see the direction in which affairs are moving (as with the revolt at the Crescent), small incidents and portraits stand out excellently, especially those of the luckless Quinn and of the eunuch, Ewers. As for the "contemporary relevance" of this work, I doubt that one can always demand that a work have such relevance, though Hal-loran is partly the type of man destroyed by a brutal system, and the bitter (but at times acidly funny) relationship of the Blythes is always pertinent. This is not a "great" novel, but is nevertheless well worth reading.

Kerin Cantrell.

**DYNASTY, by Tony Morphett. Jacaranda Press, 430pp, $4.95**

"THE BOURGEOISIE . . . has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment.' . . . (It) has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation."—*The Communist Manifesto.*

Tony Morphett could well have used this quotation as a frontispiece for his new novel, *Dynasty,* an absorbing story of a dirty family fight for control of a newspaper empire. The theme is an affirmation of the *Manifesto's* thesis: three sons of an ageing newspaper proprietor, motivated by naked self-interest, are involved in a plan to steal from their father control of his newspaper. The father knows it and the action, which takes place over one day in the newspaper's board room, concerns the old man's attempts to undo the plan.

There are six men involved in the take-over plot the three sons, and three other directors—the editor of the newspaper, and a lawyer and a businessman who are interested in the paper purely as investors. They are all, in effect, creations of the old man, but it soon becomes clear that filial and personal loyalties will have no meaning here; it's just a greedy brawl for power and ownership.

As the board room battle is about to be joined, the old man muses: "They were going to get him . . . because he was sixty-eight. . . Because his body had been born sixth-eight years before. And they were going to get him because he had taken this newspaper and made and moulded it. . . His body had lasted too long for them, and today they would try to get him. Very politely. Very formally. All i's dotted, all t's crossed. Every manner well mannered. Every hungry set of eyes lowered. He had done things like it himself. Always so much politer than a court. No caps black, and every handshake golden."

Thus the stage is set and, from there, Author Morphett employs the very effective device of examining in depth each man concerned in the dirty little drama, the story of their lives and hopes, loves, adulteries and perversions, and of the influences and motives that had brought them to the stage where, this day, they have to decide whether they are going to knife, or not knife, the old man.

At the close of each man's story, the novel moves back to the board room as the subject just dealt with, in his turn, votes on the elder son's motion to kick the old man upstairs. The shifts and twists in the board room fight keep the action moving swiftly and excitingly.

In the background are the deals, the pressures, the lobbying, the spying, the hidden hatreds, the bedroom blackmailing and counter-blackmailing, and there is, in the end, not a clean pair of hands among the lot of them. As each man has to declare himself,
the reader knows just why he did it—for power, for revenge, for preservation. And who wins? The reader can find out for himself. Except for the point Morphett seems to make that, in such an affair, there can be no real winner. Just a lot of soiled people.

Tony Morphett has drawn his characters well, though not with any great depth. He has shown considerable skill in having his characters (with three exceptions) nameless. Perhaps he has overdrawn the character of Unk, the dedicated editor, with his driving ambition to get revenge on the man who had filched his father's newspaper.

Who are the other people modelled on: I don't think Tony Morphett has meant to portray any known Australian newspaper identities, past or present. The central character, the old man, I would say is a composite picture.

All in all, this is a good novel, a praiseworthy attempt to lift Australian fiction from the suburbs and the bush track. Surely this must be the first Australian novel set in the boardroom of a big industry. A minor flaw is that, because of the flashback method involving characters so closely interwoven, there is necessarily repetition and some flagging in action.

I think a more valid criticism would be that Tony Morphett has been too gentle in his treatment. Given that his story is not a pretty one, the Australian newspaper industry is a much dirtier business than he has pictured. Some of the takeovers that have occurred among Australian newspapers have been much bloodier and more sordid affairs than that in Dynasty. This reviewer once worked on a metropolitan newspaper on which was a fellow reporter, a junior on the finance page, a very amiable fellow whose only visible assets were his weekly pay packet. Now he controls the whole shebang, and the ousted proprietor was left a (relatively) poor man. How he did it I'll never understand.

The newspaper proprietor of Dynasty is a man of some conscience and integrity (for instance, he fights his sons to maintain his editorial policy of opposing the Communist Party Dissolution Bill). Show me a newspaper proprietor like that and I'll show you Lasseter's Lost Reef.

Dynasty also tends to over-romanticise the newspaper industry. There are too many characters, dedicated editors and reporters, with that mythical ink in their blood. If such exist I have not met them in 40 years in the business.

For all the merit of Dynasty—and it has plenty—many readers may not accept the lavish praise bestowed on it (on the dustjacket) by publisher Stephen Murray-Smith as "adding significantly to the achievement of the novel in this country." But they should not let that deter them. Dynasty is well worth reading and you don't have to be a newspaper man to enjoy it.

Tom Lardner

A PROPHETIC MINORITY, by Jack Newfield.
Anthony Blond. $2.80.

ITS CRITICS, of whom there are many ranged throughout the entire political spectrum, call it half-baked, idealistic to a fault, and naive. Its supporters, which include men of the calibre of Michael Harrington, see it as courageous, dedicated and existential. Its practical accomplishments, often overlooked by those who write it off as nihilist or chronic rejectionist, are impressive by any standards. It sees itself as the product of the generation "class of sixty" and beyond,