and New Zealand, two were very popular in their day, while the reputations of the other two remain high. Each had lived in Germany under circumstances of great personal significance; each characterised a whole nation adversely, with different future repercussions. The style of each varies from ‘readerly’ to ‘writerly’.

The first to write on Germany was Mary Annette Beauchamp, born in Sydney (or, according to her recent biographer Karen Usborne, at Kiribilly Point near Paremata outside Wellington) in 1866. Her family, originally English, had lived in Australia for fifteen years. Mary, later to be known as “Elizabeth” of the German Garden, went back to England with her family at the age of three. She became Countess von Arnim on her marriage at twenty-five to a German Junker with estates in Pomerania. Immensely popular in her lifetime, and unfairly neglected since, ‘Elizabeth’ wrote twenty-one novels and an autobiography. Several novels which deal with similar issues to those in her first book, Elizabeth and Her German Garden (1898), were published in the years preceding the First World War. Usborne calls ‘Elizabeth’ ‘a formidable and original feminist thinker’ (Introduction, p. 1). In style and popularity, she occupies a similar place this century to Rhoda Broughton in the last.

The literary fame of Katherine Mansfield rests on her short stories. Born Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp in Wellington in 1888, she lived in various parts of Europe, including Germany, and published in England. Kathleen’s father and Mary’s father were cousins. When she was just twenty-one and in serious personal difficulties she stayed in Bavaria basing several sketches and stories in her first book In A German Pension of 1911 on this experience.

The Australian Henry Handel Richardson, born in Ballarat in 1870, lived in various parts of Germany from the ages of eighteen to thirty-three, mostly in Alsace in strongly pro-French Strasbourg. Her reputation is secure through her novels, two of which are set in Germany, but it is a group of her neglected short stories which bears comparison with Mansfield’s In A German Pension. Richardson referred to them as her ‘three “German” stories’. ‘Life and Death of Peterle Luthy’, ‘The Professor’s Experiment’, and ‘Succedaneum’, together present a microcosm of German society and culture from a critical feminist perspective. In the sketches Mansfield presents a different kind of critical microcosm, a gallery of German ‘types’ (the Professor, the Junker Baron, the ‘advanced’ lady, etc.).

The fourth Antipodean woman was Hilda Mary Hodge Freeman, born at Gordon outside Ballarat in 1885. Freeman’s memoir, An Australian Girl in Germany (1916), recently republished by her daughter, was a best
seller during the First World War. This very readable and valuable historical and sociological resource is also interesting as a psychological study of national feeling in Germany of 1914 before the outbreak of war. The book is not well known but deserves to be. Freeman had an interest in recording the past. Her memoir was based on her diaries and on German newspaper accounts of that year when she was unexpectedly a victim of politics; later in life she gathered material on the Murrumbidgee region’s pioneers for a book which was ready to be published in the thirties. Hilda, born in later times, might have become a serious historical researcher.

These four women of different interests, literary styles and status make a significant sample. Their origins in the colonies may have contributed to their pronounced independence of spirit and distaste for organised tyranny and servility, personal or public, as old habits of oppression were being modified faster there. (New Zealand women had the vote, more or less by accident, in 1893.) These women had all travelled great distances alone. Such scandalous freedom was one of many cultural differences between them and German women.

Their independent ways extended to control over how they should be named. None ever used the name of a man to whom she was allied by marriage; all used either the name they were born with, or a combination of this and another of choice, all except ‘Elizabeth’ who used simply that one name, the most minimal of pseudonyms as hers was initially the greatest need for concealment and independence.

The extent to which anti-German sentiment and fanaticism in their own culture and post-war attitudes and humanitarian developments affected their attitudes to writing and their outlook on life is noteworthy. All four cherished personal freedom and were opposed all their lives to violence and bigotry. They shared a love of flowers, gardens, animals and the natural world. Freeman was a conservationist (as was Richardson) and a lover of bush plants and animals.

These four outsider women knew a pre-war Germany, although war must have affected Freeman’s and Richardson’s publications. Hilda Freeman’s initial writing impetus, however, was personal; a diary of the experience of governessing in a foreign country, one markedly different from her Antipodean homeland, yet one in which she found human warmth, kindness, and shared feelings in spite of the shock of wide and deep cultural differences which profoundly troubled her. She began her diaries well before war broke out, but the book itself, published in 1916, describes events in 1914 and 1915. It conveys a balance between criticism and affection until increasing pressure of anti-British feeling and threatening events both personal and political culminate in the patriotic propaganda of the later chapters.
Richardson's stories, set in the decade before World War One but written after it, were not published until a few years before the second. In Freeman's book (the only non-fiction work) war breaks out halfway through the narrative, but the German ethos is as much the subject as war even here.

Mansfield, von Arnim, Richardson and Freeman are strikingly at one in selecting to focus on similar highly specific issues. Mansfield had read von Arnim and Richardson had read both by the twenties and thirties at least. Influence may be at work, but so is a shared vision of Germany from a woman's eyes. We do not know what Freeman read. It is possible that she had read 'Elizabeth', however, as her descriptions of flowers, and walks in the Baltic pine forests recall 'Elizabeth's' garden scenes and Baltic excursions.

The aims of 'Elizabeth' in *Elizabeth and Her German Garden* were ostensibly to celebrate: her happiness in the life she had rescued for herself away from the grim regime of the noisy Berlin house, infested with relatives and protocol; her partial escape from servants and formality; her reading; but above all of course, as the title says, her garden.

That her actual aim included more than these is clear from her rhetoric and the issues that permeate the text. For relief was also needed from a distasteful intimate life, her horror at her fate married to a Junker who demanded constant childbearing and with whom she had to fight for the simplest of personal freedoms.

Her manner is whimsical, her style sweetness and light, but the vein of satire is rich and alluvial. It shows right from paragraph one making the book a parallel text of celebration and a satire that masks a grim reality. It is representative as well as personal. These two strands combine immediately in the naming of her husband known only as 'The Man of Wrath'. Thus from her own experience of physical abuse and from the German ethos, the patriarch, her husband is spokesman for Germany in her first books.

'Elizabeth' von Arnim's marriage to her German Count (as later to her English one, Francis Russell) led immediately to a grim personal struggle for freedom, both spiritual and actual bodily freedom. She acquired German citizenship on her marriage, and with it full German chattel status. Later the First World War was to have immense repercussions on her family (as on Richardson's). War alienated 'Elizabeth' and Richardson from a nation whose artistic culture in music and literature had meant so very much.

Germany remained an integral part of 'Elizabeth's' writing for the rest of her life. It manifests itself in several books between the wars and the effect of the second war is also seen in her last book. *Mr Skeffington*, published in 1940, not long before she died, implicitly attacks racism
(her Jewish hero has been imprisoned by the Nazis). Sexism, racism, militarism run through the fabric of the Germany depicted by ‘Elizabeth’.

Karen Usborne says of her: ‘Elizabeth’s life and work were dedicated first and foremost to exploding the complacency she encountered everywhere, most particularly that of England in regard to Prussian military ambition which she was in a unique position to understand.’ Prussian militarism was not the sole target of her life’s work, however; she aimed to explode many kinds of complacencies. Sexism manifests itself strongly in several of her books with the husband or a German male used to epitomise the autocratic male in general. Her first book, Elizabeth and Her German Garden (1898), begins with this paragraph:

May 7th. - I love my garden. I am writing in it now in the late afternoon loveliness, much interrupted by the mosquitoes and the temptation to look at all the glories of the new green leaves washed half an hour ago in a cold shower. Two owls are perched near me, and are carrying on a long conversation that I enjoy as much as any warbling of nightingales. The gentleman owl says ____, and she answers from her tree a little way off, ____, beautifully completing her lord’s remark as becomes a properly constructed German she-owl. (p. 3)

Thus begins, with irony, a book as much about the plight of a woman under an extreme patriarchal regime as about the garden which brought her partial solace. Her books abound in satirical observations that expose German sexism. ‘Elizabeth’ learns that ‘nobody’ and ‘women’ are synonymous terms (p. 111). Women are classed by law with drunks and idiots (p. 115) and properly, too, says the Man of Wrath (p. 117). ‘I like to hear you talk together about the position of women,’ he went on, ‘and wonder when you will realise that they hold exactly the position they are fitted for.’

In every page she is at odds with the society she finds herself in. ‘Elizabeth’ describes matters like the sex-based difference in wages and food for farm labourers (‘The women get less, not because they work less, but because they are women and must not be encouraged’ (p. 64)) in a tone so flippant that one could overlook its import. When ‘Elizabeth’ expends sympathy for these farm-worker women, uncherished by husbands, bowed under childbearing and labour, her husband replies that childbearing is a natural control to disable women of competition with men, and brute force from the man if necessary beyond that (p. 67): ‘to silence women’s objectives and aspirations by knocking her down’ was a worthy achievement according to the Man of Wrath (pp. 68-69) who in real life apparently behaved like this towards ‘Elizabeth’.
‘Elizabeth’s’ husband made her publish this first book in an expurgated version. But its sales paid off his debts, and she kept the family in luxury on her subsequent publications.

Katherine Mansfield’s *In a German Pension* is made up of three groups of prose pieces: seven *pension* sketches distinctive, almost journalistic pieces of *saeva indignatio* (‘Germans at Meat’; ‘The Baron’; ‘The Sister of the Baroness’; ‘Frau Fischer’; ‘The Modern Soul’; ‘The Luft Bad’; and ‘The Advanced Lady’); four short stories far more sophisticated in technique and more technically ‘objective’, all using German elements and having a shared sexual politics (‘The-Child-Who-Was-Tired’; ‘Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding’; ‘At Lehmann’s’; and ‘A Birthday’); and two studies in romantic love (‘A Blaze’ and ‘The Swing of the Pendulum’), quite different in kind and spirit and which represent a transitional stage to the psychological interests and literary technique of Mansfield’s later work.

The collection is artistically very mixed. Sometimes brilliant, often brittle satire, the vivid *sketches* are not in the same artistic league as the stories. The technique, especially the personal immediacy of the quasi-journalistic narrator and the overt superior and satirical position she takes, makes the Bavarian Pension sketches a unique set in the volume, with affinities to other ‘travel’ pieces written at about the same time. Mansfield outgrew her first collection. In technique and point of view she thought it immature and bad.

The satire in the sketches is too close to mockery, and I believe Mansfield came to think so. Her journal of 4 April 1914 records: ‘Nothing that isn’t satirical is really true for me to write just now.... And at the same time I am so frightened of writing mockery for satire that my pen hovers and won’t settle.’ The War and its aftermath strongly influenced her perspective. She made a kind of apology to the Bavarians, and an implicit link between her ‘youthful disgust’ and militarism in a letter to her mother, Annie Burnell Beauchamp: ‘The Germans are a very curious people. I suppose this war is as hideous to them, poor souls, as it is to us. It’s the fault of the Prussians and not those simple warm-hearted bavarians, after all.’

It would seem that the aim of Mansfield’s *sketches* was simply caricature arising from disgust or contempt for a national ethos. (Similarly, in a letter to Middleton Murry on 12 April 1920, she comments on her love for the south of France but her dislike of the French - however, not the ordinary people: ‘it’s the voice of *La France officielle* which I loathe so.’) These motives are not entirely unworthy or there would be no value placed upon satire.

Many of her attacks are justifiable. It is in the unrelieved nature of her offensives in the name of Germans and Germany, and the crude
technique (crude in the 'moral' sense as well as the technical) that the
problem lies, however. The 'I' narrator, self-conscious without irony,
suggests there is no fictional difference between author and narrator. Where 'Elizabeth's' work is often spoilt by coyness or whimsy, Mansfield's sketches are spoilt by superciliousness of the narrator. There is little to choose technically between the overt Mansfield of the sketches and Freeman's book, except for Mansfield's unmitigated caricature of a whole culture in the name of its worst characteristics. No human warmth is shown on the side of the Germans. All is perjured by their arrogance or ulterior motive, while the 'I' narrator is thus rendered supercilious rather than morally superior. The irony is that such a technique serves the very inhumanity it seeks to expose. In the Bavarian sketches it amounts to hate, and hate is a form of corruption, something Mansfield was always to fight against in herself and in things in general through her writing.

In the aftermath of war when Mansfield repudiated her book, she looked to find the lessons of war reflected in writing, and in the behaviour of individuals and peoples. The perspective of inhumanity seemed a crime of similar order to those she held up to question. War had altered things, truth had to include shared humanity.

The four feminist German stories, by contrast, are on a level of technical objectivity and skill with Richardson's. Here the (sometimes revealingly forced) German setting can be accepted as a correlative signalling a problem in any culture by association with one in which the traits of sexism were then so marked. Perhaps that is why the 'Bavaria' of 'A Birthday' has an unconvincing harbour, just as the change of setting from Russia to Germany in 'The-Child-Who-Was-Tired', Mansfield's dialectical parody of Chekhov's 'Sleepy', is not a whim, but a recognisable signal to readers asking to be interpreted. I doubt whether Mansfield would have repudiated these four stories except that as a perfectionist she might repudiate anything.

Her view of the book in 1917 is a little harsh considering how it shines against so many other writers' first books, but still apt. Yet she did not totally repudiate the book itself, at least in private. In a letter to Ottoline Morrell she wrote: 'Would you care for a copy of my wretched old book? It is young and bad, but I would like to send you one. It might amuse you a little' (14/1/1917. Collected Letters, Vol. I, p. 292). Later, when resisting its republication, Mansfield reinforces this view without specifying the sketches as her particular target, she nevertheless conveys the impression that for content (mockery?) and style (unironic, personal narration?) it may have been these in particular she disliked, a point borne out by her 22 May 1922 letter to the literary agent Pinker:
About *In a German Pension*. I think it would be very unwise to republish it. Not only because it’s a most inferior book (which it is) but I have, with my last book, begun to persuade the reviewers that I don’t like ugliness for ugliness’ sake. The inteligentzia [sic] might be kind enough to forgive youthful extravagance of expression and youthful disgust. But I don’t want to write for them. And I really can’t say to the ordinary reader ‘Please excuse these horrid stories. I was only 20 at the time!’

... *In a German Pension* had a very good press. But it was that unpleasant thing—a succès de scandale.¹⁴

Whatever the different fictional pose in different novels, ‘Elizabeth’s’ ‘voice’ remains recognizably the same. Mansfield altered her technique; no longer did she use an ‘I’ narrator to equate unironically with an ethical centre. Her sophisticated use of distanced, polyvocal modes or an ironised narrator create neutral space in which the reader may exercise free judgment, still authorially directed but no longer regimented. Sexism and self-deception and ‘corruption’ remain prime targets as before, but there is more humanity in all, free indirect discourse becomes her means to achieving this. Her style changed from the ‘readerly’ one of the sketches to the ‘writerly’ one of the stories.

Richardson’s *Maurice Guest* was being written around the same time as ‘Elizabeth’s’ first book, but was not published until 1908. The typescript reveals the connection between Germany and sexism in Richardson’s mind at the time:

> Girls have their very kitchen-apron tied on them with an undermeaning. And poor souls, who can blame them for submitting. What a fate is theirs, if they don’t manage to catch a man. In no country in the world is the unmarried woman held in such contempt as here and gossip and needlework are only slow poison.¹⁵

But the author’s eye was not primarily on Germany in this book.

To judge by critical opinion and neglect Henry Handel Richardson’s ostensible aim in her German stories was to capture quaint scenes of Strasbourg life. No coherent literary account has been published of this set of stories.¹⁶ In presenting a microcosm of German society and culture the stories subversively employ the traditional form of the German *Novelle*, which had become the vehicle for raising difficult questions about society. For Richardson these concerned the fate of women in a patriarchal and very private world of tyrannies and servilities, mainly sexual.

Freeman’s book, Mansfield’s sketches (*not* the four ‘German’ stories) and von Arnim’s ‘German’ fiction tended to overt confrontation of the culture via the narrator. In Richardson’s stories the point is made with symbolism, irony and an ‘objective’ polyvocal style. The politically sig-
significant setting, especially Strasbourg, provides her with a ready made set of cultural signs which she re-functions to her purpose.

There is a representative cross-section of society. In ‘Life and Death of Peterle Luthy’ the respectable family is found to be morally corrupt. (‘Germany is the home of the Family’ as the Traveller in Mansfield’s ‘Germans At Meat’ declares.) In The Professor’s Experiment sterile academicism and the social institution of marriage are in serious moral question. In ‘Succedaneum’ romantic love and romanticism in art are satirised. Richardson subverts the cherished German notion of Gemütlichkeit. She resists this notion of private idyll, cosy domesticity, exposing its dark side, an obscene deprivation of natural freedom and justice for women. German society may have exemplified male power and its effects more grossly for Richardson, who went through a period of revulsion against Germany.\(^{17}\)

The German detail has been cleverly employed to realize women’s historical and local situation. These stories focus on three young women, powerless and actually or virtually prostituted, in sexual involvements none has freely chosen. Older women are complaisant or compliant. The woman is mocked or condemned by various representative individuals and groups. Critical doubts are raised about societies professing such cultural values. But Germany as a correlative is more objective, it is never openly berated. It is available as analogue in Richardson’s ‘writerly’ text. These three stories are Richardson’s twentieth-century contribution to the Novelle form, which, according to Martin Swales, is distinguished by ‘hermeneutic unease’ and modernity in challenging the ‘social universe as traditionally defined and inhabited’.\(^{18}\)

Hilda Freeman’s original aim was the personal one of keeping a diary of an exciting new experience, the daily life of an Australian bush girl in the utterly foreign deeps of northern Germany on the estate of a Baron. Then fate made her witness to the psychologically fascinating workings of jingoistic patriotism and later made her a prisoner of war. An Australian Girl in Germany is the result.

To what extent she was persuaded by others to push recruiting-type sentiments in the final pages and how much was her own emotional reaction to the progress of the war is not possible to know.\(^{19}\) Freeman’s daughter Brenda Niccol claimed that the Prime Minister Billy Hughes brought pressure on her mother to help in the conscription rallies, but Freeman’s response was that she could not urge anyone to do something she could not undertake herself.

In the Foreword of her book Freeman discounted any ‘after the event’ alteration of her story; it was not ‘coloured by developments after my leaving Germany’. Freeman’s daughter describes her mother’s subse-
quent attitude towards the world’s differences: she became, says Niccol, ‘an advocate for the dignity of all peoples’.

Freeman’s observations about Germany resemble those of the other writers. She focusses on food; the menial status of women; sanitation; health; child-bearing and customs of child-raising; rigid formality and precedence; criticism of the fetish made of sewing and linen; women’s exclusion from intellectual status; physical and verbal brutality; condescension or grossness towards women.

Freeman approaches Germany determined to ‘absorb Germany, cultivate its point of view, wear its clothes, eat its food, speak its language, and bow to its customs’ (p. 9). She says ‘adieu to Democracy and ... Australia’ and looks forward with interest to life where ‘the people are so quaint, the houses so pretty, the country so new to me’ (p. 9).

She is to be governess in a family (that of the Baron von Klinggraeff) in all respects similar to ‘Elizabeth’s’. Both von Klinggraeff and von Arnim experiment in agricultural production and use Polish and Russian outworkers (p. 17). Both Freeman and ‘Elizabeth’ remark on the harsh conditions for these people. Like ‘Elizabeth’ and Richardson, Freeman notes both the self-sacrificing ways of the women (specifically mocked by Mansfield in the sketch ‘The Advanced Lady’), which she finds excessive (p. 24) and the condescension of men towards women.

Freeman continually disclaims any feminism in the formula ‘I am not a suffragette, but...’ which becomes a thread running through the book:

Men in Germany are treated as if they are little gods. Of course the women treat them with deference and humility simply because they must do so. Man is the stronger animal; hence the meek and mild obedience of the weaker sex. I am not a suffragette, but still I feel no undue humility where a mere man is concerned, unless of course, his natural character is so truly superior that it demands my respect, then I give it gladly, freely. (p. 29)

The extent of Freeman’s self-proclaimed anti-feminism as opposed to her actual aversion to sexism is shown here:

Tante often tries to press me into the service of waiting on the dear men, but they rouse some latent contrariness within me, and, though I would willingly lace an Australian’s boots if necessary, or wait on an Englishman with pleasure, I certainly cannot bend my knee to a German. An Australian feels that woman is his equal; the Englishman treats her as a delightful ornament; but something about the average German’s attitude towards women makes me shudder. (p. 31)

Freeman observes many German customs which unsettle her, but she involves herself in almost every aspect of the people’s lives: ‘Besides it is heaps more exciting to see things from varying standpoints than always to remain riveted to the one’ (p. 50).
At one stage she quotes Mme de Sévigné: 'The more I see of men, the more I love my dog' (p. 55) (although she attributes the expression to Lafayette). This is the half-serious view of Richardson, and the stated view (in her journal) of 'Elizabeth' whose autobiography was pointedly about *All the Dogs of My Life*.

Freeman comments sarcastically on the manners of the (upper class) men towards women:

Women are rather despised, I think. They are certainly kept in the background.

The *Hausfrau* waits for her dear lord's permission, before she gives her opinions. Her ideas are all very simple and homely, and do not interfere in any way with her business in life, viz., the Promotion of the Comfort of the Lord and Master - Man. I don't think I had ever much approval for the militant suffragette, yet after seeing the way in which the women are subtly insulted here, I feel quite in sympathy with them, though the savage tactics of the Wild Women of England, appal my peace-loving nature. (p. 67)

The strongest argument over the suffragettes takes place on pages 76-77 in one of several interesting discussions the German family have, too long to include here, but again revealing Freeman's ambivalence. Frau Grossmutter is disgusted that women have the vote:

'The women have votes. Aber that is terrible. It is not right!'

I raised my eyebrows a little. I have before mentioned that I have no political views, but I certainly do not think that female suffrage is a terrible thing. (p. 76)

The doctor's speech openly links English 'weakness' and 'decadence' to the suffragettes' campaign (p. 99). However, the connection between private and public tyranny and servility (and Freeman's ambivalence as a declared non-suffragette) is most apparent in the following revealing anecdote:

They amuse me, these good housewives, who are so much praised for their house-wifely virtues, these placid, docile, obedient, anti-suffragette slaves of the master, Man. They are now relieved [through the general mobilization] from the oppressive sway of their beloved and much feared lords and masters. They are eager to salute the heroes who are brave enough to face those same lords and masters in battle. One poor peasant-woman cried bitterly as the train moved off, carrying her soldier-husband to the front. 'Don't cry my good woman,' said a kindly passer-by. 'Your man will come back safe and sound.'

'Oh, it's not Hans I'm weeping for,' sobbed the woman, 'he can take care of himself. I'm thinking of the poor (sob), poor creatures (sob) who'll come under his fists,' she wailed and sobbed with fresh vigour. Evidently she knew the weight of his fists, and all her sympathies were with his enemies.

