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The Male Line and epic drama: an investigation of epic drama in theory and in practice using traditional sources

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THE MALE LINE AND EPIC DRAMA

AN INVESTIGATION OF EPIC DRAMA IN THEORY
AND IN PRACTICE USING TRADITIONAL SOURCES

Stage Script and Annotations

A thesis submitted

for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF CREATIVE ARTS

from the

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

B.C. GORMAN, B.A.

FACULTY OF CREATIVE ARTS, 1998

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Declaration.

I, Clem Gorman, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Doctor Of Creative Arts, in the Faculty Of Creative Arts, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Signed:

Clem Gorman

Date .................
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ABSTRACT

This project is an attempt to examine a process of creativity - in particular as it relates to the writing of an epic play - and to create such an epic play to which the theories examined in the course of research and investigation can be applied, bearing in mind that the Annotations which embody this examination are secondary to, and focused upon, the play.

In writing this DCA I bear in mind the need, as I perceive it, to broaden and vary the narrative base of the epic play referred to in several ways. Firstly, by developing and enhancing the narratives of characters in the play other than its nominal protagonist, Thomas "Thossie" d'Arcy, to create a more multivocal text so as to tell the stories of those hitherto marginalised characters, especially the women in his life who, in a traditional epic narrative, would appear only in so far as was necessary for the telling of his story. In this way I would attempt to subvert the meta-narrative of the patriarchy.

Secondly, I would attempt to vary the narrative in terms of its traditional form by creating an epic protagonist, in this case Thossie, who was unsympathetic to an audience. Thirdly, I would attempt to vary the form of the traditional epic in the writing of this play by exploring Thossie's character in a little more depth and detail than might be usual in a traditionally structured epic narrative, of whatever mode. In attempting this I would apply theories and practices used in traditional epic poetry and prose to the dramatic mode of the epic. The overall aim would be to show how epic drama may, if modified, continue to be relevant for a postmodern, postcolonial world. This project is part family history - except that, in filling in historical gaps in
my knowledge of my grandfather's life, and in my desire to distance my nominal protagonist from my historical grandfather, I have changed facts, added or deleted scenes and details, and altered names and dates. The result is, therefore, a fictional narrative based upon some members of my paternal family.

The Annotations to this DCA are in two parts: a Journal, and a Theory Section. The Journal is a discursive document couched in often subjective language, which admits anecdotal observations, employs a sometimes impressionistic style, and speaks from a personal perspective to reflect upon my creative practice, from day to day, as I have written the play. The Theory Section attempts to come to grips with traditional theories of the epic and to relate them to *The Male Line*. In this, I break new ground by not basing my examination solely on the theories of Bertolt Brecht.

The Annotations themselves described a curve during the six years of writing, from being purely an examination of, and a reflection upon, creative techniques and processes, to being an examination of, and reflection upon, the nature of epic drama - where the epic is the very form which this creative project took.

This DCA project, then, interrogates the patriarch, reflects on creative practice, and applies traditional theories of the epic, drawn from poetry and prose, to both create, and reflect upon, a non-traditional, multivocal, postcolonial epic form.
PART I

THE CREATIVE WORK

A STAGE PLAY


PREFACE

This play has been written slowly and hesitantly over a period of six years. During that time I have experimented with a number of dramatic techniques, such as a chorus, or a talking statue, only to reject them as inappropriate or untheatrical.

It began to emerge as an episodic play, and in time I began to realise that it may in fact be an epic play. To a great extent the episodic nature of this play was dictated by the fact that it was based upon the life of my grandfather, which limited my options in choosing a suitable structure.

I have always wanted to write a seamless play where scenes would blend one into the next in a constant flow. This I have achieved, for the first time, with this play.

I also experimented with a variety of names before settling on The Male Line, a title borrowed from another play which I wrote five years ago, but with which I was not satisfied so did not submit it to theatre companies.

The theme of this play is arrogance leading to a fall. The characters are drawn from life but this is an archetypal play which could apply in any society at any time. It has been a great effort to write because of my own inner resistance to writing it.
In a DCA the work of art is the principal element, not serving merely as an illustration of theories. I hope therefore that this play will stand scrutiny as a work of art. It deals with an unpalatable part of our Australian heritage, one that many writers may wish to avoid. But unless we understand our past we can make no progress toward a better future. "The past looms large in Gorman's work" said playwright Jack Hibberd in a preface to one of my plays. Nowhere is that more true than in this play.

NOTE: STAGING

The staging of this play relies basically upon a collection of wooden rods or staffs, which might be four inches by one and a half or two inches, and are made of smooth timber.

These rods serve as rifles, as the necks and heads of horses, as building materials, as railway sleepers or rails, as fence posts, and so on.

They can be quickly coupled together, by actors between scenes or even as part of the business within a scene, to make longer staves which can serve as veranda posts, building materials, trees, and so on.

In addition, there are large boxes, about as big as a seaman’s sea-chest, which can be coupled with the staves to make tables, chairs and so on; or piled up to make a cart; or a piano, or an antique, or a desk. Coupled with the staves they can make buildings.

Areas are differentiated by means of lighting. Two separate pools of light means two separate areas; time zones in some cases.

In general, the actors carry on staves and boxes, set them up, and carry them off.
CAST LIST

Principals:

Old Thossie d'Arcy  30+ -70s
Young Thossie  20s-30s
Elizabeth d'Arcy  His wife, 30-70s
Robert d'Arcy  His son, child - 20s
Dawn d'Arcy  Robert's wife, 20s.
Narrator  Thossie's grandson, 20s.
A Gallipolli officer.
Bookie's Clerk
Horse Trainer
Bill O'Halloran  Commissioner For Railways.
Hal Winstead  Bank Manager, 30s
Veronica Winstead  His wife, 30s

Dunn  A Journalist.
Athol Kennedy  A Publican.
Court Officer
Commonwealth Police Officer

Cast: Others:

Gangers
Tattersall's Members
Soldiers at Gallipolli
Men at Races
Party Guests
LIST OF SETTINGS

A cemetery
Street scenes
Bar scenes
A gangers' camp
Interior, old house
Interior, Noble's house
Shipboard
Building site
Gallipolli beach
Bookie's stand
Annie's bedroom
Tattersalls Club corridor
Bill O'Halloran's office
Area of parkland
THE MALE LINE

Act 1

The East Perth Cemetery, day.

Thossie d’Arcy and his son, ROBERT, are looking through lots of documents, sitting on graves, their briefcases on the ground, pens in hands.

Thossie: This one from Bob Prendergast quotes seven thousand quid. There’s no way that he can run the Railway Refreshment Rooms for that money.