The women, oh the women; how they have lost their heads. 'Ach,' said one man, 'our women are the greatest trouble. When we are at home they are quite good, but when we come back from the war they will have found other men -
enemies for preference. It was so in the 1870 war.' I chuckled as I read the accounts of the rebellion of the women. They had always professed their astonishment at the behaviour of the suffragettes. 'The men in England are always too kid gloved; they are too soft, too much the gentleman,' they had said. 'If we had the suffragettes here we would rule them differently. Our men would whip them - they would know how to treat them. Mees Pankhurst! Ach! she would not trouble us long. We would soon put her in her proper place.' I quite believe it. Some of our English women would be vastly astonished if they were under German rule for a while.

'They would not try any starvation tricks with us,' said one man, grimly. 'We'd manage them.' They haven't quite managed their own women, but they will do so. (pp. 195-196)

But after all that Freeman has seen and experienced, patriotic conformism colours her thinking on her return to England: 'Even the suffragettes have ceased from troubling and have settled down to good, sensible work. They are anxious and eager to help their country in some other way than by breaking windows; they are even knitting socks' (p. 367). Nor does she see the ultimate irony of her words, especially the reference to the knitting of socks. For on p. 308 she had written, 'I have heard that in the Frauenverein, the women have been making socks and underclothing for many years. They have been filling storehouses with the fruits of their labour, in preparation for war needs.'

To these four women who all used 'German' in their titles (or descriptive epithets in Richardson's case) Germany exemplified sexism just as it later came to exemplify racism to writers of the thirties and forties, including 'Elizabeth' herself. How women dealt in their work with this potent combination of Germany and sexism, the private life and war would make for an interesting longer study.

NOTES

2. 'Elizabeth'. *The Author of Elizabeth and Her German Garden* (London: The Bodley Head, 1986).

Elizabeth and her German Garden (1898; rpt. London: Virago, 1985), 'Virago Modern Classics'. Pages references will be to this edition and given in the text.
5. The End of a Childhood and Other Stories (London: Heinemann, 1934). Page references will be to this edition and given in the text.


However, Freeman does not appear in Australian Women Writers: A Bibliographical Guide, Debra Adelaide (London: Pandora, 1988), despite her book having been re-printed in 1987, which shows how fugitive published works can become.

7. This has been published posthumously by her daughter Brenda Niccol. Murrumbidgee Memories and Riverina Reminiscences: A Collection of Old Bush History, Hilda M. Freeman (Maryborough, Vic.: The Dominion Press-Hedges & Bell, 1985).


10. ‘The Journey to Bruges’ and ‘Being A Truthful Adventure’, both set in Bruges, and the three ‘Epilogues’ set in Geneva and written about 1913. These may have been titled epilogues as farewells to the form of personal sketch of a foreign setting.


17. In her correspondence Richardson once said ‘Germans lack even a plain everyday decency’: ‘there is a streak of brutality in even the best of them.’ Letter to Oliver Stonor, NLA MS 133/2/243. In ‘Some Notes on My Books’ she says, ‘and in addition came my own intense emotional revulsion against a country that had
meant so much to my development and with which I still had numerous ties. (Originally printed in *Virginia Quarterly Review*, v. 16 (1940), 334-347, 'Some Notes...' was reprinted in *Southerly* 23, 1 (1963), 8-19.) The reference is to the *Southerly* reprint p. 16.


19. The tremendous loss of life at Gallipoli and in France of local young men (her future husband was also wounded at Gallipoli) probably led to the lecture tours on her experiences in Germany which Freeman gave throughout the Ballarat district.


21. Richardson’s stories were never published separately as a set but were arranged together in her 1934 collection.

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**The Next Issue: Vol. XII, No. 2**

**A Celebration of Chinua Achebe**

AN EXPEDITION TO EXPLORE THE INTERIOR

In all ways there is this barrier
fiercer than supplejack or granite indifference
there is fear to hold me
to strangle and out-wait me

The rain and river have trapped us
in our silence and the thought
that it makes no difference if I let this
be my final resting-place
or struggle to find somewhere else

if I make this river's destination mine
or become a remainder
for the wekas to peck out my eyeballs
and see me rot without blessing

17 February 1847
I am sorely disappointed in the appearance of the river
during a fresh. I expected something majestic...

singlehanded
I believed I would be guided to the sources of fable
but I find only the rigours of a fern-root diet
I am repelled as an intruder
mocked as a newcomer and stung by nettles

I have discovered only torn skin and empty belly

And beauty?
That's too harsh a word to speak

Picturesque and romantic
are just hallucinations
26 February
I am getting so sick of this exploring, the walking and
the dietary both being so bad, that were it not for the shame
of the thing, I would return...

The silence falls
as far as rain on the river

the air condenses
and the plants keep to themselves

But this aching
it feels like eyes are upon me

wanting to crush me and
waiting for my emptiness to explode

This aching
my head and stomach burn

my member burns
for want of a woman

and my companions' eyes burn
while their native tongues lick my name

I am a feral child
who chatters with fever

I am your ignorance your majesty
your faithful and attached servant

3 March
This is without exception the very worst country
I have seen in New Zealand.

16 March
I am afraid to quarrel with the natives, for I am told to
look out for myself if I choose, and they will do the same.

Reason is just a push against madness
and the desire to scream out loud
Hunger is to be consumed
in a dream of every skeleton
of every bird we’ve eaten

and all the eels and ferns discarded
and the soil feeding on our human litter

the scabs picked off
cerumen faeces left-over skin
nails saliva hair semen blood
urine and sweat
the bodily travail and its trail of leavings
scrapings and secretions

piecemeal
we discarded ourselves

but in this same midden they would leave me
whole
as a home for fungi
like the snow-white one I ate

21 March
Rain continuing, dietary shorter, strength decreasing,
prospects fearful.

There is an alien organ in my gut
perhaps that same taipo
as the women call it

though I don’t believe
I don’t believe in possession of souls

Only land

And now this true fearful devil
boiling my blood and shivering my flesh

Hot and cold pains rank fluids
and sleep gave no relief
I lay paralysed and heard trees rushing
then passed out like being swallowed up
or blown out like a match

I felt the terrors of a child
I saw snakes
adders rising out of darkness
telling with their tongues they meant no harm
but came to whisper of forgotten things

and motioned me towards a cave

Then it was lost but for their tongues licking
and a sweet smell...

I found myself on a sparsely wooded hillside
walking upwards in the twilight

There were cats coming down past me
with a menacing air but ignoring me

Streaks of coloured light thundered past my head
and a voice boomed through the din

It told me to prepare for the godhead on the hilltop
and then there was silence

I was standing in a clearing
with the dusk gathering around

and there was nothing
but a run-down wooden homestead

Awoke startled
as the clouds revealed their treasure
the sun!

My face flushed in this narcotic air
and I rose to a lush luminous world
a forest that filled me and nourished me
and had changed without moving
So we sprang to our feet and walked on

This is without exception
the closest to paradise I have ever been

30 March
...I felt I was fast losing all my English diet.

Not even black tea with one lump
to wash down the fernroot

Like walking barefoot or a taste for claret
a tolerance for such a diet is acquired slowly

And while considering the decay
that takes root in a body
my tongue plays with fancies of chocolate
or the bitter delights of coffee

After dinner the rain cleared
and the earthsmell rose from the leafrot

Too late to push on
so my fingers idled in the mould
contemplating a living never moving from this spot

an acquired taste for the singularity
that evanescent feeling
and the many delights of reducing to a mould

13 April
It tries one's nerves to be dangling on a flax rope about 100
feet above a granite rock, with a load on the feet and no hold
for the hands.

Dangling indeed it could be so wasted
but for a faith in flax fibres
and the shame of a body fallen victim
to the fear of living

I would not be here
if not first cut off from my lifecord and spat forth
to seek passes majestic rivers magical mountains
pasturelands and roadways for horses goats nails
and seed potatoes

Impressed with the stamp of his consciousness
and the foot poised like a question-mark
on a quivering tongue
he you I we set upon this crazy trip
wanting to make a mark greater than any exclamation
over cakes and tea or a guided tour

But rather some brave trespass
or singlehanded reckless blunder into tanglewood
like vermin through unkempt hair

And as he has done
so do I we you

and until the day I’m blasted home and gone
I remain a faithful and attached servant
leaving only with sadness

Based on Thomas Brunner’s journal of his expedition down the Buller Gorge, published as *The Great Journey: An expedition to explore the interior of the Middle Island, New Zealand, 1846-8* (Christchurch: The Pegasus Press, 1952). He took three months to cover on foot what can now be travelled by car in a couple of hours. His four guides were Maori, two men and two women. The two men he calls Epike (‘...a greedy old fellow, and I should have been better, and have had better fare, without him’), and Ekehu (‘...a faithful and attached servant’). The two women are not identified.
Zimbabwean Short Stories by Black Writers: Still-Birth or Genesis?

This paper is an attempt to describe the circumstances out of which the current Zimbabwean short story has evolved. It is itself a story which may help writers and readers first to understand why the genre has been so long emerging, second to appreciate the particular and embattled heritage at the disposal of new Zimbabwean writers, and third to encourage them by implication to think of new possibilities for the genre now that the historical conditions of pre-Independence no longer pertain.

A glance at the chronology of the Zimbabwean short story by Black writers shows that its progress has been inextricably tied to the history of a handful of magazines. The not so obvious factor, however, is the relationship between the writer and the editor and various aspects of the Settler ideology which the editor puts into effect. This paper will look frequently at these relationships as a principal determinant of the progress and struggle of the emergent genre. It seems that from the start short stories by Blacks were fated to be still-born curiosities.

The earliest stories of any significance were published in 1931 in *Native Mirror*.¹ Prior to that, as far back as 1902, and indeed ever since, writers have published individual versions of Shona animal stories,² but I am less concerned with transliteration of traditional stories than with the emergence of new fictional forms that reflect changes in society. However, fables are interesting, not because, as some critics argue, they reflect a proud heritage, but because they give the clue to a vital point in the history of African literature in English, namely the stance of the first European editors to Black writers. The typical procedure in the early years was for a Shona person to tell the story to a European who then transcribed and edited it for publication.³ This mediation is prompted by the preconception of settlers as to what was available in the storehouse of Shona literature. The mediated stories confirmed the myth that Blacks were childlike since these stories bore a close resemblance to animal stories of the Aesop kind which the European read to
his children. Half of the twelve short stories by Blacks in *Native Mirror* from 1931-34 are Shona fables told in English.

What then of the non-fable stories? There are few of them to begin with, though many more stories were sent in than were published. Some contributors had different notions from the editor on issues like originality and authorship. Readers were sending in stories they had read, often in school books, assuming they were public property just as the folk-tales were. A somewhat annoyed editor wrote in 1931, not for the last time, 'We must therefore ask that only original stories be sent us, that is stories which our readers themselves have written or which they have heard from others.'

The non-fable stories usually centre on an ingenious hero who after various trials is vindicated, or on a villain who is duly punished. The setting is rural, often specific. There are also fanciful stories of no fixed place or time in which the triumph of innocence is the main concern. Evident throughout, though ironically as will become clear, are a sense of justice and a respect for innocence.

To say that *Native Mirror* was the first regular outlet for Black writers in this country is a half truth. Started as a quarterly magazine printed on glossy paper with many photographs it was a wolf in sheep's clothing. The editorials and feature material suggest it was a vehicle for disseminating Settler attitudes and values among Blacks, a point confirmed by a message of encouragement from the Governor of the Colony in the opening issue. Certainly it was the first paper specifically aimed at a Black readership and printed in English, Shona and Ndebele. Many adverts were in the vernacular and to help hesitant White advertisers the paper published 'Useful Facts about the Natives in S. Rhodesia'. Readers were at first predominantly teachers and pupils, and after a few years the editor noted the demand 'for a certain amount of matter more advanced than we have been accustomed regularly to supply'. Once the paper established itself the Director of Native Development recommended it as an alternative reader for senior classes in schools.

The avowed policy put to its Black readers was 'co-operation between the races', its aim 'to reflect the African mind and to be a medium for the expression of African opinion'. Demand for the new venture is reflected in the fact that it moved from a quarterly to a monthly to a weekly.

The first stories published were very short, about 300 words. There were plenty of contributors, often from a mission address. No author's name appears twice. If the paper's hope was that its short stories would 'reflect the African mind' or 'African opinion' the results show remarkably little variation and fit neatly with the Settler expectations mentioned above. They say more about the hope itself and the
editor’s relation with his contributors than about the African mind. The reason becomes clear in the next few years. *Native Mirror* became the *Bantu Mirror* in 1936. Creative writing was dropped. The purpose of the paper, to educate Black opinion into Government ways of thinking, was now evident in its management. A former M.P. and missionary, F.L. Hadfield, became editor and managing director; under him ‘a Native Editor’. Treasury granted the paper £15 per month and a further £180 per annum for subscriptions on the advice of the Director of Native Education. Correspondence shows that Hadfield worked closely with Government though he was wary of the danger of publishing ‘only what was favourable to the Government’. He kept up an appearance of impartiality, but private correspondence shows there was cooperation with and surveillance by the Chief Native Commissioner. Concern for good relationships between the races meant to Hadfield and the Native Commissioner guiding the African mind to think and write like a European and thus fulfil the European’s expectation of his Africanness. The encouragement of truly imaginative African writing was a non-starter.

These details are symptoms of attitudes lined up to control the emergence of Black writing in English, and they are sharply evident in two other incidents in the middle thirties. The Chief Native Commissioner working with the police in the Plumtree area effectively banned *Umsebenzi*, the magazine of the South African Communist Party, long before the arrival of censorship. And in parliamentary debates on the proposed Sedition Bill (1936) members agreed to control the import of literature, particularly from Watch Tower and the Jehovah’s Witnesses which was regarded as harmful to race relations and subversive. The principle was clear that imaginative literature by Blacks should either contribute to an understanding of African culture or promote racial harmony. It should certainly not be political. The function of literature by Blacks was to promote Settler policy by supporting the underlying Settler myths even about Blacks themselves.

This was the climate in which the next journal which gave space to creative writing appeared in 1937, *Mapolisa*. Together with *NADA* and *Fledgling* it reinforced the notion that African writing meant Shona folktales. *Mapolisa* was designed ‘to foster a spirit of comradeship among native members’ of the police. The continued trickle of animal stories - ‘Mudune’s elephant’, ‘How the jackal tricked the lion’, ‘The story of a dog’ - and the dearth of personalised or critical fiction is most immediately explained by the editorial comment, ‘We do not discuss international or home politics, that is what the governments of other countries or our own are doing.’ Some months later the editor is convinced that many Black readers who would like to contribute don’t do so because
they don’t know what to write about. A European staff member drew up a list of topics to help them: ‘this will be appreciated ... by many who would like to write to Mapolisa but cannot think of anything to write about.’ 26 The irony of the argument is that letter columns of other papers repeatedly expressed concern over issues like education and housing. While the editor discouraged anything with a political hue, the readers themselves might not yet have realised the potential for talking about such issues in fiction. Hence the European editorial staff, assisted by African policemen, spent more energy on correcting and editing the expression of African contributors than censoring their ideas.

Stories in Mapolisa frequently show traces of a ghost hand either in oddities of translation from Shona or in their detached tone. 27 Most stories have a strong moral note or deal with a problem of justice in keeping with the wider aim of the magazine, to teach readers ‘how to live lawfully and in peace’. 28 Ever present is the hovering spirit of the editors.

Occasionally a stray voice speaks up for African literature. One such is The African Observer published in Bulawayo in 1934 which in an article far in advance of its day asked, ‘Who is going to interpret Black Africa as Chekhov gave the despised Russian peasant to the world?’ 29 The beginning of an answer and an important moment came in a short-lived liberal magazine called N.B. (1949) which included Doris Lessing among its contributors. A short story by Lawrence Vambe, ‘No imagination whatever’, 30 deals with the perplexing experiences of a young man Njombo who comes to town to make money. The story is an ironic protest at the presumptuous values of a White woman who employs Njombo as a gardener, the acquiescence of a fellow Black employee in her scheme of relationships, and the absurdity of their means of communication: ‘Njombo felt like telling the missus that he did not understand the kitchen kaffir. At best he guessed, but was afraid to say so.’ 31 The story is a prototype of much fiction by Black writers that has since been published.

Vambe was involved too as first editor in another encouraging development, African Parade, which appeared in November 1953. 32 It was the first popular magazine ‘edited and printed by Africans for Africans’. 33 Despite its financial backing from a South African based company that wanted no radical politics, it was the first African magazine not covertly attached to or supervised by civil servants. 34 Here was the first local competitor with South African forerunners like Drum and Zonk. 35 The opening number said the paper wanted to help the African ‘discover himself and his talents and to take pride in his culture and his contribution to Western civilization’. 36 This aim, much in the footsteps of Drum, together with a clear-cut acceptance of English as the lingua
franca and Shona as a vernacular to be proud of,37 make it a more aggressively African magazine than any of its predecessors. The contents of the first few numbers bear this out. Contributors and material come from all over central Africa. Stories ‘by African Writers’ have a page of their own, and folk-tales which would have been for adults in Native Mirror are put in a column of bed-time stories explicitly for children.38 Stories by African writers sometimes more varied and witty than previously are often brief, improbable, and moralistic as before.39 However, the claim to put culture and entertainment ahead of news, a prize of £10 for a story,40 and the absence of patronising editorials did suggest fresh possibilities for writers.

For the first time in a local magazine journalism acknowledged and tried to be sensitive to Black readers’ sensibilities - cartoon strips with African figures and narrative, detective stories, historical fiction - ‘How Tshaka made a Portuguese Doctor Swallow 150 Quinine Tablets’41 - and autobiographical articles, the political potential of which later became an issue between the editor and management.42 Feature short stories take on a new confidence and relevance to day-to-day experience of Blacks. ‘Canana’’s story, ‘The Man with a Beard’ is a wry-humoured precursor of later stories and poems about the rural innocent on his first trip to town.43 Mbofana’s ‘The Life and Death of Negondo of Zwimba’ is the first story to present conflict between a rural community and Government. It celebrates the decision of the spirits over a Government plan to supply a borehole.44 Here too were the first examples of long complicated domestic dramas.45 When a history of Zimbabwean Black writing comes to be written African Parade must feature as the first and only sustained attempt before Independence to Africanise fiction in this country. The transformation of the writing from a timid, restricted, oppressed art form to a fresh, sometimes gangling and adventuresome youth just when Government was preparing to launch its Literature Bureau is remarkable. Post World-War II circumstances, Federation, Secondary schooling for Blacks, Vambe himself are contributing factors.46 The boldness of the stance and its variety were new phenomena that need further analysis.

The anomaly remains, however, that no lasting achievement in fiction came out of Africa Parade. It failed to mobilise a new generation of writers as Drum did in South Africa.47 Writers of the 1950s like Mutswairo and Chidzero - the first to produce novels in Shona - were abroad. Mutswairo wrote much of Feso at Adams College in Natal,48 and Chidzero having graduated from Roma had gone to Canada for postgraduate work. When then did writers not take advantage of the platform which Parade gave them? One reason was the paper’s policy to encourage new writers rather than establish reputations.49 Another may
have been that writers and editors were sensitive to the ever closer vigilance of Government on new publications. The Subversive Activities Act of 1950 which started out as a Bill for the suppression of Communism allowed *inter alia* the ‘prohibition of the printing, publication, importation or dissemination of books, magazines, periodicals, or newspapers’. This Act set the climate in which literature would operate for the next thirty years.

Short stories in *African Parade* turn more and more to romance and melodrama as the years pass. A title like ‘Marry me now, how many men can resist it?’ indicates the later direction. This perceptible demise of initial promise and the absence of engaged writing is linked to entrepreneurs who in papers like *Popular Post* (1961-62), *Advance* (1970-71), *Prize* (1973-76) saw their chance to capitalise on a fast expanding Black urban readership. The tenor of the management of these magazines is moderate in politics and conformist in morals. This is repeatedly evident in the editorials of *Popular Post* and short stories such as ‘The Story of John the Lodger’ by Paul Chidyausiku which, while titillating the reader’s excitement with improbable accidents and tense movements, affirm Settler versions of such values as loyalty, good sense, justice. *Prize* with two short stories a month, and contributions from promising writers like Geoffrey Ndhlala, is nevertheless a colourful commercial venture designed to engage regular subscriptions from a middle class African readership. The presence of a strikingly innovative story - ‘My Poor Feet, A Conversation Overheard by Charles Mungoshi’ might easily pass unnoticed. It is not difficult to see behind the undiscriminating vogue for melodramatic domestic stories financial backers such as African Newspapers.

An interesting contrast is the less flashy effort of little magazines like *Chiedza* (1969), later *Edzai* (1973-78). This was a cyclostyled magazine published in the Gwelo Municipal Council for distribution in the town’s high density townships. It encouraged short stories in the three major languages - English, Shona, Ndebele - and the writing is less self-conscious, less strained for dramatic effects. The early numbers, despite now familiar topics like success at school or in love, have the promise of an unpretentious forum for new writers, more concerned for their story than the money market. Yet even in such a local magazine, the censoring hand eventually finds it has to declare itself. In June 1975 the editor writes, ‘We hope more of you will send us articles on any interesting subject. However they should not be of a political nature as this is basically a social magazine’ (p. 1). Not long after there are no short stories in *Edzai*.

The anomaly remains, however, that magazines and papers with a more open political mind than Government or its supporting editors -
Daily News (1956), Central African Examiner (1957), African Star (1960) - did very little to promote imaginative writing. In the turbulent political climate of the times, the banning of the NDP in 1961, of ZAPU in 1962, the emergence of ZANU, the collapse of Federation, UDI, short fiction reads like a trivial distraction from what preoccupied readers' minds.

Yet romance is not simply trivialisation. It has its own ideology of displacement. Individuals with no roots yearn for fulfilment in a one-to-one emotional relationship which itself holds the promise of eternal security in an insecure world. 'Romantic love, in the modern sense,' writes John Berger, 'is a love uniting or hoping to unite two displaced persons.' The rising number of romance stories in the 1960s may be symptomatic of individuals who have lost their cultural bearings, are spiritually homeless, and look inwards rather than at the society for fulfilment in an egoistical dream. The larger socio-political context offers neither sense nor hope. Seen in this light Marechera's House of Hunger (1978) could be regarded as the intense culmination of much that had been happening before him.

Particularly blatant exploitation of the malaise is evident in certain stories in Advance, a glossy all-colour monthly magazine managed by European editors for the urban African market. Amidst a welter of advertisements, prizes, advice on the pools, horse racing, trotting, are souped up real-life success stories, The Cripple who Made Good romance photo serials, and melodramatic short stories set in the city about the ills of drink, theft, and wife stealing. 'Burned Bridges' for example is a story by Amos Munjanja about a White man and his wife who having stolen what he thinks is a bag of money which will solve their problems discover the bag is full of pages from a clergyman's notebook. The manner of the story and its material details leave a suspicion that Munjanja, who wrote several stories of the same kind in various magazines, had a money-making formula to write what the European editors thought Africans wanted to read. In a sense we are no further forward than the mentality of the 1930s with this twist. Being embroiled in the attractions of an urban consumer society Blacks were persuaded by all the means of high technology printing, including full-colour girlie covers, not to look for an identity but to fall in with a European bourgeois life style. Short stories of romance and crime are one of the most striking features of this process.

Just as Advance was the reverse of African Parade so is there another opposition which signifies a major change in the way Blacks saw the role and materials of art. In 1943 Stephen Katsande produced a painting at Cyrene of a Black Christ figure sitting teaching two younger men. The details of setting, clothes, accoutrements present Christ as a peaceable teacher in an African setting. In the 1960s when Canon Paterson
Cover of *Advance* magazine.
Advertisement from *Advance* magazine.

Feature article on Native Life in *Advance* magazine.
had moved his painting school from Cyrene to Harare his pupils expressed their preoccupations in a series of paintings which depict in strong lively colours children in an urban street stoning cars. The change is from parable to realism, from preaching to politics, virtue to violence, gentle to strong colours. This dramatic change in political consciousness heralds a new generation of artists. Young writers like Mungoshi, Muchemwa, Marechera and Zimunya take up a similar critical and protesting note in their early poems and stories of the 1970s.

The progress of the Zimbabwean short story particularly in the 1950s suggests that creative writing here had a decidedly different history to that in other parts of Africa. There are no signs of the effects of ngrititude, no attempt to tell the outside world about injustices inside Rhodesia, no equivalent of the Onitsha popular literature, no impact from the University to equate with Ibadan or Makerere. The literature was rarely produced by ‘an elite that had received its university training in African institutions, on African soil, in the midst of their African society’.

One reason for this scenario is evident in the official response to the first slim volume of short stories published by a Black writer in 1972. It is not unfamiliar if we look back to the 1930s. The same anxiety and stiffness of resolve to keep writers off politics is all the more strident. Mungoshi’s *Coming of the Dry Season* was banned and the unsuccessful appeal against the banning heard in camera. In his story ‘The Accident’, the particular point of the ban, Mungoshi was said to have brought the police into disrepute. Mungoshi had touched a nerve that had been twitching for decades. What neither Native Commissioners nor the Subversive Activities Act (1950) could control, however, was the imaginative sensitivity and enterprise of new young writers. What they did not realise was that romance, melodrama and in the late 1970s the rise of the detective story were symptomatic not of assimilation into European middle class magazine literature but of alienation. Mungoshi and Marechera in different ways make this point. With searching but assured poise, with irony and protest, sometimes poignant sometimes ferocious, Mungoshi and Marechera brought English onto the side of the alienated. Following on from Vambe’s editorials of the 1950s the Settler’s language had become the stick with which to beat him.

Marechera’s *House of Hunger*, as suggested earlier, differs from the decade of romance stories in that it explores and rebels against the triviality and alienation in relationships which romance had offered as attractive. Together with Mungoshi he is one of the first to scrutinise the quality of felt experiences in daily life. Previously those experiences had been pushing through cracks in the wary consciousness of a few writers only to be suppressed or modified if they ever got past patron-
ising editors. Thanks first to Vambe, then in the early 1970s to Mungoshi, then to Marechera what looked like a still-birth for several decades had finally and ironically metamorphosed itself into genesis.

NOTES

2. The earliest known example is ‘A Mashona Fable’, Mashonaland Paper, Nov. 1902, p. 3.
3. See S. Chanakira, ‘Mashona Stories’, contributed by M.E. Taylor, NADA, 6 Dec. 1928, 91-95. The European transcriber was often a Native Commissioner. For Albert Gerard’s argument that ‘generation after generation of newly educated writers displayed immense respect for their ancient oral traditions’ see Albert Gerard, ‘1500 Years of Creative Writing in Black Africa’, Research in African Literatures, 12, 2, 1981, 150. There is scant evidence of this in early Zimbabwean writing in English.
4. Native Mirror, Dec. 1931, p. 1. The point is made more harshly in Native Mirror, April 1932, p. 1. It is also noted in Mapolisa, March 1939, p. 3. See also the editor’s comments in African Parade, Oct. 1954, pp. 5, 45.
5. For example, Anon. ‘Story of a man and his family’, Native Mirror, Oct. 1932, p. 18.
6. The paper was published in Bulawayo on 1 Jan. 1931, price 6d. The first number carried a message from the Governor, ‘I was pleased when I was told that a journal was about to be started for the Natives’ (p. 1).
9. Native Mirror, Oct. 1932, p. 1. The editorial intention was to expose readers to good simple English. The editor noted, ‘we frequently have to correct the English in letters written for the columns, “From Our Native Readers”’, Native Mirror, Aug. 1934, p. 10.
12. Native Mirror, July 1931, p. 1. By 1934 stories had to be 500-1200 words long. Prizes of at least 10/- or books were given for the best serial story (Native Mirror, Aug. 1934, p. 16).
13. Education for Africans according to L. Vambe, fell into two categories. Students from centres like Domboshawa and Tjolotjo became policemen, agricultural demonstrators, interpreters, whereas mission schools like Waddilove ‘turned out a much more independent type of person’, often future political leaders (L. Vambe, An Ill Fated People (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 235).
14. In March 1936 a monthly paper similar in format and objectives was started in Northern Rhodesia, Mutende: The African Newspaper of Northern Rhodesia. In Nyasaland Zo-ona, started in 1924, proposed to Government that in exchange for a guarantee against financial losses it could be used ‘for purposes of propaganda’ (Governor of Nyasaland, 29 June 1935: Zimbabwe National Archive S 1542/L11/1933-40 (hereafter Nat. Arch.)).
15. Secretary for Native Affairs to the Chief Secretary, Nairobi, 1 July 1939 (Nat. Arch. S 1542/L11 p. 2).
16. The £180 was ‘on condition that a copy of the newspaper is supplied to each Mission and Kraal school once a month ... in the Colony’ (Secretary for Native Affairs, 1 July 1939: Nat. Arch. S 1542/L11/1933-40; L 3061/L11/9/39). See also Chief Native Commissioner to the Secretary (Treasury), 18 April 1939 (Nat. Arch. S 1542/L11, ref. J 1649/39) and letter to Chief Native Commissioner from the manager, Bantu Mirror (Nat. Arch. H 617/C11/1/39). Even so C.A.G. Power in a talk on ‘The African Press’ was able to say Bantu Mirror was ‘a commercial undertaking, receiving no subsidy’ (National Affairs, 11, i, p. 2).


18. See the frequent correspondence between Hadfield and the Chief Native Commissioner in Nat. Arch. S 1542/L11/1933-40.


20. One member referred to the ‘subversive and seditious propaganda and literature in this Colony much of which unfortunately has taken root in the native mind’ (Debates, Sedition Bill, 1936, XVIII, 1, 1022, 23 April 1936; cited by Songore, op. cit.).

21. The European view that African culture was a combination of the traditional and the exotic is borne out in Government’s move in 1936 to send a group of Rhodesian Blacks to the Empire Exhibition in Johannesburg. The plan was to send weavers, dancers and iron workers. The latter, however, ‘would not, probably, have the same value as the dancers from the point of view of advertisement for tourists’ (Secretary for Native Affairs to Secretary to the Prime Minister, 29 May 1936: Nat. Arch. S 1542/A11, 160). Another group was sent to England in 1936 for a film on Rhodes, and there was an unsuccessful attempt to send 100 African dancers to the United States in 1937. For Settler myths about Blacks in Rhodesia see A.J. Chennells, Settler Myths and the Southern Rhodesian Novel, D.Phil. thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 1982.

22. Monthly magazine of the Police force costing 3d, aimed at Black lower income readers.

23. Editorial, Mapolisa, April 1938, p. 3.


25. Editorial, Mapolisa, Oct. 1938, p. 3. It is interesting to note that South African writers Plaatje, Abrahams and Mphahlele had published novels or collections of stories by the late 1940s.

26. Editorial, Mapolisa, July 1939, p. 3.


31. Ibid., p. 21.
32. A monthly magazine produced on relatively poor quality paper at 6d. It included several photographs and cartoons.
33. Front Cover, African Parade, Nov. 1953. Along with Vambe as editor was Mr Mlambo as proof reader and corrector.
34. See interview with W. Musarurwa who worked on the paper in the 1950s and 1960s; Interview, 17 Feb. 1987 (Zimbabwe Literature Documentation Centre, English Department, University of Zimbabwe).
35. ‘We certainly faced competition from Drum ... it contained political articles’ (Musarurwa, op. cit.).
37. Editorial, African Parade, Jan. 1954, p. 5, ‘The hallmark of true culture and real education is to value and cling on to one’s language.’
38. African Parade, Nov. 1953, p. 34.
39. See ibid., p. 25.
40. Musarurwa, op. cit.
42. See Noah M. Murapa, ‘From the old to the present ways’, African Parade, Dec. 1953, pp. 21, 42. When Musarurwa became editor in 1960 his first article was a biography of Kenyatta. The director Mr Avery did not want to publish it. There was a general feeling that there was need to suppress African political feeling since it had been aroused by events in Kenya’ (Musarurwa, op. cit.).
43. African Parade, Jan. 1954, p. 19. ‘Canana’ might have been a pseudonym for the editor Vambe (Musarurwa, op. cit.).
45. For example a six part serial, ‘Marizwikuru, the missing child’ by Guyu-Kunaka, a pen name for ‘one of the foremost Rhodesian African writers’ (unidentified), African Parade, April 1954, pp. 14, 33.
46. Many of the articles came from missions and schools (Musarurwa, op. cit.). The intention of the Native Affairs Department in establishing the Southern Rhodesia Literature Bureau was to supply literature by Africans that was moral and wholesome in the view of Government. With reference to the tasks of the Information services the Secretary for Native Affairs wrote in 1953, ‘Some effort to fill the vacuum or the hunger in the mind created by schooling must be made if undesirable influences are not to come in’ (Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs, 1953, p. 12). The point is made again in 1956, ‘The demand [for books] is far ahead of supply and there is, therefore, every opportunity for purveyors of morally and politically pernicious literature to gain a foothold’ (Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs, 1956, p. 87).
48. Interview with Dr S. Mutswairo, 12 Feb. 1987 (Zimbabwe Literature Documentation Centre, English Department, University of Zimbabwe).
49. Musarurwa, op. cit.
50. Subversive Activities Act (1950), 7.i. It was strongly opposed by the Rhodesia Railways Workers Union. British Prime Minister Attlee replying to the Governor of Southern Rhodesia remarked sourly, ‘His Majesty [King George VI] will not be advised to exercise his power of disallowance’ in respect of the Act (Nat. Arch. Subversive Activities Bill (1950) S/483/2/17).


58. The paintings are in the Zimbabwe National Archives.

59. Gerard, op. cit., p. 157. I am indebted to him also for some of the general features of the development of Anglophone African Literature.

60. The Literature Bureau was known by Black writers to practise political censorship on their material. Both Mungoshi and Marechera published their first books outside the country.


I am grateful to Mr C. Manditsvanga, a student research assistant from the English Department who helped me on this project, to the Research Board, University of Zimbabwe, and to the staff of the National Archives who were most co-operative. The paper was presented at a conference on Zimbabwean literature in English at the University of Zimbabwe, 23-24 April 1987.
Jack Hodgins. Photograph by Lawrence McLagan.
Jack Hodgins

INTERVIEW

Russell McDougall interviewed Jack Hodgins at Writers' Week, Adelaide Festival of Arts, 5 March 1990.

Jack, I'd like to begin by asking you to tell a little about your Vancouver Island background.

I was born into a family of loggers and farmers in a tiny community - it wasn't even a town, just a sort of crossroads - of sixty-acre farms: people worked in the woods as loggers, but at home they had a couple of cows and a chicken-run and huge gardens. A person's father spent the days up in the mountains cutting down all the giant trees and then came home and spent the rest of the time clearing land for pasture. It was a community where hardly anybody went on to University and certainly few people read books. I went to a very small school, where I read the whole library, which was one shelf across the back of a classroom, quite quickly. So I did a lot of re-reading of books. I think that might be significant. The few books that I read I re-read many times.

What kind of books were they?

Everything - particularly aimed at young people, like the Hardy Boys - that kind of stuff. But also historical novels. Anything I could get my hands on. Probably little that was 'good' literature. I was in high school before I started reading people like Thornton Wilder and Ernest Hemingway. My mother was a reader and tended to get Book-of-the-Month-Club type of books, so I read a lot of those. I was given books for Christmas by relatives but, I sensed, with some disdain: 'He's not much good at things that matter, but at least he can read, so give him a book.'

What would have been the normal expectation for someone in your situation?

Books were something that people 'did' when they didn't have anything that needed doing. In other words, they were purely for recreation,
purely for filling in time. But in a community like that there was never a time when you shouldn't be doing something else. There were fences to be mended and cows to be milked and gardens to be weeded and firewood to be hauled: decent proper things that you should be doing with your time. So reading books was always stolen time for me, and it was a thing that was never considered appropriate behaviour - for a boy especially. Books were for old women. People actually said that. I was very careful for many years not to be caught too often with a book in my hand...

But I did have an inspiring English teacher in high school.

It's an old story.

This young fellow moved into the district. It was his first teaching job. He was right out of University. He was twenty-two, or something like that. He was a baseball player of some talent who therefore became known in the whole valley. He had apparently just broken off an engagement: so he was a plum catch for everybody’s daughters and was invited everywhere. He happened to board in a house owned by some people my parents know. He had a way of teaching literature that was just magical. A wonderful teacher! But the fact that he was a male was already a completely foreign thing. For a male to be standing at the front of the room reading poetry and talking about Gray’s ‘Elegy in a Country Churchyard’ as if it was a normal thing for people to do was quite astonishing. And then to overhear his landlady telling my mother that he sat up all the night typing because he wanted to be a writer, changed my whole life. This was the man who, when Hemingway won the Nobel prize, ordered six copies of The Old Man and the Sea, so that we could actually 'read' it. He read the whole thing to us. This was to a bunch of guys and girls who would never have been exposed to anything like that before at all... I never told him at the time how inspiring he was as a teacher. And I never told him I wanted to write. It took me fifteen years to write to that man and tell him how important he’d been.

Actually we had a kind of reunion years later. He was a guest speaker at a conference in Calgary. So was I. He stood up and told all these people from right across the country about his first teaching job - he described the school right to a tee, said how proud he was of me. We both got quite sentimental about it all... He’s a real hero to me. He came in to our little isolated community from outside and showed me that something unthinkable was possible. Since then, I understand he’s moved to Australia!
Your fiction does often have outsiders coming into the community and having a great effect, for better or worse.

Yes. It seems to be a natural pattern for me: to establish a set-up that looks pretty stable and then bring in an outsider. The latest novel does the same thing. The community is set and the people are happy and then this woman steps off the boat and all hell breaks loose. It is one way stories get started in my imagination.

The destabilising usually seems to be quite a positive process.

Oh yes. I think it can be. Maybe it comes out of the kind of experience I've just described: people came into that closed, small community where I felt... I don't know what the word is... I'm in the process of sorting it through. The next book I'm going to write is dealing with this. On the one hand, much of my writing seems to be celebrating the sense of community that you can have in a small place. On the other hand, I remember how painfully restrictive it was. This other side that I'm trying to capture is the way in which a community like that assigns roles to people, condemns people to roles which they find difficult to break out of. People are almost instantly described with maybe two adjectives. That describes their entire life, and people will tend to grow up and live them. My younger brother at the age of two was already 'the hellion' of the family. He still refers to himself as 'the black sheep'. (It is probably the only family in the world in which 'black sheep' is a compliment!) People were all labelled very quickly. That's the painful, horrifying side of this enviable sense of community. That's what I'm exploring now...

What was your journey out of that community?

I was quite young, actually, though it seemed to take forever. I was seventeen when I graduated from high school and went to Vancouver, to the University of British Columbia. I was very anxious to get out, although I was then homesick for most of the first year. It was a huge leap. I had only been off the island, maybe twice.

Was there any opposition?

Oh no. It was accepted as natural and right. Maybe this is where that role-assigning came to my rescue. It was always known, it seems to me in retrospect, that I would go off to University. It was always insisted within the family, for instance, that we could be anything we wanted
to be in this world except loggers. My mother said she was willing to spend her life worrying about her husband; she was not going to spend her life worrying about her children. People were killed all the time in the logging camp. My parents were always encouraging of my plans.

What was that life like that you missed out on?

It meant going off into the mountains every morning at something like four or five o’clock and working with trees that were giants. They were cutting down trees that were fifteen feet across the base and three to four hundred feet high, with pretty appalling safety standards in those days. My Dad had two brothers killed in the woods. This was fairly normal. He was wounded a couple of times. I remember as a child there was one time when he didn’t come home. If he was even five minutes late the tension level in the house was incredible. If he was a half hour late we were all packed into the car and headed out to company Headquarters where the officers worked to see what was wrong. When he did come home the next day, this particular time, his head was entirely wrapped in bandages, with just two eyes looking out. I thought he was a mummy. A limb had fallen and cut open his nose and cut off part of his ear. The fact that he was alive was something to celebrate. It was a very, very dangerous life. I wasn’t even tempted...

I went to UBC and took teacher-training. The biggest scholarship in the district was earmarked for teacher-training. I thought, ‘Well, I have to be something, so I might as well be that.’ I had had more than one good teacher as a role model. I had a Math teacher I admired. The English teacher was very serious and very young and very eager, while the Math teacher was laid-back, joking, made everything very easy to learn. By the time I was through my five years of University I realised I wanted to be both of them in the class-room... I got my degree in secondary education and started teaching high-school English and Math.

All the time I was at University though, in my heart I knew that I would write a best-seller before I ever had to graduate and go into a class-room. I never really believed I’d have to go into a class-room. This was the time when a whole bunch of nineteen-year-old sensations hit the world as writers: Françoise Sagan, Marie-Claire Blais in Quebec... When I got to be twenty-two and I still hadn’t published a book I thought, ‘Oh God...’

Were you writing by that time?

I started writing when I started reading, I guess, when I was six. I wrote a novel when I was fourteen, in a scribbler with a pencil - set in
ancient Rome. It started out with the Emperor pacing up and down the hallways complaining because the Christians were making too much noise in the jails. It obviously came from watching movies. Those were the days of 'Quo Vadis' and 'The Robe'. I was writing while I was in school; but I didn’t tell anybody. I was writing while I was at University. I took one course from Earle Birney. There was no Creative Writing Department, but Birney, who was a highly respected poet and successful novelist, was teaching in the English Department. I remember again it was one of those turning points in my life... A long, long skinny man with white floating hair... I'd read some of his work. I knew his reputation. I thought, 'I've got to study with that guy.' There were two writing courses. One was introductory - poetry, fiction and drama - and if you passed that you could go into a second year in fiction. I wanted to go straight into the second year, so I went to him and asked if I could get into the course. He said, 'Well, show me some of your work.' So I showed him two or three short stories and he took me into his course. And then gave me terrible marks for my first stories - it was a real shock to me. I thought, 'I'll show you!' Gradually, I improved. By Christmas I was getting A's... but it was sheer determination to show him that he hadn't made a mistake in letting me into the advanced class.

Do you regard Birney as a mentor?

I think the important thing was that he took my work seriously... I'm very grateful to him. Years and years and years later The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne won the Governor-General's Award, which was to be given in Vancouver that year. The Governor-General was to make the presentation as always, but Tito died in Yugoslavia and the Governor-General had to go to the funeral. They asked Earle Birney to give the Awards in his stead. I guess he must have been given the winning books to read on the plane from Toronto. He said he was half way across the country before he made the connection that I was a former student of his. It was quite thrilling for me to actually have this wonderful old man - I think he was eighty by then - give me the prize.

Then you went teaching...

I do not know how I did this. I married, moved to the Island, started a family, built a house, started a career teaching, taught night school in order to finish the rooms of the house - one room at a time - and wrote five novels in the first five years. I don't know how I did it. These were all novels that I never published. Actually, I probably didn't
do five that fast. But I did a lot of short stories, and eventually did five novels that were never published. But I was writing every spare moment when I wasn’t hammering nails. This is a very Vancouver Island thing to do, by the way. You grew up, you started yourself a family and you built yourself a house.

But you didn’t write yourself five novels.

Obviously I was proving that I was normal while privately doing this very perverse thing that was anything but normal. And I never told anybody outside of my immediate family - until I finally sold a story, at age twenty-nine.

To?

Northwest Review in Oregon. I sold stories to a number of American magazines, and even an Australian magazine, before any Canadian magazine would touch me.

Which was the Australian magazine?

Westerly.

So that was the beginning of your interest in Australia?

Yes. Bill New at the University of British Columbia was a good friend of mine. He and I went through teacher-training together, but he stayed on and got his Master’s degree and then went off and got his Doctorate in England. He read my work and gave me critiques. I guess I must have said, ‘Look - I’ve run out of places to send stories. Where do I send them?’ He said, ‘Who don’t you try Australia?’ He gave me the names of some Australian magazines - Westerly and Meanjin. Westerly sounded attractive because I identify with the West.

I guess I had twenty stories published before anyone was interested in a collection. In fact, when Macmillan (Canada) did show some interest in seeing my short stories I sent them twenty stories which had been published in magazines and they picked ten of them. Then, in the period that it took for this book to come out I was constantly writing new stories and adding them and withdrawing other stories. So by the time Spit Delaney’s Island came out, it was quite a different book than the one originally accepted.

It had in fact become a book in which the stories were not utterly discrete.
Oh yes. In fact both of the Spit Delaney stories were added after the book was accepted. I wrote one Spit Delaney story and sent it in and then six months later - it took a while for the book to come out - I felt 'incomplete' about Spit: something was still needed, and I sat down and wrote the other story. I kept the very first story that I had published in for sentimental reasons. I'm kind of glad because, even though I think it's very derivative, it seems to appeal to other people. There is a guy right now making an animated cartoon of it, and there was a television adaptation of it, 'Every Day of His Life', and a stage adaptation will soon be produced.

The teaching seems to have left its mark in at least one way, Jack - that is, although you eventually gave it up to concentrate on writing, you're teaching again now in the Creative Writing programme at the University of Victoria. Then there are the three books for schools, which have become text books. Do you think there is a connection between the writing and the teaching?

I suspect there is, though it is hard sometimes for me to see it. They seem like totally separate worlds; and yet I know that the teaching is good for me as a writer. Working with the students is good because it forces me to think about what I'm doing. I have to understand why I'm doing things in certain ways in order to help a student solve his or her problems in writing, not by giving them my solutions but by knowing the process I go through to get the solutions. Also I've seen students starting with a problem that I've had to help them solve and I'll be able to see that remarkably often that's exactly what I was looking for in something I'm working on. The other thing that is useful is that it forces me out of the house. My instinct would be to become something of a hermit. I find it very hard to face the public. I find it very hard to go into the classroom - after all these years. I've been teaching for twenty-nine years and I still find it difficult to walk into the classroom. If I didn't have the job I would be in danger of becoming very anti-social and very private.