Robert: Can we beat it?

Thossie: Yeah, only because I’m running them already. Not if I had to start from scratch.

Robert: None of these are under seven thou.

Thossie: That’s it, then. If I quote six thousand, nine hundred and ninety nine I’ve got the contract for another year.

Robert: Another year of Thossie’s pies at the Railway Refreshment Rooms!

Thossie: I never sold any bastard a bad pie!

Robert: I know, Dad, I know. I was joking.

Thossie: One thing you don’t joke about, Son, is money. I didn’t make you a lawyer for the fun of it. I made you a lawyer so you can make a decent quid in this world.

Robert: Right-oh, Dad.

Thossie: Now I better get those tenders back to the Railway Commissioner’s office before five. I’ll just fill in the figure on our tender .... seal the envelope .. and that’s that. We’ll have to put our prices up a bit to cover that rent, but we’ll be alright. Another good year!

Robert: Yes Dad.

Thossie: OK we’ve done the business. Now you can crack a joke.

Pause
Robert It's gone clean out of my head.

Thossie No wonder. All you ever think of is cricket and sex. Come on, I'll buy you a drink!

*They pack their briefcases and Robert exits.*

Narrator Name: Thomas d’Arcy.
Date of birth: 28 December 1874.
Father: - a blank.
Mother: Margaret d’Arcy
Reference Number: 75/003026.

Thossie exits.

Narrator moves.

The Narrator stands in a single spot, facing audience.

Narrator This could be the very spot where it happened.

He waits

I don’t know what I should be feeling.

Pause

Maybe they've changed the street alignment since then. I try to conjure the scene in my mind. Thossie in his cart, driving his horse along the street. I imagine street noises.

*FX Street Noises*

He sees a man who owes him money walking on the footpath. He pulls the horse hard over to the side of the road, narrowly missing a woman and her child. He raises the whip, and cracks it around the man’s shoulders. When a policeman intervenes, Thossie goes to his mate the Police Commissioner and has the man transferred to Wyndham!

*FX Whip Cracking, Screams, Shouts.*

But it's impossible to imagine. Things like that don't happen.
There is no sense of the space, still less of the motion, of Thossie’s life. His life took place in a space which no longer exists. His life is no longer where it was, it is now wherever I am. No longer history; but myth.

Pause

I want to know him. To know myself, by knowing him in me. He was my grandfather. This is how I attempt to recreate the life of Thomas d’Arcy. I returned to Australia to exorcise the ghosts of my past, to come to terms with what happened to my family. And that means; Thossie.

The Narrator moves. Slow fade begins.

Mackay, Central North Queensland, the 1890s.

FX The mournful hoot of a ship’s whistle. Horses’ hooves, the creak of a waggon. A bullocky’s whip; the bellow of a bullock.

A new town, gateway to a vast new area of forest and plain. Tropical, fast-growing and violent. Its streets a sea of mud in the Wet; dust in the Dry. More pubs than doctors’ surgeries. In some of them, sawdust-floored, we see some colonial stereotypes. The Grazier.

Spot slow up on Old Man Noble, a colonial gentleman.

.. and the Town Larrikin.

Slow spot up; no figure in spot.

As the Narrator names items, they appear in the spot - thrown in.

The Town Larrikin was always in a sense preceded by his waistcoat ...

A waistcoat is thrown in.

His hat.

A rough hat is thrown in.

And his boots.

Boots thrown in.
Only then would you begin to get a glimpse of the Larrikin himself.

A small, wiry man, his face blacked out, steps into the spot and dons the boots, the waistcoat, and the hat. He is already wearing pants and shirt; now he is fully attired. It is Thossie. As he dresses the Chorus speaks.

The Chorus: Annie, Meg, Dawn. Each woman speaks in turn. They speak in a conversational, matter-of-fact tone, as if chatting while waiting for a train.

Dawn Some people, you can see when they’re young how they’re likely to end up.

Meg Nothing you can say or do will make the slightest difference.

Annie Thossie was far too hungry for his own good!

FX; Sounds of a railway gang working. Hammer on spike. A steam engine in the background. Shouts and commands.

Three men are fixing a rail to a wooden sleeper. One man wields the hammer, one holds the spike, one supervises; the Ganger (Thossie). They finish and stand, mopping their brows. The Ganger pulls his big watch, on a chain, out of the fob pocket of his waistcoat, and examines it at some length; the others watching him.

Ganger Smoke-oh!

The other two men relax. One of them pours tea from a billy hanging over a fire. One of them rolls a smoke. Thossie, the Ganger, takes out a small tin whistle.

Man 1 You’ve had that tin whistle a while, Thossie.

Thossie It was my father’s.

Man 2 He musta give it ya a long time ago.

Thossie I never met ‘im.

Thossie plays the tin whistle. Irish jigs and reels. One of the men gets up and dances an Irish folk dance. Another joins him. Thossie holds up his hand. They stop.

Thossie Always remember one thing, men. There’s dignity in Labour. Hold your heads high!

He pauses for effect.
There's a revolution coming, boys, and it's gonna sweep the capitalist off his feet!

Worker Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Worker 2 Look out Thossie, there's the Engineer!

Thossie looks startled and immediately resumes work. The Workers laugh. He is angry, but smiles too.

Thossie You'll see, you'll see!

Narrator Thossie was more often to be seen, however, in the local bars.

Thossie finishes a drink at a bar. He wipes his mouth and runs over to the railway line, putting on his hat as he goes.

Man 1 Here she comes, Thossie!

Thossie needs no further prompting. He spins around to face ..

Elizabeth, who has arrived at his camp, walking to work as a school m'arm. She is dressed all in white and carries a small white parasol over her head. She walks sedately, serenely; apparently oblivious to Thossie and his rough-looking gang.

Thossie plays for her on his tin whistle. She does not acknowledge him, but turns and exits.

He is crestfallen. He stops playing. A workman steps up to him.

Man Come on Thossie, don't get down. She always does that.

Thossie turns and lunges wildly at the man, who backs off.

Man Alright, alright.

Thossie You bludgers would never do any work if I didn't stand over youse! Now get back to it!

Slowly, grumbling, the men get back to their feet and return to the job. Thossie hesitates a moment, watching after the lady in white, and then joins them, as they work among the audience.

Crossfade to Narrator.

Narrator All he knew about her was that she was the daughter of a local landowner and that she taught in an infants school. That was why she rode by his gang every day; on her way to school.
Slow fade to dark. Spot Thossie. He paces, frustrated, head down. He takes from a box a worn suit, patched and old, and examines it. He throws it down in disgust. He begins to play the tin whistle.