And yet, thinking of the life of a hermit, one imagines a certain fixity. There is so much travelling in your fiction - not just travelling for its own sake, rather as a virtue of some kind.

Yes - exploring the world. Travelling as the journey of a person's life: it's all very important to me. But much of it has been a great effort. I will always do these things because I know that I will be glad I've done them and it's good for me and I need to do them; otherwise I will turn into a cobwebbed, dusty curmudgeon.
I have always thought that there is a creative tension in your writing between the idea of being in a place and the other idea of moving out from that place.

I'm not surprised. I'm not deliberately putting it there; but it exists in my life. It exists within me - that kind of tension out of my childhood, the desirability of a community but the negative things, the tensions between the good and the bad. I guess I feel ambivalent about almost everything. That can be quite good for a fiction writer. It saves me from ever becoming too dogmatic. The minute I start feeling I really know something for sure this time, I start to see the other side of it. It's great for fiction, but it's hell for 'real life'... In fact, one of the tensions in my life is that I always find it easier to be in someone else's shoes than in my own. I'm constantly identifying with other people and suffering on their behalf. So, that business of searching for a place, the travel through the world is very important to me: the exploring, the journey, the growing. To me, all travel is growth. But at the same time it's also a search for home. I think I've always been searching for a new version of the home I left behind when I was seventeen. I know I'll never find it and that it doesn't exist. When I go back to the original, it's great to visit my parents, and I love going back and exploring things, but I know I could never live there.

But you don't really live far from there, do you?

I'm four hours away. No - it's not far. It's still the same world. It's still the same island. But I'm living in a small city...

What was your sense of the City when you were a child in the Valley?

Oh, the City was a magic world where everybody was intelligent and everybody read books, and everybody had a tolerance for people who read books. They were another breed. There was something understood in that community that people who lived in the city were a cut above other people. You know, 'Some day if we have enough money we can move to town.' Town was seven miles away - just a little town - but that was a cut above: polite society in the Town. We were peasants. We lived in the bush. To go to the City was even a step beyond going to Town. It was entering the world of the educated. The wealthy, the cultured - and the magical. Of course, it was a distorted vision.

What about Toronto and the cities of the East?
Toronto was as far away as New York or Los Angeles or Tokyo in my imagination. It was the source of a lot of things that came into the home. It was the source of television. It was the source of a lot of books. It had that kind of magic. It was where you wanted your publisher to be if you ever had one. But it wasn’t a place I was tempted to move to.

*In Vancouver you were not ever part of a literary circle or anything like that?*

Interestingly enough, it was at a time when there was the growth of a very strong literary school in Vancouver - the Black Mountain school. I was in the same American literature class as George Bowering, for instance; but I was not part of the campus literary scene. I was a country kid who had come to the City to learn the skills that were going to get me my passport to that magical world where I would suddenly turn into William Faulkner.

*Faulkner is an influence that you have had to resist, isn’t he?*

Yes. I fell under the spell of his rhetoric very early. I probably had a distorted view of him. I fell in love with his language and with his region and with the people that he wrote about. I somehow felt that they had a lot in common with the people I had grown up with. For years I thought this was a figment of my imagination, that I wanted to see my own world in his. When I went to Mississippi about eight years ago - to Oxford - to his house, I was surprised at the number of things the place had in common with where I had grown up. It wasn’t just my imagination after all. There was a landscape that seemed very similar to the Comox Valley. I think maybe it was also that underlying melodrama within Faulkner that attracted me. It seemed to me that he was getting away with writing about pretty melodramatic stuff, but somehow making it sound as if it were much much more than mere melodrama. And I found myself trying to imitate his writing, writing novels that you’d swear were set in the South - you know, plantation houses sitting on the edge of a cliff on Vancouver Island. Terrible. Terrible. It was almost as though I wanted to take his skin and put it on. I liked everything about his public image. The gentleman farmer - I liked that image: the fellow who lived in a beautiful mansion and rode horses and didn’t do anything else but write books in his little office... I didn’t find out until reading a recent biography that he was going crazy trying to write enough to make enough money to keep sixteen adults alive, because they all depended upon him for their living - his mother, his brothers, his stepchildren...
How did you go about writing against Faulkner?

The first thing I did was to decide I couldn't read him any more.

What stage of your writing career was this?

We're talking about my late twenties, when I still hadn't published anything but was writing all those novels and all those short stories. His was the standard of excellence and I wanted to write things to sit beside his novels. I somehow got it into my head that they had to be like his. But at some point I had to decide 'No more Faulkner. I've got to find my own way of writing and my own world to write about.' That's when I started to learn to write. Late twenties - I hadn't sold a story - and I decided this was it. 'If I don't sell a story by the time I'm thirty I'm not going to write again.' So I got out every book I could find on writing from the library and I read them all and made notes about how to do things. After all this time - it was the first time I'd ever sat down and thought, 'Maybe I can actually teach myself how to write.' I re-read a number of short stories that I really admired and I took them all apart to see what made them work. I remember lying on my stomach on the living-room floor and starting to write a story, thinking 'I'm going to put in everything I know how to do.' And I sold the story. That was my first. It saved my life! And I decided that if I could do it once I could do it another time. To that point it had all been fantasy. I'd been thinking, 'If I want it bad enough it will happen.' I hadn't had the humility to learn how to make it happen, tiny step by tiny step.

In finding your own way to write and your own world to write about, how conscious were you of the blend that you were throwing together of epic, allegory, parody, etc. - all of the things that work so well in your writing, but which traditionally of course were thought to be separate genres?

Much of this was a response to an impossibility. First I had to learn how to listen to the voices of my own world. Those are the people whose stories I'm going to try and write. I'm going to have to accept the fact that I've been given Vancouver Island. I've not been given New York, or Los Angeles, or London, or Dublin.' It took a while to realise I had been given a kind of goldmine. I'm glad now that I didn't have James Joyce looking over one shoulder and W.B. Yeats looking over the other shoulder. I had nobody looking over my shoulder at all. I had no models in that landscape or with those people. I was writing about people I had never seen on the page myself, aside from in some nature books by Roderick Haig-Brown. I was writing dialogue that was not
like dialogue that I had read before, because people on Vancouver Island talk slightly different from people elsewhere. The short stories I was writing were pretty traditional in structure and approach, but in the back of my head was this big thing beginning to form that didn't look like anything I'd ever seen before. There was no reason to believe that this would be something you could call a 'novel', or something that you could put between covers. I spent a lot of time trying to think of a way to fit this story into a traditional pattern. It didn't work. And there came a time - I can remember making this decision - 'I've written five safe, imitative novels that nobody wanted. What have I got to lose? I'm going to write this one the way I want to write it!' I took a half year off teaching and every day went into a room and just sort of listened - and it came in rapid passionate bursts of energy that lasted for a certain length of time and then disappeared - and then a whole new kind of energy and a whole new way of looking at it came for a while and then disappeared. I came back, for instance, from a summer in Ireland - full of the rhythms of the Irish language, having found my stone circle and all the things, the deserted village and so on, that I had gone off to find for the story. I just sat down and I thought: 'I'm going to tell a story about this weird guy that led all these Irishmen to Vancouver Island. Beyond that I don't have any responsibility. Plot-wise I don't have to make anything fit. I only have to sit down and explain how he got from there to here. Whatever happens, I'll write.' I sat down and just listened to it - and the first sentence came, and the second sentence, and the third sentence... I wrote the entire Irish section of what was later to become *The Invention of the World* in three weeks. And it was three weeks in which, at the end of every day, I was just shaking. I'd come out of the room with sweat pouring down my face - in another world. It came to a point where it ended. I had written a mythic Irish 'thing' - I didn't know what it was. I just knew I had it, that it was complete and I daren't touch it.

*Did you research that Irish section of The Invention of the World?*

Yes I did. I looked for specific places. I knew I had this story that I wanted to tell. I thought, 'Well, OK - it's a weird story. So I'd better anchor it in real things: a real village that I've seen with my own eyes and have pictures of, a real stone circle that I've touched and walked through and just turned cold in the presence of. I could point it out on the map. I went to a lot of stone circles that were sort of touristy and spoiled for me because there were signs and trails... And I was in a little village. The tour book said there was a stone circle somewhere around this village, but everywhere I asked they said, 'Oh no - not
around here.’ I knew there was one. While I was talking to this old fellow who was telling me there was no such thing my eyes went up the side of the hill and I saw a standing stone at the top of the hill with the sun shining off it. I didn’t say anything to him; but I thought, ‘There’s something up there.’ I took the family back to the house - it was just about two miles away from the house we were renting - and I went back after supper just as the sun was going down into the Atlantic. I went up to the top of that hill - and there it was! There were three huge slabs of stone standing up facing the sinking sun and a stone circle around them - and nothing else except a bunch of cows standing looking at one. And a cold, cold wind. It was as if I had actually found the novel lying there on the ground. It was an incredible moment. I came down that mountain knowing I had a novel and I could write it.

But you already knew about the crazy prophet...

Yes - I knew the pattern. I knew I was going to write a novel about a failed Utopian colony - a novel set in a place on Vancouver Island where a group of people had come from somewhere and tried to set up this community, but the leader was corrupt and had turned people into his slaves. This was actually suggested by a real colony on Vancouver Island. According to local legend, Brother Twelve gathered wealthy people from all over the world and turned them into his slaves. It was just one of many different examples of failed Utopian colonies on Vancouver Island. So I knew I had that sort of historical basis to work with. But I had to find my own things to use. I did a lot of reading on circles and squares, circles and tangents and all the meanings of Medieval alchemy. One thing led to another. I had this great elaborate thing on my hands. Something that made me think that I could risk it was reading a wonderful novel called Tay John - by Howard O’Hagan - a British Columbian novel - divided into three parts. In the first part he treated the main character as a mythic heroic figure, to whom you never got very close; in the second part you actually had an eye-witness account of what this guy had done; and in the third part you went right in close to him, so that he became more and more human as the novel went on. I thought I would use that pattern: the mythic part, the eye-witness part, and the inside part. And alternating with that I would tell the quite opposite story of somebody contemporary. I actually ended up with huge charts on the wall to show me how I was structuring this novel. But to get to your question finally: I didn’t sit down and say, ‘OK - the second part is going to be a mock myth and some of it will be allegory and the last part is
going to be mock epic." It's just that when the time came that's what
felt right. Certain works that I happened to be teaching at the time con-
tributed to this. I was teaching a course in which every year I was re-
acquainted with 'The Rape of the Lock', and had great fun with it.
When I got to the last section of *The Invention of the World* it occurred
to me that the only possible way to end this novel was with an ordi-
nary wedding that gets way out of hand. It was a wonderful experience
for a writer - just wind 'er up and let 'er rip! It's a youthful novel, I
think, dependent upon its great energy - written, so to speak, with a
chain saw.

_I wondered in fact whether there was any consciousness of the politics of this._
_You are dealing with a dystopian fiction - not only in this novel, though per-
haps particularly in it - a journey from the Old World to the New; but in the
process of your writing from the Old World to the New you do invent some-
thing new._

I think that in a sense I was aware that that was what I was doing, but
I wouldn't have been able to articulate it. All I had was the need to tell
that story, the need to find a shape for that story, and a few novels
that I'd read. *Tay John* was one, and Rudy Wiebe's *The Blue Mountains
of China* (which looks like a book of stories but is really a novel), Ray
Smith's *Lord Nelson's Tavern* and David Godfrey's *The New Ancestors*
-all of which look nothing like anything that I'd been taught a novel
was supposed to look like. Something in me said, 'If these guys can do
this and call it a novel, then I can do it too.' What may be related to
something we now see was happening all over the Commonwealth was
at the time really a personal response to the fact that I had no literary
predecessors on my own soil. I had to invent my own kind of novel to
deal with a people and an island that had not been written about be-
fore in serious fiction. What we now see, I guess, is that people all over
the Commonwealth have been responding to the fact that we were
writing in a language that was invented for another place. We had to
change it to suit our place. We took a long time to notice that it is also
possible to change the structures.

_It seems in a way appropriate that the writer you decided to write against is
American - not an English writer, which is more likely to have been what an
Australian writer would have written against._

That was the glamorous literature next door. English literature was pre-
sented to us as the *real* literature of the world and American literature
was presented to us as the *exciting* literature of the world: on the one
hand, this is the tradition; but, on the other hand, this is what is really happening! I think that deep in the hearts of a lot of Canadians growing up then was a sense of 'If only I had been born on the other side of the border I would have had a completely different life.' You could have been Faulkner if you were in America; but, because you were not, you were doomed (you thought) to eternal invisibility - an invisible citizen of an inconsequential country. Of course, this feeling could co-exist with an equally strong sense of excitement at being born in a country which was still trying to find what made it different or justified its existence...

How did you come to the next novel - after The Invention of the World?

The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne grew out of my driving into a little north-Island community that was in the habit of sliding down the mountainside every time they had too much rain. People would sometimes be hurt, but more often their houses were pushed off the foundations, their cars were buried, that kind of stuff. They'd get up the next morning and start putting everything back just the way it was. If anybody ever suggested that they move the town to another location they really resented it. Something about that place kind of triggered something in my head: what kind of people would live here? What does the place suggest anyway? I saw this as the precariousness of living on the west coast of the most westerly part of Canada, with nothing between there and Japan... All these people clinging to the edge of the earth, which then suggested metaphor: people clinging to earth, people clinging to material things.

Again it was a very different exploration of the dynamic between place and community, wasn’t it?

Yes. It grew out of the questions, ‘Why are these people living here? Where have they come from?’ I did a bit of research, a bit of asking around. In fact, like most of the West Coast, those towns are made up of runaways, people who have left everything behind somewhere else; and here they are clinging to the edge of the world. So I just sort of gradually created a population of people looking for home.

What about the idea of the New Man?

This is well embedded in religious and literary symbolism: the idea of renewal. Again, it goes back to the same thing: somebody comes in from outside, shakes the earth underneath your feet and you’ve got to
find a way of standing upright again. So it is that transformation that I was interested in. Can a place, can a people, can a person survive that kind of shake-up? In a way, I'm asking myself that question all the time I'm writing that novel. But while I'm writing it, because I realise I'm dealing with some pretty serious stuff here, and the other part of me is saying, 'Well, come on, don't take yourself too seriously,' I start playing around. And the next thing I know - well, they tell me I'm writing parody. 'Hey, you've written a parody of an eighteenth-century novel!' Or something like that. I guess, because I'm aware that I'm dealing with topics that are pretty serious and pretty important to me, that the more I can balance it with irony or satire or mockery the more palliative the piece will be. There is something in me that is constantly undercutting. If I ever catch myself taking myself too seriously, there's a mocking voice there pulling me up.

*Why always the false prophet? It is a recurring figure in your writing...*

When I'm writing, I'm constantly asking, 'What if this were true? or what if that were true? or have you ever thought of looking at it this way? or why do we automatically accept that way of looking at things? why isn't there another way of looking at things?' So that every false prophet implies a true prophet. By looking at false prophets maybe I'm looking for a true prophet. It's like shining a light on something to see what's behind it, to see if there is something true behind the lie: that is what I'm constantly chasing after.

*After the two novels you decided to publish a second volume of stories, Barclay Family Theatre. Had you been writing these throughout the period in between the first and the second collection?*

Yes. A number of them had actually been written at the time that *Spit Delaney's Island* came out. Some of them were newer. When I was preparing them I saw that the old stories and new stories had some common elements, that I was dealing with a family, and that the family was very much like my own family. I was exploring some of my own roots here, to do with becoming a writer, to do with the arts in a place like Vancouver Island - essentially, I guess, the discovery that even in the so-called uncultured places people still have a way of making art forms. It may not be ballet but may be plays in the local woodshed. It came together gradually. I began to realise that I was exploring some of the adults of my childhood, those archetypal figures that don't ever go away. You keep trying to write about them again and again and you never succeed.
Does this relate at all to the increased length of some of the stories in Barclay Family Theatre?

I discover the older I get the longer the stories get. I don’t know that I’ll ever be able to write another short story. I’m amazed that people can write short stories - because to get anything into a short story you have to decide that it is possible to say everything in twenty pages or less. I now find it almost impossible to say anything in five hundred pages or less. One thing leads to another. The world is far too complex and interconnected. I find it also very hard now to be interested in only one person in a story - that interest in one leads to an interest in another, and another and another. The short story for me is not appropriate for that sort of exploration.

Is this what lies behind the idea of discontinuous story structure - some kind of linking of stories within a larger structure? I know that you are a fan of Chaucer, too, where you have the sense of community as well as tales that are connected in some way.

It seems appropriate not only to my reading tastes but to the place. You know that with a population of a certain size living on an island that paths are going to cross. There would be something essentially dishonest about pretending otherwise. If I wrote six thousand short stories all set on Vancouver Island and the people never bumped into one another it would be telling a lie. It’s just an accurate reflection of real life: people find out they are related to one another when they are sixty years old. So they are going to wander in and out of each other’s stories - and they are starting to wander into the next thing I’m writing too. I think that will continue.

What was the genesis of The Honorary Patron?

That novel grew out of two sources. One was being invited to Vienna to a conference on Canadian Literature. It was my first trip to Continental Europe. While I was in Zurich, sitting in a roof-top cafe, I had a very strong image of an elderly distinguished gentleman sitting at a table. I imagined him sitting at the table by the balcony, looking down at the river quay and waiting agitatedly for somebody. I started to imagine who he was waiting for. I got a picture of a professorial Canadian waiting for some terrifying person out of the past to come and corner him there. I wrote a few pages of that and put it away. Then not long afterwards I was invited to be an artistic patron at the inaugural season of a theatre festival in the town where I had lived and
taught for eighteen years before moving to Victoria. I found myself on
the opening night sitting on the terrace on a hillside overlooking the
town, listening to interminable speeches as the clouds got darker and
darker and darker. Lord Somebody from England was there as the
'honorary patron', and the Mayor was making speeches, and all the
politicians were making speeches... I was sitting beside this Lord. He
had a speech four inches thick that he was going to read. All the time
everybody was looking at the sky, because obviously it was going to
rain. Just before we got to my speech the skies opened up. A real West
Coast downpour! Everybody got up and ran for the building. Suddenly
I realised that that man I 'saw' in the roof-top cafe in Zurich was the
professor who had been dragged home to be the Honorary Patron at
a theatre festival in the most unlikely place for a theatre festival in the
world. The guy has been away forty years. What is it like to be
dragged back by the lover of your youth to be a distinguished gentle-
man in your old age? The old guy had decided that his life was over;
but she had other plans for him. It is a love story of advanced age.

It begins, then, exactly as you imagined it: with this man waiting in the cafe
on the roof-top, and with the reader waiting for something to happen just as
you had to wait yourself for the character to develop and have something to do.
I wouldn't want to put a handle on how Jack Hodgins opens his novels; but
it strikes me that this is somehow a very different opening...

I'm not surprised to hear you say that. I often like to start novels right
in the middle of things. Somebody is already on the street and walking
when I come in. It may mean I've thrown away the first ten pages. It
usually means I've written the first page - or ten pages - a thousand
times until I've got my voice. With The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne, for
instance, I could not possibly write that novel until I had written the
first couple of pages over and over and over again until I had a
rhythm that just carried me along - and hopefully the reader as well.
But with this one I was dealing with a quieter, more patient novel. It
is asking the reader to trust me. It is a novel that doesn't rely on acro-
batics of any kind. I was trying to write in a style that was appropriate
to the place. He's from Zurich. He's a man who goes often to Vienna
to look at paintings. He's an art historian. It had to begin as a Euro-
pean novel. But of course as the novel progresses on Vancouver Island,
where theatre festivals become stock car races, the language has to be-
gin to break down, to change.

Rhythmically, the opening reminds me a little of Death in Venice.
Death in Venice was one of the inspirations. One of the things I wanted to do was take the Death in Venice pattern beyond death, if you wish. In other words, let the guy bottom out; but instead of having him die at the end, see if I can bring him back to life - or see if Elizabeth can bring him back to life. The old man, like Mann’s hero, becomes obsessed; and the obsession could finish him. But I had somebody standing in the wings. I had Elizabeth, who is not going to let that happen. Of course, because he is on Vancouver Island and not in Venice, it has to be a different kind of ending.

Did you go through the same process of re-writing the first ten pages of your new novel, Innocent Cities, over and over?

Yes - in fact, writing the first hundred pages - and throwing away a lot.

What is it that takes you from publishing a story in Westerly to the Australian hippies in the story, ‘The Plague Children’, to the Australia/Canada Literary Award, to the new novel being set, in part, in Ballarat?

Australia has always been an exotic place in my imagination. When I first moved to Victoria I signed up for evening classes in local history, taught by a brilliant historian-biographer. She was teaching us social history, telling us the stories of real people who had lived in the place. Every week I’d go home saying, ‘I’ve just heard a brilliant novel. I’ve just heard a brilliant TV series. Or I’ve just heard of a brilliant idea for a short story, or play or whatever.’ But there was one story that intrigued me so much that when the course was over I approached the teacher and said, ‘Are you going to do any more with that?’

And she said, ‘No. [Pause] I knew you were here for a reason, you sly soul. You want it, don’t you?’ [Laughter]

I said, ‘Yeah - I’ve got to write that story.’

She said, ‘Well, you can have it,’ and she even offered me some of her research.

It was the story of a family in Victoria that was exploded apart by the arrival of an outsider, a woman who came from Ballarat in Australia. In fact the story began growing in the historian’s mind, as well as in mine, when she found a letter in the archives from this woman back to her sister in Ballarat. And it went something like,

Dear Emma, Do you remember when you and I were walking along the path by Lake Wendouree and Old Leathercheeks came up to us and said, ‘Would one of you young ladies marry me?’ And you looked at me and said, ‘I’ll marry him if you’ll sleep with him.’ Well, dear Emma, I’d like to offer you something simi-
Dear John and I have a happy marriage except that he finds me spoiled, having had another marriage...

I can't remember how she put it, but she wasn't all that thrilled with sex herself. But if her sister would emigrate to Canada, then they could share the husband - and everybody would be happy.

Well, the sister was on the next boat to Canada...

Is this for real?

This is for real. I'm not telling you the novel; I'm telling you the real. So - where did this woman come from? Why are they here from Ballarat? Well, the story unfolds with a family that was in Victoria, owned a hotel - a very popular man and a very loving wife and a whole slew of adopted orphan children. They were just too good to be true - except the guy was always in court for punching people in the face, cheating on horse races and stuff like that. He was very popular. This woman stepped off the boat and, after looking the territory over, announced that this guy was her husband - and that she wanted him back! Then she proceeded to use every dirty trick in the book to get him back. And she did - destroyed the family, got her husband back, and the hotel. It turned out that he had married her when they were both young in Manchester. He actually was engaged to the oldest sister; but the night before he left for America he married the younger sister. For one night - and then took off. When he sent for her five years later - he sent five hundred bucks for her to come and join him - the older sister got the letter. She opened it. There was a picture. She tore it in little pieces, put it back in the envelope, kept the five hundred bucks and she mailed the envelope to the guy in San Francisco. He interpreted that as 'Get lost!' And he and the washerwoman from next door moved up to Victoria and lived happily ever after - till this gal, who had just been widowed in Ballarat, comes looking for him.