As he does, the notes of his music become synonymous with the blows of a hammer on the iron rail. Lights show the Gang at work, among audience.

**Thossie stops playing.**

Thossie  Alright, now listen to me. From now on he railway line turns away from the road..

Worker  Never mind, Thossie!

Thossie  Shut up. That means we're going into virgin bush.

Worker  Not the sort of virgin bush you had in mind, eh?

Thossie goes to the man. The man licks his lips and turns away.

Worker  No offence Thossie.

Thossie turns away from the man. He looks toward the road.

Thossie  Alright, I'm going to see the Engineer. You men wait here.

As Thossie starts to leave, Elizabeth appears on the road. Seeing her, Thossie grabs his in whistle and begins playing. There is an edge of urgency to his music now, as he approaches her.

Things proceed as before. Thossie plays, a couple of the men dance, and Elizabeth walks on, ignoring it all.

Then she stops. The men stop dancing, staring at her. Thossie stops playing, then starts again, then stops again, falteringly. He turns to his men.

Thossie  You men can take some time off.

They do not move. He turns back to Elizabeth.

Thossie  May I take your bag, Ma'am?

Elizabeth  You may not.

Thossie  May I play for you?

Elizabeth  You may.
He plays. At first, not well; but he plays. Slow fade. Spot Elizabeth, who speaks to audience.

Elizabeth I was obliged either to stop, and now, or to be condemned to ride forever no further than the boundaries of my father’s property. Worse still would be the boundaries of the town; graziers like my father, shopkeepers, policemen, the entire district given over to a small fraternity of clans. Church, school, drawing room. No.

Pause

Elizabeth If I’m to pause here, I will demand your respect.

The workers stare with astonishment, turning to one another.

Thossie I may be a working man but I know a lady when I see one!

They face each other.

Elizabeth Well .. play.

She turns to the workers, who move away. Thossie plays. Slow fade on this.

Narrator in spot.

Narrator Neither knew it at the fateful moment when, music bisecting recklessness, she abandoned the road of probity for the railway of adventure - but they had begun a struggle for power.

Thossie appears in a spot.

Thossie I could hardly bring myself to believe that this vision in white, had stopped for me. As close as she was, surely she would see the stain which Labour places on all its prisoners. But she did not go away as I played for her.

Elizabeth I ride out on my father’s estate each Sunday afternoon. Do you work on Sundays?

Thossie Indeed, dear lady, I do not.

He adopts a defiant pose.

Nor do I attend religion!
Elizabeth If you walk with me, you will. But for the moment I am glad that you don’t. Do you know Lacey’s Creek?

Thossie I do.

Elizabeth Do you know where it passes below Browne’s Hill just near the main road?

Thossie It spreads out, and there’s sandbars.

Elizabeth If you care to place yourself there - mounted - on Sunday afternoon, I may ride with you.

Narrator In the weeks that followed the relationship between Thossie and Elizabeth grew closer, as the railway line and the track grew further apart. I imagine them inventing elaborate ruses to keep her father in that state of ignorance to which all lovers would confine all parents. I imagine her thinking “I can mould this rough clay. I can teach this beast to blow his nose, and which knife to use with which dish. We can fly away to some great city, and there we can make a new life. And with all our money being my father’s, I will be the one in command!”

She exits, leaving Thossie speechless.

After she has gone, he throws his hat in the air and whoops. Turning, he sees his men watching him. He rushes at them and a fight ensues, an all-in melee in which he and his men throw mock - and not so mock - punches, wrestle, and roll on the ground.

Elizabeth in a spot. She plays the piano - the sort of music a girl on a station might play - but suddenly stops. She stares away from the piano.

Dawn d’Arcy paces anxiously up and down in a room, wringing her hands. There is decoration to indicate that the room belongs in a house built in the 1920s. A radio is on; we hear the News, delivered in the style and accent of 1943.

News A Perth solicitor, Robert d’Arcy, was arrested early this afternoon. It is understood that Mr d’Arcy has been charged with soliciting a bribe. Mr d’Arcy, the son of well-known caterer Thomas d’Arcy, is the Chief Legal Officer for the Manpower Department.

Meg Lee races in from outside.

Meg What’s up, Girl?
Dawn Have you heard the news?
Meg No.
Dawn They’ve arrested Robert.
Meg Oh, Girl! Why? Who?
Dawn That’s what I want to find out. Will you look after Bertie?
Meg Of course, Girl. You go. Now you take it easy. Don’t drive too fast. Do you want a cup of tea first?
Dawn Oh dear God!

They hug, fiercely, briefly.

I’ll ring you as soon as I know what’s what!

Dawn hurries out of the room.

Thossie, talking to a man beside a chair on which is draped a saddle.

Thossie You call that broken nag a horse?
Man It’s the best horse you’ll buy for what you’re offering!
Thossie Is that so? Suppose I was to offer to fight you for that fine Arab stallion there?
Man I know your style, Thos d’Arcy, and I warn you; if you try rough stuff with me I’ll call in the constables!
Thossie Be damned to you then! I don’t care for your good opinion. You’re just another parasite on the working man!

Thossie makes to leave.

Man The only way you’ll ever ride a decent horse is to steal one!

Thossie stops and turns back toward the man. He smiles, then leaves.

Narrator, in spot. He smiles knowingly to audience and emphasises the word "rode".

Narrator They rode. That Sunday, and on many others. And as they rode, Thossie began, slowly, to lose the stain of labour.
Elizabeth and Thossie seated on the ground, eating sandwiches.

Thossie My men work hard for me and we're ahead of schedule. I learn them well, believe me.

Elizabeth You teach them well. It is they who learn.

Thossie Ah. It is for you to teach me, beautiful lady in white. I swear I’ll be your best pupil!

Elizabeth You won’t swear at all, Thomas d’Arcy.

Thossie You, my lady, are a vision.

Elizabeth There are some who say I am already an old maid, at 30. What do you say to that?

Thossie If I didn’t know you are incapable of lying I’d accuse you of adding to your age!

She laughs. He laughs with her.

Elizabeth You’re an impudent man. I can’t tell you how dull some of those proper young men are.

Thossie I want to be one of those proper men.

Elizabeth I like your energy. Just keep it on the straight and narrow. Like your railway tracks.

They laugh. Time passes. Later. The sandwiches are finished. They drink soft drinks.

Thossie So you see if it were not for Marx and Engels the working man would still be in the gutter. They frightened the bosses so much that conditions began to improve.

He gestures broadly.

"A spectre is haunting Europe. The spectre of Communism!" Those are the opening words of Marx’s first book, "The Communist Manifesto".

Elizabeth I find myself in a state of utter amazement.

Thossie That a working man could know such things?

Elizabeth My father has a Radical temper. Though he’ll hardly be likely to admit as much to you!
Thossie: I doubt he'll even admit me into his home.

Elizabeth: Oh he'll do that alright, mark me. But tell me, isn't Communism violent?

Thossie: My word it is! And aren't the bosses violent toward working men?

Elizabeth: And women.

Thossie: Oh.. and women.

Elizabeth: My father isn't.

Thossie: If I ever had wealth I'd use it to help the poor.

Elizabeth: You are a man the like of which I never expected to find in Mackay, I'll give you that. You have more depth than any ten of the landed gentry.

*Thossie looks at her.*

Thossie: I aspire to work with my brain. And that my children should never have to work as navvies.

*Narrator in spot.*

Narrator: The time came for Thossie to approach Elizabeth's father, old man Noble himself.

Thossie is let in to a cool, high-ceilinged room by a servant, who then leaves him. He stands, transfixed, staring about him. His boots make loud echoes, so he stops moving.

Finally he handles an expensive looking ornament, reverently.

Thossie: My dear old mother, if you could see me now. You gave me your name, now give me your courage and your cunning.

*Narrator*:

If there was a single moment in Thossie's life when he began his movement to wealth and power, it was this moment. Few sights are more seductive to a poor person than the sight of a grand piano in a fine house.

Thossie touches a grand piano, tracing its outline with his finger.

Thossie: You will play one of these for me. In our grand house, one day.

*Crossfade to Elizabeth and old man Noble.*
Elizabeth: Father it may be inexplicable to you, but I’m not a fool merely because I am a woman. I do know what I’m doing.

Noble: Do you think I built my fortune to squander it on a railway ganger?

Elizabeth: If you care for me, you’ll accommodate him. It is as simple as that.

Noble: I’d as soon throw him out in the dirt!

Elizabeth: He’s no stranger to dirt. But he’ll make a fortune of his own one day. He’s got the energy, I can see it in him.. All he needs a stake!

Her father stares at her, in despair.

Old man Noble enters the drawing room where Thossie waits for him. Thossie raises his body to its full height and assumes the air of a man born to such wealth; a man who has never known anything else. He strives in vain to make the two sides of his frayed waistcoat meet over his chest, so that he may button it up; in the process he notices just how frayed it is, and tries to make the frayed ends less visible by spitting on his finger and rubbing them. At this moment old man Noble enters and observes him.

Thossie adopts a cunning, sly, patently false smile which almost shouts “look out!” Old man Noble opens his mouth to speak and extends his hand, but before he can speak Thossie does.

Thossie: Mr Noble, what an honour it is to be greeted by you in this magnificent room! Forgive me for being a little late. You have a fine piano there.

Noble: Mr d’Arcy. I see you have made yourself welcome. Would you care to be seated?

Thossie: I would not.

Noble: Then perhaps you would care to state your business?

Narrator: Thossie remembered that Noble was celebrated for his directness.
Thossie  My business is your daughter Elizabeth.

Noble draws in his breath sharply, shocked.

Noble  On the contrary, I would have thought my daughter was none of your business.

Thossie pauses, staring at Noble. Now Thossie's posture changes: he begins to stand taller, adopt a more confident air. Thossie measures his words carefully.

Thossie  I wish to pay court to your daughter. And that is her wish also.

Again, Noble registers shock.

Noble  My daughter does not know you, Sir!

Thossie  She has met me, we have conversed, and she has expressed a desire to see me again.

Noble  That cannot be true. Without disrespect, Sir, I did not bring up my daughters to consort with such men as yourself.

Thossie raises himself, if possible, even higher.

Thossie  Ask her.

Noble hesitates for the first time.

Noble  You have a damned impudence, Sir! You come into my house. You claim an impossible acquaintance with my daughter. Can you offer me one reason why you should not be horse-whipped?

Thossie does not answer, but stands his ground. Noble explodes.

Noble  Sir, what are you? I know you by reputation. A man of no family. A poor shadow of a Catholic. Rumoured to hold Socialist views. A bar-room brawler, an odd-job man with no property. Have sense, man! My daughter is an educated woman. She plays that piano on which you have laid your hands for God's sake. She knows which knife to use with which meat. No, I won't listen to this!

Thossie  And you're right. I have no money, no family, no church, and I am too fast with my fists for my own good. But I can work and I have ambition. With a good woman I can do anything!
Noble You mean, with a good woman and my money!
Thossie I don’t want your money!
Noble Then make your own, and come back when you have it. I’ll bar no man because of what he is. But have something to offer apart from an unparalleled gall!

Noble turns as if to leave the room, then turns back.

A horse which does not belong to me has been found in my far paddocks. You wouldn’t know anything about it, I suppose!

Noble turns and leaves. Thossie is at a loss. He goes to the front door, stops, and turns back. He goes to the best armchair and sits in it, making himself comfortable. He waits. He helps himself to Scotch. He flicks through an English magazine devoted to the life of the landed gentry.

Old man Noble, looking tired, and somehow older than he did before, slowly enters the room. He speaks without looking at Thossie.

Noble I will overlook the matter of the horse. As of the close of business tomorrow there will be a cheque in the sum of ten thousand pounds waiting for you at my bank, which is the English, Scottish and Australasian. You and my daughter will travel as far away from this place as is possible to do. Neither you nor she will ever communicate with me again. Agreed?

Thossie walks slowly up to Noble.

Thossie sticks out his hand, but Noble declines to shake it, and instead walks slowly off, his head bowed. We hear him sobbing as he leaves the room.

The Chorus:

Meg Thossie grasped at the land, oh yes, oh dear yes.
Annie He grasped at women. I should know!
Dawn The land, the women, they weren’t ever his to grasp.

Thossie stands in a spot, as he really was; ragged, down at heel, rough. Elizabeth approaches him, carrying clothes.

Elizabeth I bought these for you.
Thossie Thank you.
His manner is stiff, reserved; so is hers. He carefully goes through all the clothes she has. From the pile he picks a waistcoat, trousers, suit jacket, shoes, and hat. He leaves the others.

Thossie: These will do.

Elizabeth: But there are lots of others. Look through the pile.

Thossie: These will do. I know nothing about clothing. I have no desire to play the dandy.

Elizabeth: But you can't always dress like that!

Thossie: Shall I play my music for you?

Elizabeth: Everything I have is yours, will I or won't I.

Thossie: Yes. Where would you like to live, my dear lady?

Elizabeth: Somewhere far from here.

Thossie: Well on that point, at least, you and your father are in agreement.

She begins to weep, softly.

I know it's hard for you. Bear with me. And I assure you, beautiful woman, you will never regret this action.