That was the basic structure I was working with. That's all in the archives. It's from family letters and from this historian in Victoria.

Which archives?

In Ballarat archives and in the Victoria B.C. archives. This woman had done a lot of that research. She told that little story I just told to you in just one chapter of a little book of local history, a book that tourists buy when they come to Victoria.

What period are you dealing with?
This was the 1880s - the height of the Victorian age. What had happened is that people moved from goldrush to goldrush. These people were born in the same town in England - Manchester. People rushed out to the goldrush in California. Then some of them rushed off to the goldrush in Ballarat. Then I think they split up: they rushed off to Western Australia or they rushed up to British Columbia. A lot of people ended up in Victoria who had all started out together. The British empire was like a big family. People were constantly crossing each other's paths.

I saw that story as irresistible. First, I didn't know who was the main character. All of those people were equally interesting. But I thought, 'The guy is the one who is the most passive, because these women fight over him. So he's not a good one for a main character, even though in the non-fiction version he is the main character. The wife is too put upon, too sympathetic. I didn't find her the right person. But the bad guy - the woman from Australia [Laughter] - was the one who interested me the most. She became a Shakespearean tragic figure. She got her husband back but things turned out quite differently than she'd planned - tragically, in fact. So I thought she would make the most interesting central character. Still, I invented a fictitious character as the central consciousness, a young widower who is courting the daughter of the family.

This of course led into a need for a lot of research... Coincidentally, at this time I won the Canada/Australia Literary Award. The Literature Board in Sydney wrote and said, 'When are you coming? What do you want to do? Who do you want to meet? Where do you want to go?' So I gave them my shopping list of places I wanted to go and writers I wanted to meet - and I also said, 'Probably nobody has asked this before, but I want to go to Ballarat.'

When I got to Ballarat people were ready for me, thanks to the Literature Board. A college instructor was kind of a host to me, and his wife. The librarian, Peter Mansfield, threw open the archives and made his staff available to me; and he also drove me around town, showed me what buildings would have been there, what the architecture was like. We even looked up the records. We couldn't find her, of course, because she was a woman. But we found her husband - the husband that died - and found out what street she lived on before she came to Canada. And I was also able to ask all different kinds of questions, like 'How high would that tree be then?' Or, 'What would that park have looked like then?' I brought up the local paper on the screen and read a lot of ads and things like that to see what was being said and done in Ballarat in those days. I made a lot of notes and I bought books of Ballarat history...
Ballarat must lead to a completely different kind of rhythm.

Yes. In fact, I wrote the Ballarat section first, as soon as I got home from Australia. Again it was like the Irish experience: 'I better do this before I forget.' And the first sentence that came to me set the tone for the whole novel. It began with the image of this woman every morning at dawn coming out on to the front verandah of her little miner's cottage with her husband's musket and blasting at the cockatoos in the upper branches of the bluegums across the street.

The novel is set mostly in Victoria, British Columbia, in the present of 1881 and 1882. But she brings us up to date on the Ballarat section; and the gentleman brings us up to date on the San Francisco section. What I've done is structure this novel architecturally. Victoria's architecture is a constant series of false faces. If you take the false face off many buildings in Victoria, you find another false face; and if you take that one off, you find another false face. I got intrigued with the idea, 'What is the real face?' So my central consciousness, the young widower, is also a builder who is an expert in putting false faces over false faces. I structured the novel as a stripping away of false faces, because of course it is a story of deceit. Deception of every kind. We never know the real story. You peel off another layer and you find out all your perceptions were wrong. It was a tricky thing; but it was a great deal of fun.

Architecture figures significantly in some of your earlier fiction.

When I went to University I majored not just in English but in Math. I've always been fascinated with geometry and architecture. I seriously thought of becoming an architect when I was in high school. It was probably a good thing I didn't because after I designed and built my one house I was completely satisfied. [Laughter] But architectural images are fascinating to me. And the architecture of Australia, Canada and San Francisco play a role in this novel.

Am I right in my sense that writing this novel has also led to an interest in Australian writing?

Oh yes! But I was reading Patrick White and Thomas Keneally back when Bill New was telling me those were the people to read. I didn't make a big thing about their being Australian - they were very interesting, very exciting literary figures for me. But when I learned that I had won the Award and that I was coming here I started thinking, 'Well, I want to meet Australian writers - how will I know who I want
to meet if I haven't read any?' So I read a lot, especially fiction, before coming. No - now I'm going to correct myself. Years before, when the Award first set up, I was on one of the original juries. So I got to read a bunch of Australian work then - just for one year - current poetry and drama and fiction. But it mainly came out of my preparing to come to Australia. I became fascinated by a lot of the fiction and excited about some writers. Of course, after I arrived in Australia I went to every book store in the country, I'm sure, and bought all kinds of Australian books and sent them home - had an orgy of reading afterwards... In fact, there was a period in which every Australian novel that came out in Canada the Ottawa Citizen would send to me to review. The writing of Australia seems at first to be so different from anything done in Canada, and yet I've seen Australian writers trying to do some of the same things that I'm trying to do: take a language that was invented for another place, try and bend it to suit your place. Maybe this novel I've just written is actually an Australian novel!

It became, in fact, a novel about the colonisation of language. It begins with a ship breaking up in Juan de Fuca Strait and all the cargo smashed up, washing ashore, all these boards and barrel-staves washing up on the beach of Vancouver Island - and every one of them has a word stamped on it. There are English words and German words and Spanish words, Australian, well... words from all over the world, just washing in! There is an Indian character who goes along the beach picking them up and he uses them to plug the cracks in his house, to keep the wind from blowing through. He ends up, of course, living in a house of words - as do all of the men in the novel. The young builder builds his own tombstone. He's not dead; but he puts his own history on the tombstone. He keeps changing his mind; so he has to keep building a bigger and bigger tombstone. Eventually he ends up with a gigantic castle with words, false biographies all over it. Of course, the guy who owns the hotel is always in the bar telling stories as if he's having to keep the roof up over his head - until of course he is silenced. The walls cave in. The woman, this central character who everybody is watching in the town, she is gradually using her language to strangle. I didn't even understand it myself. I was writing the last page of the novel and I thought, 'I don't know what this is that is happening to me!' But when I was writing the last page I had the image of people doing certain things - I didn't know what it meant at all - but I knew when I had written the last sentence of the novel that it was the only possible ending! I went back and realised it was absolutely inevitable. A boat-load of words just had to end with... well, I'm not going to tell you how it ends.
It sounds very different from what you’ve done in the past.

I think it is.

And yet history has been important to you before this.

Oh yes. Maybe I’m taking history more seriously this time. No - historians won’t say that. [Laughter] I went to more trouble to be authentic this time. Let’s put it that way. I wanted to capture the flavour, because I realised that this story took some of its power from the fact that it happened in the Victorian age, in a city called Victoria, with people who come from the state of Victoria - and with visits from two of Queen Victoria’s children. There is even a figure in the novel, Mary One-Eye, who wears a little tiny crown on her head and a veil like Queen Victoria. She sleeps in the cemetery in a broken-down old hearse that she has rescued. Queen Victoria floats in and out of the novel all the time, in her local manifestation as Mary One-Eye. I don’t understand it totally - I don’t want to - I just know it all felt right: the peeling away of the layers, and ending up with silence.
Although Mrs Jordan could hardly confess this to Logan Sumner immediately, she had not forgotten that back home in Ballarat she had begun to fear that the pressures of widowhood were beginning to have an unfortunate effect upon her mind. Because her hatred of the cockatoos had grown so large that she sometimes had trouble breathing, she began to go out onto her narrow verandah at dawn when the great white birds had gathered in the upper branches of the blue gum across the street and, with her eyes closed, to discharge her husband’s ancient musket at the vacant sky. Though the blow to her shoulder continued to send her staggering back against the weatherboard every day, fewer and fewer of the ten, eighteen, thirty-nine birds exploded off their shivering branches to go screeching down the street and resume their squabbling in the sturdy old bloodwoods at a safer distance. Stepping inside to lean the firearm into the corner behind the door, she knew of course that she had changed nothing, that others would come, and others, or the same ones again, that there was no end to the great white hated parrots, or to their persistence - there was a whole continent of them out there prepared to hang their weight on the limbs of the blue gums and bloodwoods of Ripon Street in order to drive her mad. ‘Nobody should be expected to live in a world where birds are the size of pigs that laugh in your face.’

For some reason she never learned, neighbours did not complain about the widow’s new habit of catapulting them out of their dreams every morning with a blast from a flintlock musket that dated back to the Eureka Stockade. Perhaps this was out of respect for her husband, dead now for less than a year, who had not permitted the loss of an arm in the rebellion to prevent him from performing his job in the dry-goods shop, or from starting a family, or from expressing admirable sentiments amongst the crowd at the Loafers Tree on Saturday afternoons. Perhaps their silence was motivated by a self-protective caution
as well, a horror of the sort of unpleasantness which might be un­
leashed by mentioning something even mildly critical to a woman of
Kate Jordan's temperament.

Even more surprising was the fact that no delegation approached her
on behalf of the town council, to discuss this violation of certain city
statutes. No mayor, no councilmen, no councilmen's wives. No irate-
but-careful leading citizens. Not even a deputation from Christ Church
Cathedral, which might have added gentle remonstrances concerning
other matters - that she had not been seen in her pew since the funeral,
for instance, or that she had not approached any of the ladies of the
congregation for the sympathy and comfort they felt they deserved to
be asked to give.

There was no immediate response from her sisters, either, who must
surely have heard the gunshots in the family boarding house three
blocks to the east. Susannah, the eldest of the McConnell sisters, sel-
dom passed up an opportunity to speak plainly to the most spirited
member of her family. But she had not been speaking to Kate at all
since the day they'd quarrelled publicly during the preparations for
Tom Jordan's funeral, when Susannah had insisted that for a new
widow who owned a cottage but had no money the only solution was
to take in boarders as she and young Annie did, as Kate had done her-
self, along with them, before her marriage - and Kate had responded
that she would rather throw herself and her children on the charity of
the parish than make herself the servant of every demanding butcher
and brick-works labourer who pounded on her door.

Annie still visited occasionally to take tea in Kate's kitchen, but she
did not make direct reference to the explosions which had become a
regular introduction to her day. She spoke, rather, of local concerns
given space in the Courier. 'You remember that boy at the Theatre Royal
who accidentally discharged a gun into his thumb while putting it away
after a performance - he has developed lockjaw!' She also repeated
rumours which had travelled up the track with Cobb and Co. from
Geelong: 'A shooting at the Melbourne opera! A man shot both his wife
and her lover. Some Frenchman sent here to help set up the Exhibition.
And then he shot himself. He was the only one who died.' And she
reported on letters received from their brother in Canada. 'He seems to
be accumulating a fortune in his saloon, having no wife to spend his
profits. He says he had to fight off two would-be thieves wielding
revolvers.' Cheerful, energetic Annie behaved as though she were not
aware of any common element in the stories she related, almost as
though the world had undergone no very significant change.

On the morning of Her Majesty's sixty-first birthday, Kate went out
onto the verandah as usual and, bracing herself against the post where
scarlet roses continued to climb and bloom without regard to season, pointed the musket at the sky, and closed her eyes. This time, when she’d recovered from the shock of being slammed against the wall, she saw that not a single cockatoo had left the branches of the blue gum across the street. As indifferent as the citizens of the town, they continued to screech and tear at the leaves as though she and her husband’s musket did not exist. Kate Jordan went back inside the house, slammed the door, and tossed the gun into the corner, where it slid down and lay along the skirting board. She strode through to the kitchen where she stopped and pressed her palms together beneath her chin for a moment of silence; she threw open a door to look in on her children, both undisturbed in their beds; she marched back to the front of the house and snatched up the musket from the floor and found the small half-filled carton of bullets in the corner cabinet. This time, when she steadied the barrel against the post of fragrant roses, she took careful aim at one particularly confident sulphur-crested male. Though the intended victim did not plummet when she pulled the trigger, a nearby cluster of leaves detached itself from the upper limbs and wheeled earthward from the tree. Uncertainty rippled amongst the great white tenants of the upper branches. A third shot tore off still more leaves and caused a general confusion of wings. One, two, three birds deserted the no-longer-to-be-trusted blue gum in favour of safer branches farther down the street, but did not give up their first choice without indignant protests. A fourth shot also failed to find a victim but a fifth succeeded finally in convincing the rest of the stubborn inhabitants to evacuate the tree. At the same time, cottage doors squeaked open, eyes appeared at windows, someone’s voice shouted something from down the street. But a sixth and seventh and eighth discharge was necessary - aimed at upper branches all over the neighbourhood, in random order - before Annie McConnell came into sight, running from the direction of the boarding house and crying ‘Katie! Katie! Katie!’ as if all this had somehow caught her by surprise.

‘You frighten me half to death!’ she cried, catching up her sister’s hand in her own. An earnest sombre look had tightened all the curves in her freckled face. Poor Annie - her immense tangle of red curls seemed never to cease moving about her head! She yanked on the great thick plait she’d brought round from the back, as though it were a rope for summoning aid from some invisible servant. How could you take her seriously? ‘If you’d come live with us, we’d keep you far too busy to care about silly birds.’

‘I hear Susannah’s voice in that.’

‘Susannah says that if you’re planning to become a bushranger with that gun, you should do your target practice up on Misery Mountain,
out of our hearing.' Annie was not reluctant to laugh at their common
cross, but sobered quickly. 'It isn't because of Susannah that I've come.
I can't bear it myself. If you refuse to put this house to good use, then
sell it and help us as you did before, when we were sisters together in
a new country. I don't see that you have any choice.'

'Dear Annie! If I truly thought I had no choice I would use that gun
on myself, I would turn it against myself! Surely by now you must
know I would rather starve, I would rather die, than start again with
her. I would rather burn this cottage down around us. I would rather
see us throw ourselves down a mineshaft.'

Laughing at her sister's habitual tendency to see things in extremes,
Annie knelt to comfort the little girl who had appeared in the doorway.
Beside her, James began to whimper. Kate told him to hush, but this
only sent the child sobbing to Annie, to throw his arms around her
neck. Now Laura also began to cry. 'Hush! Hush!' - it was Annie who
comforted them. Kate glared. Two sobbing enemies glared back, from
the safety of Aunt Annie's trustworthy embrace.

Kate leaned the musket against the wall. Choking back what might
have become a sob, she grabbed up her parasol and went down the
steps and out through the gate to the sunlit street. Then she opened the
parasol and laid it across her shoulder and marched off in the direc-
tion of Sturt Street past the row of plain-faced little miners' cottages
with their rust-stained iron roofs, her eyes ahead, scarcely aware of her
children's voices calling her back, conscious only of the heavy silence
that reigned at last, at least for the time being, in the branches of all
the fragrant eucalypts of her neighbourhood.

_Innocent Cities_ will be published in Canada in the fall of 1990 by McClelland and
Stewart, and by University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, in March 1991.
With crusading and, probably, feminist zeal, Sara Chetin in an article entitled 'Armah's Women' sought to expose Ayi Kwei Armah's male biases in his presentation of the female characters in his novel, Fragments. Interestingly, however, Ms Chetin's own biases made her blind to some of the novel's possibilities: or to put it another way, to read as a woman may well be an inevitably dualistic exercise in simultaneously revealing and concealing. Thus under the ironic gaze of a deconstructive surveyor, a feminist reading becomes just another moment in the multi-layered unfolding of the text's possibilities. And it is with a profound awareness that I in turn cannot possibly be free of bias that I wish to express disagreement with certain claims made by Ms Chetin. I am male and West African - but I suspect that this confession is not an adequate explanation of my particular biases.

Placing Armah among certain male writers whose 'concepts of female-ness perpetuate specific stereotypes instead of opening the way for new values and new ways in which people can understand themselves - and each other' (p. 47), Ms Chetin proceeds to discuss Armah's female characters with a view to uncovering the stereotype that lurks within each of them. Thus, according to Ms Chetin, the hero's grandmother, Naana, who in my view embodies those spiritual values which modern Africans in their headlong rush for material things have discarded, is seen by Ms Chetin as merely a 'suffering, helpless woman' (p. 49), i.e. as an instance of the chauvinistic male portrayal of the woman as feeble.

Even more interesting is the discussion of Juana, the Puerto Rican doctor who becomes the hero's lover. According to Ms Chetin, Armah portrays Juana as 'a destructive force' which seeks to cripple Baako's creativity by making him excessively dependant on her seductive power. Juana is Eve, the temptress (p. 53), and, one might add, a version of the seductive enchantress of such poems as 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' who enralls the hapless knight-at-arms and then abandons him drained and bereft of purpose. Says Ms Chetin: 'To me, Juana's symbolic sea and moon goddess significance doesn't evoke the "promise of regeneration" but represents a death-like destructive force from which Baako is unable to escape. The ending is pessimistic, nihilistic, and per-
haps sheds light on Armah’s distorted concept of female strength’ (pp. 50-51).

Ms Chetin’s views on the other, less sympathetic, female characters is predictably more disapproving. In her view, Armah portrays Efua and Araba, Baako’s mother and sister respectively, as ‘manipulating parasites’ who are ‘responsible for the various tragedies that occur’. Efua is portrayed, she says, as a misguided mother who realizes too late that she has placed a curse upon her son and then ‘retreats into the self-sacrificial role of Motherhood’ (p. 55). As for Araba, who uses sex as a means of manipulating and controlling her besotted husband, she is the grossest violation, according to Ms Chetin, that Armah inflicts on the image of women.

In conclusion, we are told that Armah distorts women because his view of them is essentially simplistic: if women can’t be savers, then they must be destroyers. Ms Chetin concludes:

Perhaps it has to be left to the African women writers to create female characters with depth and insight.... Most African women writers today are concerned with correcting the distortions created by male writers and freeing women from the stereotypes that have, so far, imprisoned them in a universe, that perpetuates their own negative self conceptions. (p. 56)

In my view there is one overriding problem in this account of Armah’s women: it abstracts the women characters from the meaning-giving context of the novel’s themes. In particular, Ms Chetin fails to ‘balance the equation’, so to speak, in not considering Armah’s male characters - especially Brempong, Baako’s uncle, Foli, and, to a minor extent, Baako’s friend, Fiifi. For the simple but important truth which Ms Chetin chose to ignore is that Armah’s characters - men and women - are selected and designed to represent his view of society. It is unfair to upbraid his portraiture of women while forgetting their function as symptoms of a social malaise that afflicts both men and women.

Fragments has many inter-related themes, and one of the subjects that Armah, as a male writer, is interested in exploring is that elemental pull which women exercise on men and how that profound need can be exploited and debased by the woman in certain social circumstances.

The Mame Water myth - which is so important in the novel - crystallizes Armah’s view of men’s need of women. I agree with Ms Chetin that the myth appears to invest women with power, but this is not necessarily the seductive and ultimately dangerous power of Eve or Circe. This power is more ambivalent and indeed the Mame Water myth offers a view of the relationship between men and women which is richer and less sexist than what is found in many myths of the Western world. Let us remind ourselves of the conclusion of the myth:
'The singer goes to the beach, playing his instrument. These days it's become a guitar. He's lonely, the singer, and he sings of that. So well a woman comes out of the sea, a very beautiful goddess, and they make love. She leaves him to go back to the sea, and they meet at long, fixed intervals only. It takes courage. The goddess is powerful, and the musician is filled with so much love he can't bear the separation. But then it is this separation itself which makes him sing as he has never sung before. Now he knows all there is to know about loneliness, about love, and power, and the fear that one night he'll go to the sea and Mame Water, that’s the woman’s name, will not be coming anymore. The singer is great, but he's also afraid, and after those nights on the shore, when the woman goes, there's no unhappier man on earth.'

‘It's an amazing story.’

‘The myths here are good,’ he said. ‘Only their use...’ His voice died.2

The woman causes the man much pain, but she is also the source of his creative energy. The myth expresses the tension that, in its view, lies at the core of romantic and sexual relationships. Woman is man’s home or mother (the sea) to whom he is inevitably drawn for security and consolation.

She is, however, also the source of great pain, for she is of an alien element (the sea); she is different, other. Man has come out of that element, but is no longer of it. Thus when woman retreats into her element - which she does not out of malice, but because it is the order of nature - man is forlorn. In this view, the relationship between the sexes is - at least for the man - one of alternating joy and pain, satiety and frustration, ecstasy and creative agony.

Now, the society which Armah offers to the reader’s contemplation is one in which greed and vulgar materialism have replaced those values which are enshrined in the old woman, Naana. Thus Sara Chetin’s description of her as ‘a helpless old woman’ is in a way accurate. Helplessness - and helplessness is a major theme in this novel - is not simply a matter of her being old and a woman; it has more to do with the fact that she stands for values which modern Africa chooses to ignore. She is the elegiac unheeded spokesperson for values which, though profoundly relevant, have been discarded. Her world is still the world of unbroken circles, of continuity between word and thing, the dead and the living, the spiritual and the material. If she is helpless the fault does not lie with the author who is merely revealing the terrible gulf which has opened up between Africa's past and its present; the fault lies in the society which, fascinated with Europe’s shining toys, pays no regard to its own more spiritual treasures.

In a very real sense, the old woman’s antagonist is the young man Brempong (the name means ‘mighty one’). While she offers treasures which nobody, except Baako, appreciates, he, on the other hand, hero of the new Africa, offers those goods which society now cherishes: cars,
fridges, imported drinks, material wealth. Brempong of course is the hero of the cargo cult, the bringer of things from abroad.

In this environment of greed in which mothers are willing to risk the lives of their newborn offspring for material gain as is evident in the untimely 'outdoor' ceremony, relationships between men and women also become vitiated. The relationship can take the form of a superficial game such as is played by the beautiful Christina and Baako's friend, Fiifi, in which girls trade sex for evening rides, disco sessions, expensive drinks and, sometimes, jobs. But this vitiation of the male-female relationship can take on a more sinister form and this is what Armah demonstrates in the character of Araba, Baako's sister, for whom marriage has become a species of war in which men and women try to outdo each other. For Araba sex is a 'secret weapon', the final means of coercion by which she is able to conquer her hapless husband. If the Mame Water myth indicates a natural need of men for women, what Armah is revealing in the character of Araba is a perversion of that need - itself the result of a more general perversion of society.

In my view, Ms Chetin misreads Armah most seriously when she groups Juana with Araba and Efua as just another predatory female, whereas in fact the quality that is most emphasized about Juana, the expatriate psychiatrist, is her helplessness and not her power. She is the outsider who sees too clearly the agony of a people betrayed by their leaders and preying on one another, but she feels unable to offer any lasting help.