She does not respond. He takes his few clothes and heads for the door. She raises her head.

He exits without answering.

Elizabeth and Thossie, he wearing his waistcoat, arm in arm; a voice says "you may kiss the bride", and he does, tenderly.

FADE.
Narrator in spot.

Thossie and Elizabeth set sail on the old coastal steamer MV Carpentaria for the long journey to Perth, Western Australia.

Thossie in spot;

That seemed about as far as we could go without drowning!

They loaded Elizabeth’s piano and her trunks of clothing into the hold, and the old man’s ten thousand pounds into a new bank account in Thossie’s name. I imagine Elizabeth, on the deck, watching the North Queensland coast drift out of her life.

Flash-forward: Elizabeth addressing the Narrator, who sits at her feet like a young boy.

I remember it all so vividly, Bertie! At night, when they were burning the sugar, the sky lit up for miles around. My father would take me in a horse and buggy to watch. I was his favourite, his princess.

She stares into space, remembering. Crossfade to Elizabeth and Thossie, dressing for dinner.

Let me look at you.

You look well enough. If we’re to sit at the Captain’s table you must make a good impression. There might be people on this ship who will be useful to us in Perth.

You’ve got a good head on your shoulders.

He kisses her. She smiles.

You’ll be a gentleman in Perth. You’ll leave behind the ganger. And please, leave behind the Communist while you’re at it?

Thossie laughs.

At least, not at the Captain’s table. And remember to start with the implements on the outside of your plate, and work toward the plate, course by course.

Thossie narrates to audience. He reclines on deck.
Thossie  As we approached Perth I began to feel as if I was coming into my own. Here was a city big enough to get my teeth into; and I had teeth, now. It was a port, a business centre; there was even some manufacturing. But what my fat old mother had drilled into me was; pubs. Where She had seen many a man she loved spend every penny they had taken weeks to earn; in a few days at the pub. Now, I could own one, and get some of my money back! No man would ever push me down again. With my business and my young wife, I could overcome anything. The prejudice against the Irish. The prejudice against working men doing well in life.

Annie  Allow me to introduce myself. I am Annie, and I was his lover for money years. He kept me in a flat in Adelaide Terrace. Yes, big and fat like his mother! I know how to get under his skin.

She addresses Thossie.

But what about your Communist ideals, Thossie?

She laughs. Pause. He appears nettled.

Thossie  And I would not forget my beliefs. However high I might go, I would never forget my beliefs.

Elizabeth narrates to audience.

Elizabeth  To be honest I was more than a little perturbed at what I had done. It was one thing to imagine myself throwing over the traces, marrying out of convention and leaving Mackay. It was quite another to find myself actually married to a man who had not only no social graces, but no graces.

Elizabeth now changes her costume quickly.

On the voyage to Perth I was obliged to face up to an ordeal for which I was not ill-prepared; I was not prepared for it at all.

She and Thossie climb into bed; lights dim; they wrestle, grunting. Finally she sits up.

Elizabeth  Is this what it is? Is this it?

Thossie  What did you expect? I am a man. And you are a woman!
Elizabeth: How can you treat me like that? I am your wife!

Thossie: Like what? Like what? I am treating you the way a man treats a woman.

Elizabeth: No. I can't believe that.

She begins to sob, softly.

Thossie: Look if I was .. I didn’t mean to be rough with you. I’m .. I’m not used to .. to a fine woman. I meant no harm.

She dries her eyes. They sit, facing away from each other.

Elizabeth: Then if that is what it is, I will do it, since we are married. All I can ask is that you do not do it like an animal.

Thossie slumps back. Elizabeth arranges herself demurely on the bed.

Elizabeth: I am ready.

Thossie stares at her, not moving.

Fade to black, to the mournful toot of a ship's horn.

Narrator: I like to think of them on that ship, getting to know each other slowly, like two mature people .. but I see Elizabeth crying, always crying; trying to find times to be alone beside the railings. I see her dissembling when other people are around; playing the part of happy young wife.

Now, we see Elizabeth and Thossie, with other passengers, playing the part, in mime, upstage, of happy and jolly newlyweds; in a formal post-Victorian shipboard society.

Looking at Thossie. Even, perhaps, from time to time, affectionately touching his arm as she had seen other young wives do. I see her adopting a knowing look, like someone who has been granted membership of a club. I imagine her shame at the unchanging dress, day in day out, his uncouth mannerisms and front-bar language. As the ship cruised slowly across the Great Australian Bight, I sense a rising horror - one she must always suppress. There was no question of divorce. This was it.

Elizabeth is teaching Thossie to read and write.

Elizabeth: Now, I want you to repeat what I have just said.
Thossie Cocks-swayne, steer the ship to that shore over there!

Elizabeth No no. Listen. "Coxwain, steer my boat to yon bonny shore!"

Thossie I got the gist of it! What different does it make?

Elizabeth If you are to be a gentleman Thossie, God help you, it makes all the difference. Do you want the better people of Perth to laugh at you?

Thossie What, for being browbeaten by my schoolteacher wife?

Elizabeth Coxwain. Say it for me. 

*Thossie goes sullen.*

Thossie Coxwain.

Elizabeth There! You can do it!

Thossie It won't be by good manners or fine speech that I'll make my mark in Perth. It'll be by the power of my money!

Elizabeth I think you have a lot to learn about how power is exercised.

*They stare at each other in silent conflict.*

Meg, the housemaid, Dawn, Robert's wife, and Annie Logan, Thossie's Mistress, now appear in a spot.

Meg Many a colonial marriage began worse I suppose..

Annie Many would say that, having neither youth nor beauty to bring to Thossie's bed, she was lucky her father was wealthy!

Dawn And some would say, Thossie was the lucky one.

Narrator Perth, 1905.

*The slow bustle of Perth; hawkers, traffic noise, the clang of a tram-bell.*

I now take you ..

*The Narrator gestures.*

To a small brick house in West Perth a few months later.
We see Elizabeth and Thossie in a pool of light around a kitchen table.

Elizabeth: That money is all we have now, Thossie! We must preserve it!

Thossie: I am doing better than that. I am making it grow.

Elizabeth: Thossie, you are losing at the races!

Thossie: But it will grow. I'll win, soon!

Elizabeth: Give it to me.

Thossie: I will not.

Elizabeth: It was given to you by my father. Do you want my father to think you've failed as a man?

This gives Thossie pause for thought.

Thossie: I tell you what I'll do. I'll show you how I am investing most of it. Will that satisfy you?

Elizabeth: I suppose so.

Thossie: Alright, but you listen to me. I am going to use that money to become somebody in this State. No one will push me around ever again. And when I have made my money, I will do with it what I please. Even to the extent of going to the races. Is that agreed?

Pause.

Elizabeth: On one condition.

Thossie: Yes?

Elizabeth: I do not want you to touch me any more. Unless we.. decide to have a family.

Pause.

Thossie: You think you’ve made a mistake, don’t you?

Elizabeth: I would like to have children. Perhaps two.

Thossie: And I’m to languish without the satisfaction that a husband needs?

Elizabeth: I make no restrictions upon your freedom.

Pause.
Thossie Then so be it. I ..

Elizabeth Yes?

Thossie It's nothing. That's how we'll do it.

They turn slowly away from each other, each seeking a task to perform. Thossie puts a record on the gramophone, winds it up, and plays marching music. Elizabeth opens a copy of Old Moore's Almanac and studies it. Thossie turns the marching music up higher. Elizabeth lifts her head and moves further away. Crossfade: Thossie moves out of scene. He approaches a dishevelled man and gives him money.

Thossie Find work soon, old Mate, I can't go on doing this for ever.

Man Thanks Thossie, thank you.

Thossie There's never been full employment since 1892. It's not your fault you can't find work.

Elizabeth narrates.

Elizabeth I realised that if I was to have any life of my own - I would have to live that life in Thossie's shadow. So I began to do some things I had never thought find myself doing. To steal from him. I began to study his papers at night when he was with his mistress.

She does so, taking notes.

Crossfade reveals Thossie at the gramophone, winding it up. Marching music plays. He turns down the sound. He picks up a copy of Engels' "Condition Of The Working Class In England In 1848". He reads from it, walking slowly up and down in time to the music. We hear his voice, voice-over, as he reads a passage. Fade.

Annie talks directly to Thossie.

Annie Couldn't you see what she wanted?

Thossie What do you mean, "what she wanted?"

Annie She wanted support; she was in a strange place ..

Thossie So was I!

Annie But you were a man, and it was your world.

Thossie She never complained.
In a spot upstage, Elizabeth. She recites a poem.

Elizabeth

Never admit the pain
bury it deep
only the weak complain
complaint is cheap
Cover thy wound
fold down its curtained place
silence is still a crown
courage a grace.

Pause.

Mary Gilmore.

Flash-forward: appropriate sound FX. Thossie approaches a man.

Thossie

How are you Hugh?

Hugh

Not bad, Thossie. Yourself?

Thossie

Never better.

Pause

Look uh .. I’m sorry about what happened last year at that party. My son got drunk. If there’s any way I can make it up to you ..

Hugh

I accept the apology, Thossie. I think it’s best if our paths simply don’t cross.

Thossie

Well, as a matter o fact, I have come to make you an offer Hugh.

Hugh

I’m not sure what you mean.

Thossie

It’s for my son Robert rather than for me. As you know, he’s the legal adviser to Manpower..

Hugh

So?

Thossie

So .. he’s in a position to do you a very good turn.. If you don’t want to be Manpowered, for example.

Hugh

Well, if the Government thinks someone should serve their country then that’s what they must do.

Thossie

I served my country in the Sudan and at Gallipoli Hugh. But they were freer times. Now the bureaucrats rule our lives. You’ve got better things to do than serve the Army.
Hugh            Good God, man, we’re at war with the Nazis! Selfish interests take second place!

Thossie         For a consideration, my son can make sure you are not Manpowered. Say, thirty pounds.

Pause.

Hugh            Does Robert know you’re here?

Thossie         No he doesn’t. But he and I are a team.

Hugh            Thossie, I think we can leave this conversation right where it stands.

Thossie         I didn’t arrange this meeting to waste my time, or yours.

PAUSE.

Hugh            You realise that if I report this conversation you could be in serious trouble.

Thossie         There’s not a public official in this State who is not, shall we say, obliged to me..

Hugh            Thossie what you’re asking is illegal, it’s immoral..

Thossie         Spare me the Sunday School sermon, Hugh. I can be a very generous man to my friends. So let’s confine ourselves to reality. All I’m asking is that you consider my offer and let me know.

Pause.  Hugh considers Thossie.

Hugh            I will certainly do that, Thossie. I will most certainly do that.

Crossfade to Narrator.

Narrator       Hugh Harrington was an old enemy of the d’Arcy family. A year before Robert had broken his arm in a fight at a party. Thossie had stepped in to smooth things over with the police. But Harrington had never forgiven the d’Arcys.

Chorus; the three women.

Dawn            There is a tide which, taken at the flood, carries us on and up ..
Annie But change just one element in that tide ..

Meg Arrogance always finds the way to destruction.

Elizabeth to audience.

Elizabeth When we first arrived in Perth I asked Thossie for a little money to start a small business. It had always been one of my dreams.

Thossie Women running businesses! Not while I control the purse-strings!

She stares at him, then lifts her chin haughtily and turns away.

Thossie to audience.

Thossie It was not the first time I had seen that haughty look, and it would not be the last. She had learnt it perhaps from her mother, and she from her mother ..

Annie chips in.

Annie As they tried to deal with a succession of arrogant men.

Thossie I had more important things to think about. Mens' business. Where to place my money. Where to place my loyalty. There is nothing more important in this world than loyalty!

Thossie meets two men wearing three piece suits, hats and fob watches.

O’Brien Michael I would like to introduce to you a young man who has lately migrated from Queensland. With a substantial sum of money, I might add!

Martin I see!

O’Brien Michael Martin, please meet Thomas d’Arcy! And I, as you know, am Bill O’Brien.

They exchange greetings and shake hands.

I understand you prefer to be known as “Thossie”.

Thossie I have learnt to accept it.

They laugh.

Martin The blacks and the Kanakas in Queensland; do they give you a lot of trouble?
Thossie  They are people, just like us.

Martin  Hardly like us, surely!

O’Brien  Ahh .. shall we adjourn to the bar, Gentlemen? Mr d’Arcy is seeking advice about investment.

Martin  You’ve come to the right men, d’Arcy. We may not be welcome at the Weld Club where the Protestant silvertails hold court. But we hold court ourselves at the Tattersalls Club. And I guarantee you’ll see more money change hands there on a given day!

Thossie  I like the sound of that. Let’s talk!

O’Brien to audience.

O’Brien  In those days the country was divided along racial and religious lines; Irish versus Protestant. The Protestants controlled everything that had been important at the time of first settlement - land, the banks, and the Army. The Irish controlled what the Protestants didn’t want to soil their hands with - the building industry, gambling and hotels. The Protestant fortunes went on from generation to generation. The Irish Catholic fortunes rose and fell; the problem being that our money was too liquid - if you take my meaning.