Where then was the justification for the long effort to push back into this life those who had found it harder than the woman and had fallen down into things set deeper within themselves? What justification for sending the once destroyed back to knock again against the very things that had destroyed their peace? (p. 42)

Surely, the relationship between Baako and Juana ought to be seen as a desperate search by two powerless visionaries for a corner of sanity in a society that is fragmented into meaningless moments. Far from wanting to entrap and confine Baako in her spider's web, Juana is only too aware of the insufficiency of shielding him from his responsibilities towards his family and society. And yet she is also aware that to abandon him to his family and society is to shove him to his destruction. Thus always she is tormented by doubt as to how to deal with this acutely sensitive and intelligent man who is so out of place in his environment. 'How could she find the thing to break down his despair when she had never conquered hers? There would be no meaning in offering him a chance to swing from present hopelessness to a different flavour of despair' (p. 271).
We come now to consider Efua, Baako’s mother. Certainly, this woman participates in the perversion of human relationships which is one of the author’s indictments against modern Ghana; but perhaps more than any other female character she contributes to our awareness of the puzzle that animates the novel. She brings out the crushing complexity of the choice which Baako has to make. Efua may be venal and greedy - as is evident from her role in the ‘outdooring’ ceremony for Araba’s baby - but she remains Baako’s mother to whom the son owes, according to tradition, a certain debt of material support. And herein lies the difficulty, the complex subtlety of the cargo cult analogy. When we first meet Efua she is anxious for the safe return of her son who has gone away to be educated in foreign lands. It is she who asserts as a self-evident truth that ‘children are the most important things in this life’ (p. 57). Thus she would seem to participate in the circle of birth, procreation, death and rebirth which is so lyrically expressed by Naana in the opening pages of the novel. But, as Naana herself makes clear, Efua’s expectations of her son are too materialistic, too predatory and totally lacking in the spiritual.

Naana, the old woman, is honest enough to add that she too has had dreams about the material comforts which Baako’s return may bring. The suggestion is that there is nothing wrong with such expectations as long as they do not become paramount or so pressing as to crush the son.

Thus Efua is both the continuation and vitiation of a long tradition in which children have it as a duty to provide for their parents and extended family. And Armah’s presentation of the mother always conveys this density or irony: she is mercenary but Baako cannot entirely ignore her. One of the first things she asks her son on his return is when his car is coming so that her ‘old bones can also rest’. At one level, she is making him play the Brempong, but at another, she is reminding him that a son ought to be concerned about his mother’s comfort.

Appropriately, one of the most painful moments in Baako’s life is the occasion when his mother finally decides ‘to leave [him] alone’. She takes him to the site of a house she has started but has not been able to complete.

‘That is the last thing in my soulcleaning, Baako,’ she said. ‘These stones and the sand, they were mine. I started all this, thinking I was building something you would come and not find too small. I was hoping you would come back to me, take joy in the thing I had begun but will never end, and finish it. That was the meaning of my curse on you. Forgive me. Now that we have both come and seen this, I won’t accuse you anymore. Again I’m a mother, confessing what strange feelings you’ve sent through me. It’s over now, Baako. Can you understand? We can go home now.’ And still that happy laugh, all the way to the bus stop, waiting in the sun for whatever would come. (p. 257)
The incomplete house brings Baako to a sharp realization of the extravagance as well as the solid reality of what he owes to Efua, and makes him aware of the inadequacy of his individualism.

Thus, it is through the character of Efua that one of the central questions of the novel is posed: Where does the sensitive individual draw the line between his own needs and inclinations and the demands of family and society - especially where otherwise legitimate demands are tainted by ostentation? If the character of Efua was as crude and one-dimensional as Ms Chetin makes her out to be, there would be no problem: she could make no claim on Baako which we as readers could respect.

Clearly, what Ms Chetin’s interesting reading of *Fragments* exemplifies is the danger of approaching a literary work - especially one as subtle as this - with an ideological militancy that reduces the text to a series of stereotypes. For clearly Ms Chetin ignores the qualifications which the author has built into the text and which give it its full meaning. Naana is helpless not because she is a woman, but because she is the discarded representative of an old way of life. Juana does run the risk of making Baako too dependant on her, but she is only too aware of this danger and indeed her prescription for Baako is richer than Ocran’s prescription of artistic aloofness. Efua’s destructive demands on her son represent the contemporary expression of an ancient arrangement. The only really simple female character is Baako’s sister, Araba. Ms Chetin suggests that Armah blames the women of the novel for the central character’s difficulties, but surely it is clear that Baako is also partly to blame for realizing too late the insufficiency of his individualism, and for failing to define for himself how he can meaningfully connect with a society with which he is clearly at odds, but to which he is profoundly indebted.

My views may be nothing more than the prejudiced rantings of another male, but if this dialogue with Ms Chetin has thrown even the dimmest light on the novel, *Fragments*, then perhaps therein lies the value of both her essay and this rejoinder - as instalments in an ongoing discussion.

NOTES

The Year That Was

AUSTRALIA 1989

More than twenty five percent of Australian titles published are for children, and yet children's books - that's all children's books: not just Australian - are given at most one or two percent of the total review space in the press.

This appalling gap helps to explain why the adult literary mafia (as they're lovingly known) are so ignorant of writers as successful as Robin Klein or Paul Jennings. Mention Robin Klein to any Australian under twenty: instant recognition. She's a real star. Ask most of the people dropping names and canapes at awards ceremonies, writers' festivals and the like who Robin Klein is and they've never heard of her.

_Came Back to Show You I Could Fly_ (Viking) is a great opportunity for them to change that, and it's the winner of the Children's Book Council's Book of the Year Award for Older Readers. An eleven-year-old boy is totally fascinated by an eighteen-year-old girl who is outrageous and kind and, although he doesn't see it at first, addicted and pregnant. Some adults seem to fear that it's a book about drug addiction for twelve-year-olds, but it's not really about drugs at all: it's a beautiful and moving story about friendship and a child's innocent belief in the worth of a human being whom everyone else has rejected.

_Patricia Wrightson's Balyet_ (Hutchinson) is a more difficult novel for older readers, but equally moving. Balyet is the ancient spirit of an Aboriginal girl cursed by her people to drift forever in the mountains as no more than an echo, restless for silence and death. And it's her tortured presence that fourteen-year-old Jo encounters on a camping trip. Friendship is a possibility but so too is death.

Four other outstanding novels for older readers made it a difficult year for the Children's Book Council judges. Brian Caswell's _Merry of the Stones_ (UQP), Libby Hathorn's _Thunderwith_ (Heinemann), _Skymaze_ (Penguin), Gillian Rubinstein's sequel to _Space Demons_, and Victor Kelleher's _The Red King_ (Viking) all deal with spiritual experiences in other dimensions.

For younger readers, Margaret Wild and Julie Vivas collaborated in a wonderful picture book, _The Very Best of Friends_ (Margaret Hamilton Books). The idyllic farm life of a middle-aged woman called Jessie is shattered when her partner, James, dies. Jessie kicks James's cat William out of the house, and the cat becomes a disturbing image of rejection. It's only when Jessie realises that the cat is all she has left of James that she invites it back in.

Interesting that the need for friendship is such an insistent theme in children's books at the moment. Perhaps it's a reaction against the solipsism which is the logical extension of the nuclear family and video games, among other factors.

Fiction for adults is dominated by Elizabeth Jolley's _My Father's Moon_ (Viking). A novel which has been criticised for its flatness and its lack of Jolley's energetic sense of humour the painful recollections here of wartime England indicate that the novel was difficult to write. I like its honesty and seriousness, and for a novelist as full of postmodernist (read: 'evasive') tricks as Jolley is, this is about as close to autobiography as it gets.
Marion Halligan’s *The Hanged Man in the Garden* (Penguin) is an impressive collection of linked stories. Whenever critics need to contextualise emotional repression in women, they seem to reach for poor old Jane Austen and she turns up in all sorts of places from Bombay to Manhattan. Here she is in Canberra, the diplomatic city: appropriate setting for Halligan’s particular brand of middle-class restraint. Very different from the passionate marginalised sexuality of Mary Fallon’s *Working Hot* (Sybylla Press) and Susan Hampton’s *Surly Girls* (Collins Imprint).

In its authorial omniscience, Angelika Fremd’s *Heartland* (UQP) is old-fashioned enough to make Eurocentric theorists once again despair of Australian literature, but this simplicity very quickly becomes irrelevant. Fremd’s portrait of German migrants adjusting to life in Australia and of a young woman adjusting to her sexuality has an urgency that convinces me it simply had to be written. The kind of urgency that makes it difficult to be patient with much more technically assured fiction that eventually seems to be about nothing. Robert Drewe’s collection *The Bay of Contented Men* (Pan), Brian Matthew’s *Quickening* (Penguin), and Laurie Clancy’s *City to City* (UQP) are all impressive: well written, assured, and varied but nowhere near as compelling as *Heartland*. The ideas in these collections are often interesting, but the emotions rarely so.

Kerryn Goldsworthy’s *North of the Moonlight Sonata* (McPhee Gribble) and Sue Woolfe’s *Painted Woman* (Hudson), on the other hand, manage to balance both.

The year’s best anthology is Helen Daniel’s *Expressway* (Penguin). Daniel starts with Jeffrey Smart’s 1962 painting ‘Cahill Expressway’, and has 29 writers respond to it. What sounds like just another exercise from a professional writing class turns out to be a complex demonstration of the act of reading. Daniel says she wanted a painting ‘already well-known, in some way already participating in cultural dialogue’, and the stories by writers including Elizabeth Jolley, Glenda Adams, David Malouf, and David Ireland, together with Daniel’s own signpostings, result in all sorts of new spaces and constructions.

The one outstanding collection of poems this year, Robert Adamson’s *The Clean Dark* (Paperbark Press), has taken just about every prize there is. As surely as Murray creates the north coast farming country in his poetry, Adamson again here makes the Hawkesbury River north of Sydney his own. But there’s a remarkable advance on his use of the river in, say, an earlier collection like *Where I Come From*. The charming naivety is replaced by depth and balance in lines which are often arrestingly beautiful. This collection places Adamson among the two or three best romantic poets Australia has.

Though very different in his use of childhood and nature, Peter Skrzynecki also produces his best collection so far in *Night Swim* (Hale & Iremonger). And Ania Walwicz’s prose poems are finally collected in *Boat* (A & R). Sneja Gunew has made impressive claims for Walwicz’s work, celebrating her (rather belated, I would have thought) homage to Dada and Stein. Certainly no one else in Australia is quite like her, and she creates the broken rhythms of thought and speech with intensity. But eventually, the absence of punctuation in almost every piece sends me running from the book, desperate for a full stop. For me, Walwicz works much better in performance than on the page. Good, though, in small grabs - from this large book.

I almost feel that Barbara Hanrahan is a prose poet in *Flawless Jade* (UQP); she has some of the hypnotic rhythms of Walwicz’s writing, but she leaves me here wanting more at the end. It’s a novel, and Hanrahan’s best for some time, but what stays with me is the imagery. The actual ‘story’ of this young Chinese woman Wing-yee is secondary to the images of otherness and of women’s repression which resonate long after the prose narrative is gone. The imagery is her story. Hanrahan always
has a wonderful eye and ear, nowhere sharper than in the rich new subject matter here.

And, finally, several books that will be useful to the study of Australian literature. Top of the list, *Patrick White Speaks* (Primavera Press). Handsomely produced with a great range of photographs that tell their own story, this collection of White's reluctant speeches and public statements is inspiring in its commitment, depressing in its repeated disappointment, and always engrossing in its changes and contradictions as this very private writer grapples with public responsibility.

Ignore the appallingly cheap photographs in Candida Baker’s *Yacker 3* (Picador) - you'll have to: sometimes you'll barely be able to tell who it is! - and go straight to the interviews with Robert Drewe, Randolph Stow, Glenda Adams, Kate Grenville, Frank Moorhouse and others. Baker proves once again her ability to get the best out of even the most difficult interviewers.

*Poetry and Gender: Statements and Essays in Australian Women’s Poetry and Poetics* (UQP), David Brooks and Brenda Walker (eds.). The poets’ own statements are more interesting than some of the essays on their work, but the interplay is stimulating.

*The New Diversity: Australian Fiction 1970-88* (Penguin) by Ken Gelder and Paul Salzman sometimes tries to do everything and ends up with much less, but it’s a useful start for students interested in some of the signposts in recent Australian fiction.

So few critical studies deal with poetry that Susan McKernan’s *A Question of Commitment: Australian Literature in the Twenty Years After the War* (Allen & Unwin) becomes more appealing for its commentary on the poets and modernism than on the fiction.

*Christina Stead: a Life of Letters* (McPhee Gribble) by Chris Williams has good source material put together in a sometimes ordinary way, useful nevertheless on a writer who resisted personal celebration as Stead did.

A reprint, finally, of J.J. Healy’s *Literature and the Aborigine in Australia* (UQP; first pub. 1978), its still misleading title made an even more clearly historical document by the tremendous growth of Aboriginal writing in recent years. And alongside it, Adam Shoemaker’s *Black Words, White Page: Aboriginal Literature 1929-1988* (UQP). Both good books on their respective subjects; neither of them by an Aboriginal writer, however...

MARK MACLEOD

CANADA 1988

Several of Canada’s best known writers published novels exploring the theme of betrayal this year. Margaret Atwood’s *Cat’s Eye* (McClelland & Stewart) brings a retrospective, wry attention to childhood and women’s friendships as seen through the eyes of a fifty-year old painter named Elaine Risley. The first half resonates with a lonely child’s anguish and need to be accepted; the second half falls apart after she survives her crisis and grows up. This is an accessible book that will be pleasing to Atwood devotees and ordinary readers alike, but despite some wonderful moments it seems unresolved and stylistically dissatisfying. In particular, one is made too aware of the limitations of this first person narrator who lacks the ironic placing that makes *Surfacing* work so well. Much more disappointing, however, are new novels by Robertson Davies and Morley Callaghan, which merely rework old material in a
familiar vein. Davies' *The Lyre of Orpheus* (Macmillan in Canada; Viking in Europe) completes his Cornish trilogy with more mixing of the modern and the mythological. This time the focus is on King Arthur and the adultery of Lancelot and Guinevere. Callaghan's *A Wild Old Man on the Road* (Stoddard) returns to Paris, the Judas theme and the rivalry between male mentor and protege over the artist's role and a beautiful woman. Hugh Hood's *Tony's Book* (Stoddard) takes his New Age series into the 1960s and '70s through the intertwining stories of four central characters.

David Adams Richards' *Nights Below Station Street* (McClelland & Stewart) deservedly won this year's Governor General's Award. In a moving celebration of the daily lives of Canada's dispossessed workers in the Maritimes, those unemployed, marginally or seasonally employed, injured on the job, or alcoholic, this novel stretches the limits of realistic dialogue and of a fragmented and open-ended narrative structure. From the other end of the country and illustrated with photos, reproductions, charts and drawings, comes Ann Rosenberg's hybrid text, *Movement in Slow Time* (Coach House) - a comic tour de force that loses punch as it proceeds. She parodically relocates Dante's *Divine Comedy* in 1986 Vancouver, with the levels of hell created by Social Credit cuts to social welfare programs, expenditures on wolf hunts, the real estate boom connected to Expo 86, unemployment insurance lines and therapy classes for the victims of wife abuse. The narrator's male muse, who had once led her to an erotic heaven, now frustrates her desire through his immersion in a homosexual liaison. Satire yields to self-pity; delight to a yawn. Daphne Marlatt's long awaited *Ana Historic* (Coach House) playfully enters 'the cultural labyrinth of our inheritance' in a language-centred fiction that tells feminist history and story, always 'reading us into the page ahead'.

Tim Wynne-Jones' *Fastygage* (Lester & Orpen Dennys) is a psychological thriller that plays with the conventions of story-telling and horror. Tom Henighan's *The Well of Time* (Collins) creates a Canadian Viking saga around Ingrid of Wayland, a heroine who must journey through many dangers to save her community. Bryan Moon's *The Western Kingdom* (Oberon) plays such heroic myth-making against the ordinary small-town lives of children seeking their adult identities in a low-key, inconclusive but interesting story.

Several unusually sophisticated first novels attracted attention this year. Rick Salutin's *A Man of Little Faith* (McClelland & Stewart) learns the truth of Marx's dictum that 'we make our own history, but not in circumstances of our choosing' (264). After a lifetime of avoidance in which he survived the Holocaust and came to Canada, Salutin's Jewish Oskar (following in the footsteps of Günter Grass and Peter Carey?) takes a stand against resurgent fascism in Alberta and finds himself freed. Janice Kulyk Keefer's *Constellations* (Vintage) probes themes of isolation and community and the fine line between interference and involvement through the story of a Parisian stranger's arrival in a small Acadian community. In *Atmospheres Apollinaire* (Porcupine's Quill), Mark Frutkin dramatizes the Parisian origins of cubism and surrealism to consider the exotic conjunctions of European modernism and its 'discovery' of African primitivism. Neil Bissondath's *A Casual Brutality* (Macmillan) relocates Naipaulian angst in an immigrant fleeing Casaquemada (a thinly disguised Trinidad) for Toronto. The book is accomplished but echoes Naipaul so cleverly and so closely that one feels one is reading a parody. The stylistic quirks working variations on colonial nothingness come across so strongly they drown out any pretense at character development or the evocation of a specific time or place. This is allegory for the converted.

Jane Barker Wright's *The Tasmanian Tiger* takes a Canadian couple to Tasmania to explore women's friendships, the violence beneath ordinary surfaces and (echoing the
Azaria affair) what happens after ‘the two great institutions of motherhood and justice had charged and butted heads and bloodied themselves for our nightly amusement’ (150). Bill Schermbrucker’s Mimosa (Talon) should be more interesting than it is. It’s an attempt through photographs, informal interviews and memories to retrieve his mother’s life as part of the white expatriate community in Africa, but it seems too cluttered with facts and details to come alive more than fitfully with the poetic force it might have had. Although billed as a ‘post-feminist Beautiful Losers,’ Ann Diamond’s Mona’s Dance strikes me as pretentious and derivative meta-fiction. Richard Taylor’s Cartoon Woods (Oberon) reads like an unintentional parody of Atwood’s Surfacing. Nazneen Sadiq’s Ice Bangles (Lorimer) is a naive account of a middle-class Pakistani woman’s life as an immigrant in North America.

Stones (Viking/Penguin), Timothy Findley’s new collection of short stories, centres around our terrible need, at all costs, to love and be loved. The Bragg and Minna stories chart familiar Findley territory, the self-destructive tendencies of the upper middle class finding expression in sexual ambivalence and a fascination with slumming. A bit precious, Salinger-style, but very well done. The mysterious metamorphoses in ‘Foxes’ and ‘Dreams’ are compelling and horrifying. But ‘Stones’ itself, about war’s psychological victims and a son’s need for his needy father, remains the most moving story. William Goede’s Love in Beijing and Other Stories (Cormorant) documents the lives of foreign experts in China. Bonnie Burnard’s Women of Influence (Coteau), Ally McKay’s Human Bones (Oberon) and Pat Krause’s Best Kept Secrets (Coteau) explore a range of perspectives on Canadian women’s lives. Women of Influence won the Canada/Caribbean best first book regional award of the 1988 Commonwealth Writers Prize for its technical mastery of several points of view, its stylistic command and the compelling interest of its handling of theme. In two other fine collections, Roma Gelblum-Bross, in To Samarkand and Back (Cormorant) treats the trauma of a European childhood fleeing the Nazis and Farida Karodia, in Coming Home and Other Stories (Heinemann), dramatizes the various traumas induced by life in South Africa. Candas Jane Dorsey’s Machine Sex and Other Stories (Tesseract) transposes political and feminist themes into a science fiction format. Gladys Hindmarch’s The Watery Part of the World (Douglas & McIntyre) narrates what it feels like for a woman to ship out on a BC coastal freighter, putting the focus less on event than on experience - what is seen, heard and desired.

Richard Outram achieves an astonishing range of linguistic register and literary allusion in his delightful collection of poetry, Hiram and Jenny (Porcupine’s Quill). This is a beautiful, idiosyncratic and impressive book. Lorna Crozier’s Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence (McClelland & Stewart) includes satiric, comic and political poetry of an unassuming but compelling intensity. One finds a highly intellectualized lyricism in Christopher Dewdney’s Radiant Inventory (M & S), a collection that plays variations on ‘The love which springs/glistening from our work’. Anne Szumigalski and Terrence Heath write together in a dialogue of ‘self and other, other and self’ in Journey/Journee (Red Deer College Press), poems that speak of ‘journeys and so-journs’, voyaging inward and outward, the exotic and the quotidian.

Other noteworthy poetry collections include bill bissett’s what we have (Talon), Infinite Worlds: The Poetry of Louis Dudek, ed. Robin Blaser (Vehicule), Habitable Planets: Poems New and Selected by Patrick White (Cormorant), J.M. Cameron’s The Music is in the Sadness (Porcupine’s Quill), Joan Finnigan’s The Watershed Collection, ed. Robert Weaver (Quarry), Fred Wah’s Music at the Heart of Thinking and Dennis Cooley’s Soul Searching (both Red Deer College, Writing West series). Uma Parameswaran’s Trishanku (TSAR) explores through several voices, lyrical and conversational, the adaptation of immigrants from India to new lives in Canada. Through standard
English and Caribbean dialect, Nigel Darbasie explores similar themes in *Last Crossing* (Nidar).

Surrealistic dreams and surprising turns of phrase give Jan Horner's *Recent Mistakes* (Turnstone) the energy and clarity of poetry that you want to return to. Ironies and intensities startle and amuse in this clever if uneven first collection. Among other first published books, the following stand out for their achievement of a distinctive literary voice: Mia Anderson, *Appetite* (Brick), David Manicom, *Sense of Season* (Procepic) and Bonnie Bishop, *Elaborate Beasts* (Red Deer College).

David French's *Salt-Water Moon* (Talon) is a warm and comic Newfoundland love story that has won several Canadian drama awards. Shortlisted drama for the Governor General's Awards included Dennis Foon's *Skin and Liars* (Playwrights Canada); Tomson Highway's *The Rez Sisters* (Fifth House), a much acclaimed play by a native writer about life on the 'rez' (the reservation); Maureen Hunter's *Footprints on the Moon* (Blizzard) and George F. Walker's *Nothing Sacred* (Coach House).

DIANA BRYDON

**INDIA 1988**

The literary event that attracted maximum public attention in India in recent months was the Indian Government's official ban on importing Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. Prior to that Penguin India declined to reproduce its edition in India, thanks to its literary advisor Khushwant Singh, who himself has weathered many literary storms. The other important event was the making of a TV serial from the *Mahabharata*, a perennial source of literary inspiration in India. The popularity of the serial is, ironically, a reflection on 'progress' in Indian literary tradition. It is a tradition that at once moves forward and backward. Two international literary events created some news. The Bharat Bhavan at Bhopal held an international poetry festival in January 89, which featured several important Commonwealth poets. The poems read were immediately translated into fourteen Indian languages and published by various little magazines. The other 'show' was the Festival of Russia, which turned out to be a non-event in literary terms. Whatever one says of India's political philosophy of Socialism, the literary influences imbibed in the country are still largely of Western origin. It is because of this that Feminism receives a louder applause than Orientalism.