He turns to Thossie and starts to speak.

Thossie I think you’ll ...

But Thossie is no longer with him; he is over at the bar, drinking with Martin.

.. fit in well here.

Thossie turns to audience.

Thossie  Perth was a larger version of Mackay. Brash, vulgar, and rich because of the mining industry. I decided to build my house in Mount Lawley, a new suburb opening up to the North of the city. Not only were the houses big, but it was already reputed to be the home of the State’s most powerful men.

Elizabeth to audience.

Elizabeth  He means; I built his house for him.
We see Elizabeth supervising workmen on a building site. It is pretty minimal; a pile of bricks, some timber, several workmen and some big plans laid out on a bench. Elizabeth is dressed in white.

Elizabeth I want the house to face North of course. The tennis court - why he wants a tennis court God only knows, he doesn’t play - will be here at the side of the house. This land at the back will be for the horses. With so much bush around the house we’ll ride a lot.

She turns to audience.

In fact, we rode to hounds with the local Hunt. In some ways it was as if nothing had changed. I rode to hounds as a young girl in Mackay. In other respects everything had changed. I was no longer my father’s pride and joy. He did not write to me. It was as if he had abandoned me.

Elizabeth walks slowly, with haughty dignity, as if she is above life, and does not care.

O’Brien to audience.

O’Brien I told young Thossie; there’s plenty of black money in pubs. Make your pile, send your children to University in Melbourne to be professionals. That’s how the Irish will climb the ladder. Then we can take over the Liberal Party, which is where we really belong!

Thossie The first pub I ever bought was the North Beach. When you buy a pub, always buy one that’s in a place where people get dry. That’s the beach, the desert or anywhere that sport is played. After I bought it I still had plenty of money left over. It was hard to believe after all the poverty I’d lived with in Queensland. In these early days I often thought of my old mother and the funny thing is - this’ll make you laugh - I missed her every day and night of my life.

Thossie staggers drunkenly, corrects himself, sings;

A man’s best friend is his mother ...

He shakes his fist at the universe.

There are no loyalties. There are no friends. We are all alone. Can you hear me?

He cups his hand to his ear, listening for God.
No answer! That proves it! We are all alone!

Narrator appears.

Narrator Why did you leave your mother?

Thossie You don’t understand. You grew up in a different era. In my day there wasn’t any dole, no welfare. You sank or swam. People actually starved to death in the Depression. Right here in Australia. That’s what made me a Communist! I mean the Depression of 1891-94. I didn’t need stuck-up mugs like O’Brien in Perth telling me about pubs. All those wealthy Catholics they gave me the shits. But first, if the Tatts Club was gonna take me seriously, I had to make money. It wasn’t till I got to Perth that I first heard the expression; your only friend in this world is a quid. But I learnt to say it so well that years later when I said it to my sons, they thought I’d made it up!

Thossie turns thoughtful.

I’ve always had a respect for the past. I talk to my ancestors, y’know. Over here in Perth they’re the only people I can really trust. Ho there! Koo ...chillen or whatever your bloody name is! He’s a sort of Irish hero from the mists of history. He wasn’t a thin wiry little bugger like me. He was a big powerful man. He turned back the sea with his bare hands. He carried a sick child on his back for many days, they say. I wanted to be like him. Ho! Kookoolen! What do you say?

He listens for an answer.

He says; throw Fate to the winds! You hear that? “Throw Fate to the winds!” I know what he means. Put your fortune on every throw!

Elizabeth The only way to keep money away from Thossie was to hide it. In all the years we were together it never occurred to him that I would deceive him. I hid five pound notes in the armchairs, ten pound notes behind the piano, and one pound notes in the vases. I’ll never forget, one time ..

She laughs at the memory.

Thossie sits down heavily in an armchair and a five pound note flies out.
Elizabeth    Look, a bird!

Thossie does not look at it, but picks up the note with a wicked grin.

Thossie    Woman, if you're trying to distract me from this five pound note that fell out of my pants, think again! You didn't marry a fool, you know!

She sighs.

Thossie    As time went on I bought one pub after another. I kept on expanding, using the pubs I had to finance the new ones, and paying back the bank with the cash flow from the bars.

Elizabeth    But we could never agree on anything.

Thossie    The way to entertain in business is to have small informal gatherings. Half a dozen couples. After dinner the men retire to the drawing room to talk .. money.

Elizabeth    In m father's house we had grand parties that went on all weekend. They weren't just for business. They were jolly, loud affairs.

Thossie    Country bumpkins.

Elizabeth    If I get my way in nothing else, I will in this.

They stare at each other. Thossie turns away first.

Narrator    So it was that the d'Arcy home became famous for grand, loud, happy parties.

Elizabeth    And then we had a new joy; our first born.

Thossie    We called him Robert after someone in Elizabeth's family. He was a big baby, and he made a lot of noise, just like his father!

Elizabeth    Our children followed after my side.

We see young Elizabeth nursing a baby.

There there, Darling. You'll always be special.

Narrator    I can imagine him spouting his autodidact theories to the workers building his new house.

We see Thossie, taking off his jacket and rolling up his sleeves, walking up to workmen on the house site.
Thossie I’m a working man myself. I can do a day’s work with any man!

And he begins working with them, carrying bricks to the house. A workman goes up to him kindly.

Workman Ah .. Mate? Those bricks are not for the house. They’re cheaper bricks, for the shithouse down the back of the garden.

Thossie Ah .. yes .. yes I can see that. Anyway ah .. carry on men, you’re doing good work!

Elizabeth goes to him with a cup of tea.

Thossie It’s the maid’s job to bring me tea!

Elizabeth I wanted to do it.

Thossie What will the men think if they see my wife bringing me a cup of tea like a common servant?

Elizabeth doesn’t know what to say. Thossie takes the tea. He swishes it down in a couple of vulgar gulps. She turns away. The workmen suppress smirks and laughter.

Thossie Get back to work you bastards! I’m not payin’ you to bludge off me!

But he does not join them, instead donning his coat and wiping his brow as he critically inspects their work.

O’Brien approaches Thossie.

O’Brien So, looks like we’re going to fight the Pommies’ war for them.

Martin joins them, drink in hand.

Martin Yeah, if you ask me, our interests lie with the Germans. They helped Ireland build up her industries when the British wanted us to stay a land of peasant farmers!

O’Brien Keep those opinions to yourself, Michael. So Thossie, there’d be a quid in this for you, wouldn’t there? Supplying the soldiers with food and drink?

Thossie I’ll enlist.

Martin You’ll what?
Thossie I’ll enlist. I’ll go and fight.

O’Brien Why, on earth?

Thossie Because of what this country stands for, that’s why.