Two remarkable books to come out last year, both by relatively less known women writers, were Jai Nimkar's novel, *A Joint Venture*, and Imtiaz Dharker's poems, *Purdah*. Nimkar, whose first novel, *Temporary Answers*, was published by Orient Longman, carries her interest in human relationships into her second novel, *A Joint Venture* (Minivet, 1988). It concentrates on the dynamics of a marriage; but it is far from being an obsessively personal enquiry. The novel reflects in a realistic mode the changing social scene of Western India. It is in a sense the first novel about the middle-class Indian women who grew up in a genuinely post-independence milieu. Dharker, whose *Purdah* was published in the OUP's Three Crown Series in 1988, has been active in the poetry circles of Bombay. But *Purdah* should put her up on the national scene as a major young poet. It is a book of poems of anxiety, sensitivity and a sad acceptance of alienation of several types. The tone of the poems reminds one of the poems by R. Parathasarathy and Jayanta Mahapatra. But these poems are strongly rooted in the experience of being a woman:
Mouths must be watched, especially
if you are a woman. A smile
should be stifled with the sari-end.
No one must see your serenity cracked,
even with delight.

If occasionally you need to scream, do it
alone but in front of a mirror
where you can see the strange shape that the mouth makes
before you wipe it off.

Poetry volumes published last year included a large number of self-promoted, poor
collections. It will remain a riddle for the future historians of the English language
how India produced innumerable verse-writers while English still remained a refer­
ence language without much emotional content in India. Among the few volumes
that may interest the academics involved in Commonwealth literature one could
mention *The Golden Treasury of Indo-Anglian Poetry* edited by V.K. Gokak (Sahitya
Akademi, sixth print), *Collected Poems* (1957-87) of Dom Moraes (Penguin India, 1988),
and Nissim Ezekiel's *Collected Poems* (OUP). One hopes that this is the last reprint
of the *Golden Treasury*, for it needs very substantial inclusions and exclusions.
Ezekiel's collection will be welcomed by the teachers and students of Indian poetry
in English, particularly since Ezekiel's early poems have been unavailable for a long
time. Ezekiel criticism can now gain a historical perspective.

Poetry criticism in Indian-English has been of poor quality, and a title like
Madhusudan Prasad's (edited) anthology on *Living Indian-English Poets* (Sterling,
1989), though competent, does not break any fresh ground. In contrast, the poetry­
criticism in Indian languages is much sharper and more sensitive. The kind of seri­
ous scholarly enquiry that one sees in a title like Sudhakar Marathe's *T.S. Eliot's
Shakespeare Criticism* (B.R. Publishing, 1989) is rarely seen in criticism of Indian­
English poetry. Is it that India does not have enough classics still in the genre?

The situation in the area of drama is still worse. In its history of 175 years Indian­
English literature has not produced even half a dozen dramatists. The only names
one can think of in a historical perspective are those of Sri Aurobindo, Nissim
Ezekiel and Pratap Sharma. But the plays that have had any success in the theatre
have been translations from Indian languages such as those by Vijay Tendulkar,
Girish Karnad, Mohan Rakesh and Badal Sarkar. It was gratifying, therefore, to see
last year the publication of a first-rate play originally written in English by Gieve
Patel. Patel, who has already made a name for himself as a poet and a painter,
brought out *Mister Behram*, an immediate success on stage too, which is about Parsi
life in 19th century India. *Behram* should immediately take its place, with Rohinton

Literary production in the area of fiction has been qualitatively more satisfying.
Rafiq Zakaria published his first novel, *The Price of Power*, a not too indirect comment
on the political scene. So did Gopal Gandhi, whose first novel, *Saranam*, deals with
the complexities of Sri Lankan rural life. Just as there is a spurt of activity among
relatively unknown and new writers, there is also interest in reproducing some good
but forgotten writers. In 1989 Penguin India reissued R.K. Laxman's *Sorry, No Room
(IBH, 1969) under a new title, *The Hotel Riviera* (1988), and Aubrey Menen's *The
Abode of Love (Scribners, 1956) and The Prevalence of Witches (Chatto & Windus, 1947). R.K. Laxman has acquired international fame as a cartoonist, and is known to Commonwealth readers through his comic illustrations to his brother Narayan’s novels. Like Aurobindo’s brother, Monomohan, and V.S. Naipaul’s, Shiva, Laxman’s work has received an unfavourable comparison with that of his brother, though I think Laxman’s story telling is as masterly. The Hotel is a hilarious tale of sexual repression and erotic wish-fulfilment in middle-class, inhibition-ridden Indian society. The quality of his humour, because it has a touch of a deep compassion, is certainly superior to that of the more cerebral Rushdie. Aubrey Menen has been somewhat unfortunate, in that in spite of being a gifted writer, whose The Space Within the Heart (1970) is perhaps the best literary autobiography by any Indian writer, he has rarely received the deserved critical attention. He died this year. Penguin has given him a fitting tribute in reproducing his novels.

The old writers too have been active; but Raja Rao’s much expected The Chessmaster and His Moves (Vision Books, 1988) has been a big disappointment. It has hardly anything new that is not already there in The Serpent and the Rope. It is the kind of experience that we had reading A.K. Ramanujan’s Second Sight a few years back. Critics of expatriate-literature may like to reflect on the process of artistic emaciation caused by too long a stay outside one’s own culture. In comparison to Raja Rao’s ‘Indian’ fiction Prafulla Mohanti’s English ‘fiction’ is more readable. Mohanti, whose My Village, My Life has become a classic of rural Indian life, came out with Through Brown Eyes (Penguin India, 1989). In stark contrast to Nirad Chaudhari’s A Passage to England, Mohanti’s passage is full of disillusionment, disgust and the black Anglophobia. One wishes he had avoided making simple comparisons between things British and things Indian. And more than that one wishes he had consulted the excellent collection brought out some twenty years back by B.C. Parekh, The Black Intellectual in Britain, in which a writer like Dilip Hiro has explored the theme of social tension with far greater maturity. The book has a long chapter on education at Leeds, which, one thinks, tells more of the writer’s subjective difficulties than of any objective social problems. However, Mohanti has an extremely alluring prose style.

The books that qualitatively stand out among last year’s publications are Nina Sibal’s Yatra (Women’s Press, London, 1988), Amitav Ghosh’s The Shadow Lines (Ravi Dayal, Delhi, 1988), Ranga Rao’s Fowl Filcher (Penguin India, 1987) - all novels - and Manohar Shetty’s Borrowed Time (Praxix, Bombay, 1988), a volume of poems. The three novels mentioned have great narrative sophistication. Yatra is the story of the Punjab spanning a period of a century and featuring over fifty characters. It is, in conception, a cross between Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children and Sharma’s The Days of the Turban. Ghosh’s first novel, The Circle of Reason, was clearly written under Rushdie’s influence. The new novel, which also has the same sophistication of style, is not free of that influence. The plot of The Shadow Lines has a Rushdie-like combination of personal fate and national destiny, wit, fantasy and a wide span. One hopes that, with such fine writers as Sibal and Ghosh, there will be an exploration of some other forms of realism too. Ranga Rao’s Fowl Filcher is a first novel; yet a very mature novel. It too shares with the new generation of Indian fiction an acute sense of the comic and a stinging social awareness. Its hero rises from the position of a village dog-catcher to that of a politician’s aide, reflecting in his progress the social changes in free India. But one suspects that Ranag Rao has tried to follow Raja Rao’s style of Kanthapura rather too closely.

In contrast, Shetty’s poems show originality. His achievement cannot be compared to Kolatkar’s or Ramanujan’s as yet. But, Borrowed Time shows a definite improve-
ment over his first volume, *A Guarded Space*. The poet also shows that, unlike the majority of Indian poets, he is consciously disciplining his style into a polished and terse form.

**The Banyan Tree**

My feet - prehensile fingers -  
Grasp the earth, the earth  
Embraces me, my dreams  
Engraved circles of memory.

My faithful trails tap  
The same ground, spread  
My word, my legacy, under  
The long arms of my laws.

My palms stir outward to bless  
All who flourish from me; and  
My crown grows, grows  
Beyond the winds’ conspiracy.

In Shetty Indian-English has found a serious poet, after Aurobindo and Ezekiel, who treats poetry with a sensitivity to metre and music.

The book I very strongly recommend for the readers of this article, however, is not one published originally in English but is a translation of Urdu. It is a collection of Saadat Hasan Manto’s short stories, *Kingdom’s End and Other Stories* (Verso, 1987; Penguin, 1989). Manto, who assumed Pakistani nationality after independence and lived in Lahore till his premature death in 1955, has been probably the most powerful story teller of the Indian subcontinent. The translations of his stories by Khalid Hasan succeed in conveying the power of the Urdu originals. His stories related to Bombay are about the underworld peopled by pimps and prostitutes; but like Premchand of Hindi and Gorky of Russian, Manto shows a profound understanding of the conditions of squalor and poverty. The other translation which should not go unmentioned is that of Satyajit Ray’s detective fiction, originally written in Bengali, brought together under the title *The Adventures of Feluda* (Penguin, 1989), Feluda being the Bengali avatar of Sherlock Holmes. Ray’s style is lucid, and Chitrita Banerji’s translations show understanding of the grace that the original Bengali versions have. Translation activity is becoming increasingly important in Indian academic and literary circles. One hopes that Indian-English literature will receive strength from Indian literature in English translation in the years to come.

G.N. DEVI

**INDIA 1989**

Literary history in India is a daunting task. First, there is the amazing multiplicity of languages and cultures which contribute to and shape literature. Then, there is the perplexing co-existence of diverse, and often opposing, literary trends. The year that was in Indian literature saw a simultaneous success of a highly realistic screen-play
published in book form, *Salaam Bombay*, and a thumping come-back of one of the most ancient mythological narratives through the TV serial on the *Mahabharata*. The reading public received the new young writers and the old established writers with equal curiosity. While the number of works written in English increased, so too did the number of translations from Indian languages into English. In short, the year was a typical Indian year, which showed once again that all trends stay on in India forever.

Of the new enterprises three need a special mention. Dr Urvashi Butalia, a Delhi based feminist scholar, launched an ambitious publishing programme, 'Kali for Women'. Kali's mission is ideologically feministic and commercially anti-colonialist. Its interest is not confined to writings in English alone, for it has taken translations from Indian languages too for publication. The first few titles that have been published by this experimental publishing house display high literary taste.

*The Bombay Literary Review* edited by Vilas Sarang and his colleagues is a remarkably well produced journal of the English Department of Bombay University. In its quality of production it is decidedly superior to any other literary periodical published in India before. The two issues of the *Review* published so far carry valuable creative and critical contributions, among them a play each by Nissim Ezekiel and Gieve Patel, translations of Tukaram's poems by Dilip Chitre along with his essay on translation. The journal has found patronage from *The Times of India*, and should have a long life. Equally well-produced is the new journal launched by the English Department of Delhi University, a scholarly review that looks more like any conservative scholarly journal in Britain. The themes handled in it too are conservative and close to the established literary canon.

Though not as new as the above, I need to introduce the Garutman venture. Garutan (which means a mid-flight eagle) is a non-commercial publishing programme for translations of works from Indian languages. Its aim is to make the best in Indian literature available to the Western world so that some day Indian works start getting nominated for the Nobel Prize. Whatever one thinks of this aim, the titles published by Garutman certainly mark important mile-stones in Indian languages literature. The most notable among these are: *Avasthe* (The Condition), a Kannada novel by U.R. Ananthamurthy translated by Shantinath Desai; *Magadh*, a collection of Shrikant Verma’s Hindi poems translated by Ajit Khullar; and *Carvalho* of Tejaswi translated by a group of young Berkley poets and edited by Vidya Niwas Misra.

The last year saw a spurt in translation activity. The National Academy of Letters, apart from publishing two translation journals, has announced special awards for translated works. Several seminars were held on literary translation at Calicut, Hyderabad, Bombay, Ahmedabad, and Baroda. Indian universities are slowly introducing translation studies as a component of literary programmes. One feels that the fact that India is essentially a multi-cultural and multi-lingual nation is catching up with the syllabus makers in Indian universities. It is a welcome change.

Penguin India, which has by now become well established as a promoter of Indian literature, has started publishing translations. It brought out a reprint of David Ruben’s translation of Premchand’s works. Premchand, who wrote in Hindi and Urdu, is probably India’s Gorky, and has an abiding appeal to readers all over the world. Though his works written in a high realistic mode are reprinted periodically, realism has not made any significant dent in the world of Indian fiction. One has to wait and see, therefore, if the latest title, *Deliverance*, will perform that miracle.

Among other titles from Penguin that deserve mention are Anees Jung’s depiction of womanhood in her non-fictional *Unveiling India: A Woman’s Journey*, Shashi
Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel*, and Allen Ginsberg's *Indian Journals*. I found Ginsberg utterly disappointing, maybe because the expectations were too high. But Tharoor's experimental novel combining modern Indian history and ancient mythology may have a chance of being remembered for some time. Much more interesting is *Salaam Bombay* by Mira Nair and Sooni Taraporevala. Like its English counterpart, Hanif Kureshi's *My Beautiful Laundrette*, it is a report on the making of that memorable film together with the original screen-play. Mira Nair is in her late twenties, and so raises hope for more distinguished work in cinema and print to come from her.

Of the novels published recently, worth remembering and buying, are Upamanyu Chatterjee's *English August: An Indian Story*, Allan Sealy's *The Trotter-Nama*, and Gita Mehta's *Raj*. All three were published outside India. *English August*, which has nothing to do with either England or the month of August, is a slim first volume by its young author about an Indian civil servant who discovers himself and his country in an outpost civil station. *The Trotter-Nama*, which sounds like the *Babarnama* or the memoirs of the great Moghal emperor, presents the Anglo-Indian ethos. Sealy's language has all those, by now predictable and yet highly readable, 'inimitable' qualities of style that Salman Rushdie has introduced in Indian English literature. Black humour, fantasy, history and social irony combine in his rendering of Anglo-India, and make his first novel highly memorable. Gita Mehta's *Raj* depicts the life and struggles of Jaya Singh, a princess torn between conventions and the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi, who ushers her kingdom into modernity. In many ways it is a cross between Manohar Malgonkar's popular pulp *Princes* and Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*. But the style of Mehta is captivating. Today, Indian English fiction is blessed with the presence of so much new talent: Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Vikram Seth, Allan Sealy.

To the above list one must add a few more names: Shobha De, Shashi Deshpande, Jai Nimkar, Nina Sibal. I have commented upon Sibal's *Yatra* and Nimkar's *Joint Venture* in my last year's report. Shobha De, who has been doing a dashung editorial job for several periodicals, has brought out a rather bulky novel, *Socialite Evenings*. It is not a classic by any standard. The story line is that of cinema-like life. But what is worth noting is that De has an impressive vocabulary. When India produces hundreds of such novels, it will also start producing literary classics of world standard regularly. To build the middle level is as important a contribution to literary culture as to produce great works. Shashi Deshpande has been consistent in her work, and has added another slim volume to her credit, *That Long Silence*.

R.K. Narayan, who is now well advanced in age, has published another beautiful novel, which shows that his fictitious Malgudi is as dynamic as his own creative imagination. This *Novel for Malgudi* adds to the charm his enigmatic fiction exercises all over the English-speaking world. In comparison, Raja Rao's long promised *The Chessmaster and His Moves* is thoroughly disappointing. It is a long work which does not compare well with his own *Kanthapura* and *The Cat and Shakespeare*.

There was much poetry published last year; but clearly the generation that should replace Kamala Das, Kolatkar, Mahapatra and Ramanujan has not arrived yet. Oxford University Press, India, is the only reputed house that has taken up publishing good poetry on a regular basis. But it has not added much to its poetry programme after publishing D'Souza, Mahapatra, Intiaz Dharker and G.S. Sharatchandra. The more eye-catching titles to come out from OUP have been a paperback edition of M.N. Srinivas's *A Village Remembered*, and Sudhir Kakar's psychoanalytic study of Indian womanhood. P. Lal's Calcutta-based Writers Workshop has produced poetry volumes, which are poetry only in principle. But the bindings and covers of his publications
are invariably done in good taste. New Ground and The Clearing House, both from Bombay, are dormant. Much of the poetry publication in India is done individually by the poets. It is, therefore, impossible to keep track of the activity.

Like poetry, literary criticism shows nothing worth recommending. The more fashionable, and perhaps able, Indian critics reside abroad. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha are the best examples of this tribe. Those who live in India and produce meaningful critical work, mostly work within the parameters of the regional languages. The best that I came across in criticism was an essay by Dilip Chitre, ‘Life On The Bridge’, about literary translation (Bombay Literary Review: 1). It was a pleasant-surprise to have the doyen of Commonwealth studies in India, Professor C.D. Narasimhaiah, receive an honorary title of Padmavibhushan conferred on him by the President of India this year. Professor Narasimhaiah, or ‘C.D.’ as he is known to our discipline, deserves to be congratulated.

G.N. DEVI

PAKISTAN 1988

The country’s return to democracy towards the end of 1988 has meant that the official and unofficial media-ban on writers, at least for the time being, seems like a bygone practice. There is yet the twin challenge of reborn freedom and greater writer responsibility, which are likely to be the central issues for writers during the next decade.

The point is accentuated by the ideological tremors set off by the inter-regional proscription of Salman Rushdie’s novel, The Satanic Verses (London: Penguin/Viking), as well as the threat to the author’s life. This writer cannot comment on his novel or on the one by Adam Zameenzad, My Friend Matt and Hena the Whore (London: Fourth Estate), since the books are not available in Pakistan. It may be doubted if such a furore about the Rushdie could have followed a disciplined reading of the work as fiction. Yet, for what it is worth, it is not for the first time that a crucial question has been asked at numerous times and places: why do ex-patriate writers transported to the former imperial loci tend to flout or (ab)use privileged cultural texts of the societies in which they no longer function as citizens? A number of such works have also won major Western prizes, while other important works (with Western themes and materials) by the same writers have been passed over in dignified silence.

The other two outstanding novels were Ice Bangles (Toronto: Lorimer) by Nazneen Sadiq and Ice-Candy-Man (London: Heinemann) by Bapsi Sidhwa. The last-named novel concerns the Partition events of 1947, and is more interesting for its characterization, developing narrative techniques and the child’s point of view than what it actually has to tell about the events.

In poetry, quality rather than quantity was the operative rule. Late Faiz Ahmed Faiz, the major Urdu poet, occasionally wrote in English. Unicorn and the Dancing Girl (New Delhi: Allied Publishers) offers samples of his English verse as well as Daud Kamal’s translations and original compositions. Alamgir Hashmi’s Inland and Other Poems (Islamabad: Gulmohar) is his seventh poetry collection to date and collects work done during 1984-1988. His poems were also published during the year in such anthologies and magazines as The American Poetry Anthology (Santa Cruz, CA),
Mornings in the Wilderness: Readings in Pakistani Literature (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel), Prophetic Voices (USA), Visions (USA), New Letters (USA), and Edinburgh Review (UK).

While the only critical volume published during the year was Alamgir Hashmi’s The Commonwealth, Comparative Literature and the World (Islamabad: Gulmohar), numerous articles and reviews in Pakistani and foreign publications contributed substantially to a well-informed and lively discussion of the current literary topics. The authors most written about were Ahmed Ali, Ustad Daman, Mirza Ghalib, Zulfikar Ghose, Alamgir Hashmi, Mohammad Iqbal, Daud Kamal, Qadir Yar, Tauqif Rafat and Bapsi Sidhwa. Comments and criticism on these authors were generally published in such places as The Nation (Lahore), The Muslim (Islamabad), Herald (Karachi), The Journal of Indian Writing in English (India), Dawn (Karachi), Viewpoint (Lahore), The Journal of the English Literary Club (Peshawar), Third World International (Karachi), The Pakistan Times (Lahore), New Literature Review (Australia), and World Literature Today (USA).

Two ambitious anthologies also appeared. Mornings in the Wilderness: Readings in Pakistani Literature (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel), edited by Waqas Ahmad Khwaja, is a compilation of Pakistani literature originally written in English, and of that in Urdu in English translation. Khwaja also provides a rather long ‘introduction’ to the literature, in keeping with the popular notion here that the length of the ‘introduction’ makes for a respectable book. The Special Issue of The Journal of Indian Writing in English (Gulbarga, India), with the title Writing in English from Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh (Vol. 16, No. 2), is the first such to concentrate on the given region and Klaus Stuckert, the guest editor, has put in much effort to get the best writers to contribute to it. He has, indeed, met with much success in this effort, and a number of outstanding Pakistani writers are there in the company of the writers from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. This special issue is likely to remain an important reference for some time.

The Translations section is relatively thin but for Naomi Lazard’s The True Subject: Selected Poems of Faiz Ahmed Faiz (Princeton: Princeton University Press). The volume grew out of a degree of collaboration between the poet and the translator. The translations, in ‘contemporary’ English according to Lazard, are free of metre and rhyme and propose to improve upon or supersede Victor Kiernan’s translation. There are some very effective translations in the book; and also those to which Faizians will disagree and pull out the originals for. The book must be welcomed, nonetheless, as a devoted rendering of Faiz for the end-of-the-Century English audience, which may not have had an earlier access to the poet, his work, and his culture.

In non-fiction, the autobiographies of Benazir Bhutto (Daughter of the East, London: Hamish Hamilton) and Wajid A. Burki (Autobiography of an Army Doctor in British India and Pakistan, Rawalpindi: Burki House) stood out, though they both focus much on their professional careers. S. Shahid Hamid’s book is much too thin on material for an autobiography, while Khalid Hasan’s volume, The Umpire Strikes Back: People and Politics in Pakistan (Lahore: Vanguard), though of ‘current’ interest, indicates little development over the column-length-essay style seen in his earlier volume.

Another lively columnist and prominent writer on both social and ‘current’ subjects died in December. Mohammed Indrees, editor of The Pakistan Times, had begun, in the 1950s, with the Government College’s The Ravi and continued to work in Lahore. His passing away was described by the editorial-writer of The Muslim (Islamabad, 30 December) as ‘the end of an era in English journalism’.

ALAMGIR HASHMI
The past dormant decade for English studies appears to be approaching its expected end with some definite academic markers. Three major conferences broke the 'ideological' ice during 1989. The 'First International Conference on English in South Asia' was held at the premises of the University Grants Commission, Islamabad in January, and it drew a large number of academics from far and wide who presented papers on a wide variety of topics. Also in attendance were such writers as Ahmed Ali, Anita Desai, Rajiva Wijesinha, Chitra Fernando, Alamgir Hashmi, and Bapsi Sidhwa; they all gave critical papers as well as readings of their creative work. At its conclusion, the meeting elected the Standing International Conference Committee on English in South Asia, with Professor Alamgir Hashmi as the Chairman. Another important event took place at the University of the Punjab and the Quaid-i-Azam Library, Lahore, where Mr Ismail Bhatti and Ms Shaista Sonnu put together the very first 'National Seminar on Pakistani Literature in English'. Critical papers and creative readings at this conference also were lively, interesting, and well attended. Press coverage of the event was fairly enthusiastic even if the issues discussed required better handling.

The third conference took place in October. It was organized by the Voice of America in the form of a poetry reading and a live dialogue over the satellite which were heard and witnessed by audiences in several countries linked to the American audio-visual network. The theme of the dialogue was 'Poetry as an Instrument of Social Change', and the poems to be read were chosen accordingly. The poets who participated in this conference were Alamgir Hashmi, Khwaja Shahid Hosain, Waqas Ahmad Khwaja (all Pakistani), and Anthony Hecht (American). The literary press in the country enthused about this conference, but generally misrepresented the nature of its contents and the substance of the arguments given.


In fiction, Adam Zameenzzad's third novel, Love Bones and Water (London: Fourth Estate), is the only booklength work to draw particular attention. It would be of interest for its symbolism, narrative technique, as well as existential angst. Speechlessness is equated with impotency and a futile existence. Thus the novel creates a powerful, if brutal, allegory of subjugation and annihilation of the Gray Man - and men and women like him - at the hands of murderous politicians of Gulroza. Tariq Rahman's first collection of short stories, The Legacy and Other Short Stories, edited by Harish Narang (New Delhi: Commonwealth Publishers), though much less burdened with the sameness of theme, largely has such unvarying stretches of 'type-writing' as effectively confessed by one of his narrators: Typing broke a man's pride; it took...
away one's manhood' ('The Moustache'). Javaid Qazi published a fine story, titled 'From "Alien Harvest" - The Ski Trip', in The Toronto South Asian Review (Vol. 7, No. 3, pp. 56-67).

The other titles in fiction were reprints. The D&Y Printers of Karachi put out the third edition of Zaib-un-Nissa Hamidullah's The Young Wife and Other Stories; the collection was first published in 1958. Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice Candy Man, first published in 1988, was brought out in a Penguin edition although the edition cannot be sold in Pakistan legally.

The anthologies were all undistinguished if not dilettantish. In the first, the 'Pakistan Dossier' in Frank #10 (Paris), guest edited by Tariq Rahman, the English work is not represented well, nor are the translations of acceptable quality. The Inner Dimension (Lahore: Quaid-i-Azam Library Publications) and Silence on Fire (Lahore: Quaid-i-Azam Library Publications), both edited by M. Athar Tahir, offer such uneven and shoddy texts that it will be difficult to evaluate the volumes for a standard.

In translation, Ahmed Ali's Al-Qur'an: A Contemporary Translation (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press) has been quite popular, and has already sold in several hardback and paperback editions besides being adopted as an Oxford title in India. The collaboration between Iftikhar Arif and Brenda Walker has been very fruitful, resulting in a fine bilingual (English-Urdu) edition of Arif's poems in the parallel-text format: The Twelfth Man: Selected Poems of Iftikhar Arif (London and Boston: Forest Books). The quality of translation is quite high and the selection of poems is fair. Forest Books has done a good job of producing a readable volume with appropriate Urdu calligraphy. Other good translations, of prose works generally, appeared in the journals.

In non-fiction, Sara Suleri's Meatless Days (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) has been a popular memoir, invoking memory but exercising desire, and amplifying in her distinctive euphuistic style the fascinating contradictions of her enterprise. What has particularly grabbed the Pakistani audience is the realistic aspect - the referential visage of an extremely private book affecting public communication. The personal, creative, and communicative (language) aspects have not been noted at all by the critics. Omar Kureishi's The System (Karachi: Wings Press) is a journalist's book, which recalls his essays and columns published earlier; he writes in good humour and means well. M.R. Kayani's The Whole Truth (Lahore: Pakistan Writers Cooperative Society) collects four of his separate volumes of inimitable essays, but unfortunately the advantage of having them all in one volume is upset by clumsy presentation; the original separate pagination for each volume has been retained and the present volume is not explained well as a 'book'. Benazir Bhutto's autobiography, first published as Daughter of the East (1988), was republished in the United States as Daughter of Destiny (New York: Simon and Schuster), while a new edition of the Speeches and Statements of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah was issued by the Government of Pakistan (Islamabad: Ministry of Information).

Criticism was impressive both in volume and quality. Important articles were published by Ahmad Ali (in Third World International, Karachi), Alamgir Hashmi (in The Muslim Magazine, Islamabad; The Pakistan Times: Midweek Edition, Lahore and Islamabad; Dawn Magazine, Karachi; Weekend Post, Lahore and Peshawar; CRNLE Reviews Journal, Australia; The Ravi, Lahore; and Critical Approaches to the New Literatures in English, edited by Dieter Riemenschneider, Verlag Die Blaue Eule, Essen, West Germany), Robert Baumgardner (The Nation, Lahore), Hina Babar Ali (Journal of South Asian Literature, USA), Shahrukh Husain (Third World Quarterly, London), and Tariq Rahman (CRNLE Reviews Journal, Australia). Criticism on general topics generated
much critical energy and debate, while the authors who drew the most critical attention were Benazir Bhutto, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Alamgir Hashmi, and Bapsi Sidhwa.

There were at least two interesting special issues of journals. The Review of Contemporary Fiction (USA) (Vol. 9, No. 2) was the Milan Kundera/Zulfikar Ghose Number. The original work by Ghose and the critical articles in it will be very useful, although the issue has some serious critical and bibliographic gaps. The Journal of the English Literary Club (copyrighted 1988 but published in 1989) was devoted to the late Daud Kamal, with a substantial collection of his poetry and some critical pieces about him. Generally, the text here is not dependable and the critical writing is softer than usually expected, possibly because the issue was intended as a memorial volume.

ALAMGIR HASHMI

SRI LANKA 1989

The most important event in 1989 for Sri Lankan writing in English was the establishment under the aegis of the English Association of Sri Lanka of an English Writers Cooperative. This is perhaps the best indication of the surge of self-confidence that has affected writers in the field during the eighties in comparison with the tremendous diffidence of previous decades that accompanied the downplaying of English in the period after independence was achieved in 1949.

Membership of the Cooperative is confined at present to a dozen or so writers who have previously established themselves in various ways, but the pages of its journal, Channels, are open to new and aspiring writers, too. Two issues of Channels appeared in 1989, edited by Maureen Seneviratne and Kamala Wijeratne, respectively. Amongst well-known writers whose contributions appear are Jean Arasanayagam, James Goonewardene, Anne Ranasinghe and Punyakante Wijenaike. Of the younger writers featured Madhubashini Dissanayake in particular deserve mention for the new perspective she presents on what used to be a hackneyed staple of writers in English, the clash between rural and urban values.

The Cooperative also provides an imprint for selected works, a much needed step in the absence of active publishing houses in Sri Lanka for creative writing. Two titles have appeared this year, Chitra Fernando's A Garland of Stories, a collection of her very popular children's stories (and including a few not previously published), strikingly illustrated by Prasanna Liyanage; and Rajiva Wijesinha's novel Days of Despair, a sequel to his 'witty and bitter exploration of Sri Lankan political life', Acts of Faith. The later novel explores the wider dimensions of the present conflict in Sri Lanka, and deals in political intrigues in other countries of the subcontinent, too.

There were few other publications during this year, the most unfortunate lacuna involving Navasilu, the journal of the Sri Lankan branch of the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies and the English Association. Number X, edited by Kamal de Abrew, has been ready for the press but financial complications held it up and it is now due out only in early 1990. Another disappointment was the English Association Anthology of Contemporary Short Stories in English, a companion to the Poetry Anthology that appeared in late 1988 and rapidly established itself as a definitive teaching text. Political disruptions, particularly violent in Kandy where the editor, Prof. Ashley Halpe, functions from the University of Peradeniya, held up
the preparation of the manuscript, but that too should now be out early in the new
year.

The most interesting collection that did appear was the Shenelle Book of Sri Lankan
Short Stories, edited by Bandula Padmakumara and Lasanda Kurukulasuriya, based
on a competition conducted the previous year in association with the British Council
by the fashion magazine Shenelle. Qualms felt in some quarters about Shenelle’s
trendy basis proved unfounded in that entries were generally of a very high quality.
The final publication that emerged, incorporating stories that won prizes and some
of those that had been commended and also a few that had gained favour with
individual judges or the editors, proved particularly satisfactory. Amongst new
names that won attention as a consequence were, apart from Ms Dissanayake,
Gamini Akmeemana (albeit he, though previously unpublished except for some slight
pieces in the New Lankan Review, had twice won the Sri Lankan Arts Council award
for Drama in English), Lawrence Leelasena, Alfa de Silva and Damayanthi Fernando.

The last two of these were also featured in volume 7 of the New Lankan Review,
edited by Rajiva Wijesinha, which has appeared annually since its inception in 1983,
albeit in somewhat slimmer form this year. A feature of the journal this year was
its domination by women writers, and the increasing assurance with which writers
who had begun to establish themselves in the eighties now deal with subjects of
social and political concern. Mention should be made in particular of Nirmali
Hettiarachchi (winner of the Deutschewelle Prize for Short Stories from South Asia,
awarded in 1987), whose ‘A sense of security’ captures very tellingly the trauma
caused to individuals by the less obvious aspects of the violence and terror prac­tis­
ed throughout the country in the last few years by all sides of the political divide;
and Maureen Seneviratne and Vijitha Fernando who explore very different dimen­sions
of the ethnic conflict as it affects Tamils and Sinhalese, respectively. In addi­tion
Jean Arasanayagam displays yet another aspect of her powerful talent, moving
away from both ethnic conflict and her complicated ancestry in the wittily contem­porary
poem ‘Historical Conversations’ and the intensely personal ‘A Walk through
the Woods’; while Reggie Siriwardene, the only male to be featured apart from the
editor (whose introductory political meditation could not perhaps be characterized
as especially creative), displays his assured command of form in ‘Returning to Roots’.
Incidentally, the rather sad treatment of creative writing by the media in Sri Lanka
was gauged from his aside ‘On seeing Sivakumaran’s review of my poems in the
“culture” page of the Island’ -

The barbarous Island prints bits of my poems as prose!
They lie like bloodied fragments fallen from a vulture!
If I were to protest, they’d shriek, ‘Our precious space!’
What do they serve, the authors of the crime? Why, culture!

Meanwhile the Arts Council, following political confusion and various conflicts with­in
ministries, has fallen into abeyance, so the awards for writing in English, along
with all others, have not been made. This is particularly unfortunate, since the in­cep­tion
of these awards some years ago, and their annual presentation since, did
much to build up self-confidence amongst writers in English, and a sense of accept­ance
within the cultural life of the nation. Of course the paucity of publications in
1988 suggests that there would have emerged nothing quite as good as P.B. Ram­bukwelle’s exciting first novel, The Desert Makers, which won the last award for fic­tion;
nor, while established poets have continued to produce, were there signs of a
new talent that has been consistent enough to produce a book, as Yvonne Goone-
wardene did with *A Divisive Inheritance*, which won the poetry prize; still, as with Gamini Akmeemana's plays, it is likely that there exist unpublished manuscripts which could benefit both from the exposure and from the financial awards that the Arts Council is able to provide.

Finally, it should be noted that the Writers Cooperative has been conducting regular Workshops for Readers during the year, and from 1990 will, in conjunction with the English Association, conduct Workshops for Readers, too; almost a necessity in as much as universities have been closed for a couple of years, and the school curriculum up to Ordinary Level does not include any literature at all. In addition, the British Council has opened a low-price-publications outlet, which was initially intended only for its own publications in the field of simplified readers, but provides a marketing facility for the Writers Cooperative and for journals and anthologies. A standard price of $2.50 for copies of journals and $5 for copies of individual books is charged; the prices include airmail postage, and remittances should be made payable to 'The British Council, Colombo', and sent to its Cultural Affairs Office, British Council, 49 Alfred House Gardens, Colombo 3.

RAJIVA WIJESINHA

SOUTH AFRICA 1987

For a full overview and bibliography of South African publications in 1987, Dorothy Driver's annual compilation in the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* (Vol. 23, No. 2, 1988, in this case) is thorough and invaluable. She sketches both the political/cultural background of the State of Emergency declared in 1985 and provides information on anthologies, literary prizes, interviews, criticism, non-fiction and further bibliographical sources for the student and researcher working in the field.

Despite the emergency, bannings and sporadic clampdowns on cultural activities, the climate of dissidence and the awareness of new cultural potentialities fuelled both performance and written culture in 1987. Leaders in the field of highly politicised performance poetry, such as Mzwakhe Mbuli, enjoyed a high profile, and such performance poetry, often linked to trade union activity, is now being published by organisations such as COSAW (the Congress of South African Writers), which has played an educational and distributive role in encouraging young writers, publishing a magazine, and hosting lively conferences on current topics. The establishment of a black feminist publishing house in Johannesburg, Seriti sa Sechaba, has given black women a new forum, and a volume such as Cikizwa Nzube ka Mokoena's *A Pot of Poetry* (Johannesburg: Seriti sa Sechaba) shows how one new writer attempts to formulate her experience in Christian philosophical terms. Another volume from the same source was Sybil Dhlamini's *Letters to Jesus*. What emerges here is the newness and difficulty black women experience in using a literary English to communicate troubled personal lives under the conditions of apartheid society and traditional prejudice.

The pressure to create a sense of tradition and heroic struggle by African women of the past, very necessary to build present confidence, is seen in Christine Qunta's *Women in Southern Africa* (Johannesburg: Skotaville). The actual historical roles of black women are illustrated in two interesting research publications from the Killie Campbell Africana Library: *Not Either an Experimental Doll: The separate worlds of three South African women* (Pietermaritzburg: Univ. of Natal Press) edited by Shula Marks,
and Paulina Dlamini: Servant of two Kings, translated and edited by S. Bourquin. The former consists of correspondence between Lily Moya, a young Xhosa schoolgirl, Sibusisiwe Makhanya, a Zulu social worker, and Mabel Palmer, an older English Fabian mentor to Lily. This volume follows the recent illuminating use of life-history in socio-political documentation, in this case the texture of mission schooling and maternalistic liberalism in the forties and fifties, including the problems of dependence which Marks has made a highlighted topic of her own in political analysis. One senses a moral judgment of the white mentor involved in the self-righteous tone of the following: 'The love, support and attention Lily desperately craved were denied her to the end' (p. 42). This simply expresses a later form of liberalism, and a sentimental one at that.

The story of Paulina Dlamini consists of the reminiscences of a Zulu woman who was an adolescent in King Cetshwayo's household, providing lively sidelights on the power of the king, its uses and abuses. Later she became an exemplary Christian evangelist. Both books reveal the recent interest in uncovering women's history, especially in firsthand accounts, though in both cases there are forms of mediation which are interesting in themselves. The work of productive and impeccable researcher Karel Schoeman has also played a role here: his The Recollections of Elizabeth Rolland (1803-1902) (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau) builds on his earlier work on Victorian missionary lives in South Africa. The most substantial and fascinating volume of letters during this year was Richard Rive's Olive Schreiner Letters 1871-99 (Cape Town: David Philip) drawing on a vast range of manuscript resources, and with accurate textual readings, historical detail and biographical research by Russell Martin. Other interesting non-fiction, still in the field of women's studies (there were some books by men, and I will reach them soon) included Alan Paton's Beyond the Present: The Story of Women for Peace 1976-1986 (Johannesburg: Brenthurst). We seem to have moved beyond the era of high liberalism just sufficiently to provide some analysis of its successes and failures.

Given these last years of political turbulence and rapid change, stimulating international interest on a new scale, anthologies have emerged attempting to showcase a cross-section of contemporary and engaged talent for this international readership. One such was A Land Apart: A South African Reader edited by writers Andre Brink and J.M. Coetzee and reprinted by Viking Penguin of New York in 1987 after its Faber appearance the previous year. From South Africa was a special edition of Triquarterly magazine (Triquarterly 69, Spring/Summer 1987, Northwestern University), edited by David Bunn and Jane Taylor. The volume includes visual material, new writings drawn from a variety of contemporary voices, key critical pieces, stories, poetry and extracts from novels. The choice is lively and representative, conveying a politicized cultural context but also giving a South African readership the chance to survey much of the field.

New fiction also revealed the talent of a younger generation of writers trying to explore the intersection of private griefs and public turmoil, especially in the landscapes of Cape Town. Michael Cope's Spiral of Fire (David Philip) has much charm and verbal talent, even though its most graphic scene is one of a suicide which has little to do with the obvious social conflicts in Cape Town's squatter camps in the eighties. Nevertheless, the effervescent writing does try to connect personal quest and a wider sense of political violence, and it does convey the texture of white lives grappling with a sense of helplessness in the face of that violence. But the most striking and impressive debut volume was Zoe Wicomb's You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town (New York: Pantheon Books), a most assured and eloquent collection of stories which captures a segment of experience in Cape Town never previously chronicled
because there has never been the talent of an insider's voice to express female 'mixed race' life with such honesty and intelligence: an intelligence which knows it must move on and away from its own community but can at the same time record what it was like to be a part of it. It is a poignant and honest book, with a promise of major powers in its handling of narrative structure and imagery.

Sheila Roberts's *Jacks in Corners* (Ad Donker) is an uneven but entertaining work of meta-fiction wanting to prove that white South Africans are still material for fiction. There are lively pen-portraits, insights into sexual behaviour and power contests, but perhaps less success in probing the political morality of commitment or exile: the spy whose death is meant to move us is a right-wing agent. Given current revelations of right-wing espionage and murder, it's hard to care about him at all. What Roberts is good at is catching the failures and flatulence of human flesh, and the dishonesty which keeps us in pursuit of its pleasures. Daphne Rooke's *Mittee* was rescued from the oblivion of the fifties by Ian Glenn and Chameleon Press of Cape Town, though it does not live up to the claims made for it, despite its readability. It does tell of black/white female relationships, yet its constant recourse to events themselves, often melodramatic or schoolgirlish in tone, reveals a lack of imaginative coherence and of aim. It is a much better written ancestor of E.M. Macphail's *Phoebe and Nio* (Hippogriff Press) which is also good at catching social details but does not know how seriously to take itself and lapses into surface hilarity and an astonishingly novelettish ending. If we are going to sympathise with white South African women, it's not enough to record their experience within tired forms and conventions; some moral vision is needed as well.

Nadine Gordimer's *A Sport of Nature* came out to mixed and puzzled responses and it is a problematic rendering of a possible future for white South African women. She explores an alternative route to the difficult commitments of *Burger's Daughter*, that of 'natural' sexual spontaneity. One strange result is that black men become sex objects and aestheticised fantasies, which does make a change from the past, but which reduces the heroine's probability, not to mention her credibility as a late-developing political spokesperson. There are always interesting achievements in Gordimer's fictional experiments with political time, but perhaps *A Sport of Nature* betrays the anxiety that white women may be fairly dispensable in the future, as dispensable or indispensable as anyone else. That is what may be hard for white South Africans, including writers, to accept, but casting a white woman as consort to the liberated future flies in the face of this more ordinary requirement.

Christopher Hope's *Black Swan* (London: Hutchinson) is an elegant but rather slight fable set in the 1960s and focused with some acerbity on terrorism and militarisation. It provides a new angle on a recurrent topic of black fiction in the seventies. Stephen Gray's *John Ross: the true story* (Harmondsworth: Penguin) is lively enough but suffers from divided aims and perhaps from being imaged against the TV series at the time. It wants to write the 'real' account of a mythologised Natal hero, yet without the scholarly material of sources being built in one never knows what exactly belongs to previous legends, historical documents or Gray's imagination, for he also wants to tabulate around a young white boy and reclaim him for pro-African sympathies rather than a defensive settler mythology. As a result it is often vivid but puzzling and inconclusive.

There was not much 'traditional' written poetry in 1987, with Farouk Asvat's *A Celebration of Flames* (Ad Donker) and Mongane Serote's *A Tough Tale* (Kliptown Books) being the most noticeable. A long poem came from Guy Butler: *Pilgrimage to Dias Cross: A Narrative Poem* (David Philip). Don Mattera's *Memory is the Weapon* (Ravan) is a very touching and humane autobiography of the writer's life in Sophia-
town, his family and friends, his involvement in gang warfare and street life, and what religion and politics could offer by way of alternatives.

Possibly two of the most significant critical contributions of 1987 were Ngugi's *De-
colonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (James Currey) and Barbara Harlow's *Resistance Literature* (Methuen) which both attempt to theorize a broader literary production than a South African one but include it in a politico-
thoretical overview. This seems to be one way of approaching South African litera-
ture which will be increasingly useful as South Africa moves out of its isolated and
sometimes defensive separation from the rest of the international community. Insider
and outsider views and publications have also begun to meet in the pages of the
*Southern African Review of Books* established in London. There is a new maturity and
range in critical production around South African literature, with creative writers like
Njabulo Ndebele and J.M. Coetzee making keynote contributions towards a better in-
formed historical understanding and a humane vision of the future.

CHERRY CLAYTON
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

MARIO RELICH teaches Caribbean Literature and Culture at Wolverhampton Polytechnic, tutors in Arts at the University of Warwick, and is a regular contributor to West Africa magazine.

MARC DELREZ is a graduate of the universities of Liège and Adelaide and is now doing his doctoral studies at the University of Liège.

ANDREW TAYLOR is a poet and critic. His collected poems were published by University of Queensland Press. He teaches at Adelaide University.

STEPHEN OLIVER has published five books of poetry. He lives in Sydney where he works as a free-lance broadcaster and voice over.

DAVID KERR teaches at Chancellor College, Malawi.

CAROL FRANKLIN is a graduate of the University of Queensland and now teaches at Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand.

GRANT DUNCAN is from New Zealand. He has published two volumes of poetry.

T.O. McLOUGHLIN is Professor of English at the University of Zimbabwe.

RUSSELL McDOUGALL teaches at Adelaide University, South Australia.

A.N. MENSAH teaches at the University of Botswana.

MARK MACLEOD is children’s editor for Random Century and teaches part time at Macquarie University, Sydney.

DIANA BRYDON teaches at Guelph University, Canada. She is editor of World Literature Written in English.

G.N. DEVI teaches at Baroda University, India. He is co-editor of SETU, the Journal of Indian Literature in Translation.

ALAMGIR HASHMI is a poet and critic and teaches at the International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

RAJIVA WIJESINHA is the British Council representative in Sri Lanka.

CHERRY CLAYTON teaches at R.A.U., Johannesburg.
FICTION
Jack Hodgins, extract from *Innocent Cities*.

POETRY
Grant Duncan, David Kerr, Stephen Oliver, Andrew Taylor.

ARTICLES

INTERVIEW
Jack Hodgins.

THE YEAR THAT WAS

COVER
Ace of Spades. Collection, Guildhall Library.