The two men regard him, mystified.

Narrator It wasn’t the first time people had mis-read Thossie, and it wouldn’t be the last.

Thossie finishes his drink.

Thossie My shout gentlemen. To Australia!

Narrator Many Irish Australians were confused about England’s war with Germany in 1914. Some followed their ancestors and were anti-British, while others, like Thossie, supported the English cause. Thossie was a pragmatist, and accepted the domination of the English Ascendancy in Australia.

We see Thossie pulling on a World War 1 uniform. He is supervising men unloading barrels from a barge onto a beach.

Thossie Don’t drop that, Private, or I’ll have your privates for dinner! That’s rum, that is, and your mates up there in the trenches are looking forward to it.

Simpson approaches.

Good day there, Mr Simpson. Another load of rum for the boys up there! They’ll get drunk!

Simpson And who could blame them?

Thossie And try not to bring so many wounded out. They’re drinking all my supplies, right here at the hospital.

Simpson I’ll tell the Turks to stop firing for a while, shall I?

Thossie Yes, do that.

Thossie direct to audience.

Thossie It broke my heart to see what the men went through. And it wasn’t as if they were fighting for Australia. . . But I did my job.

A wounded man is brought in on a stretcher from the front line.
Man          Water mate! Give us some water!

Thossie holds up his hand.

Thossie       Hold it a moment, men.

The stretcher-bearers are only too glad of an opportunity to rest. Thossie takes a large metal tool used for prising open barrels. He prises open a barrel. He holds a cup to the flow from the wooden spigot. He hands the man the cup of rum. The man drinks it in a frenzy, thinking it is water. He half-chokes, then smiles beatifically. Thossie hands him another one. He drinks this more thoughtfully, tasting it. He does not take his eyes off Thossie.

Man          Thanks, Mate!

He is carried away. Thossie turns toward the audience. There are tears in his eyes. He wipes them with his sleeve. Abruptly, he goes to a gramophone beside his tent. He cranks it up. Marching music.

He marches on the spot, up and down, turning. As he does so, straight-backed, he sings, in a loud and heavy voice, the words of the marching tune.

There was rum, rum, some for everyone in the store .. in the store!
There was beer, beer, plenty of good cheer in the quartermaster's store!
My eyes are dim I cannot see
I have not brought my specs with me;
I have .. not .. brought .. my -y specs .. with .. me!

A young lieutenant approaches Thossie.

Lieutenant    My name's Thomas Blamey.

They shake.

Thossie       Thomas d'Arcy. They call me Thossie.

Blamey        I hear you're a Socialist.

Thossie       Do you?

Blamey        In my book socialists make the best business men because they despise money.

Thossie       So we're talking business?

Blamey        My officers could do with a good, cheap supply of rum.
Thossie I'm sure they could. So could the privates.

Blamey There's rum enough for everyone Thossie, you know that. What can I do for you? Extra blankets? Extra food? Extra cigarettes?

Thossie Sit down, why don't you? Let's talk business.

_He salutes, laughing. Fade._

_Narrator_ When Thossie returned home he was richer in several ways. During his absence his modest but growing catering empire had continued to make money - some of it from thirsty Diggers returning from the front. He had made friends such as Blamey - later to be Commander of Australian forces in the Second World War - and Joe Chamberlain, a Communist who would rise to be a giant in the trade union movement.

_O'Brien approaches Thossie._

O'Brien Congratulations. You've won the contract to supply the Railways with food and grog!

_They shake._

Thossie How do you know?

O'Brien Mate .. in this town ..

_He shrugs expressively. They grin, and laugh._

_Narrator_ Now, Thossie began in earnest the task of building up a great financial empire. But it sometimes seemed that for every quid he made, he lost two at the races.

_Thossie fronts a bookie. We hear the thunder of horse's feet, the shouts of other bookies. this one is looking across the bookies' yard through binoculars, then changing the odds on his own board._

_Thossie proffers money._

Thossie Fifty on Bold Prince.

_Bookie's Clerk_ Fifty to win Bold Prince!

Thossie No, be buggered, five hundred.

_The bookie's clerk tears up the ticket without expression._

_Clerk_ Five hundred Bold Prince!
He hands Thossie the card. Thossie whirls, holds the card high, and shouts.

Thossie Come on Bold Prince! Come on boy! Go go go! Jesus what are ya doing?

Cheers. The galloping sound fades. Thossie turns from the track, his head down. He tears up the ticket.

The bastard! He held that bloody horse up!

Thossie storms across the stage to where a Trainer is emerging from stables.

You had that bloody horse held, didn’t you?

Trainer No, Thossie, of course I didn’t. Ya think I wanna get barred?

But Thossie is not listening. He lays into the Trainer, and they have a ding dong fight before other men pull them apart. Thossie strides away.

You’ll get yourself barred if you’re not careful, d’Arcy!

Another man Who is that bloke?

Third Man Thossie d’Arcy. He reckons he can do what he likes because he’s got a few quid.

First Man They call him the Chinaman.

Third Man Yeah, he looks a bit like a chinaman. Funny curly hair.

Trainer You stupid bastard, Chinese don’t have curly hair.

Second Man If you ask me, he’s riding for a fall.

Thossie enters the Tattersalls Club. He smiles and says g’day to men.

A man approaches him.

Man Don’t forget that hundred quid you owe me, Thossie.

Thossie You’ll get your money!

He buttonholes a man.

Thossie Bert, I’ve got a winner in the third race. It’s ..

He looks around to make sure no one is within earshot.
Bold Prince.

Man    Thanks Thossie.

Thossie nods.

Thossie    And if he wins I want ten per cent!

Thossie crosses to the house, leaving the man shaking his head.

Thossie rages in the house, marching to his gramophone and shouting unintelligibly.

Narrator    As Thossie raged around the house every time he lost at the races Elizabeth slowly drew more and more into herself. I imagine the assertive girl from the bush becoming the eccentric, self-contained wife.

Elizabeth    My consolation and my joy was two baby boys. First Morris, and then Lavus.

Narrator    Lavus? L .. a .. v .. u .. s? Where on earth did Lavus come from?

Elizabeth    It’s Latin. Thossie chose it. He thought it sounded literary.

Dawn    That figures. He loved books. His favourites - apart from left-wing social analysis - were adventure writers like Edgar Rice Burroughs.

Thossie approaches Meg, the housemaid. She is dressed in little better than rags.

Thossie    Do you like working for the family, Meg?

Meg    Oh yes, oh yes, yes yes yes. I love the little boys.

Thossie    My wife tells me you used to be a ballet dancer.

Meg    Oh! That was a long, long long time ago, Thossie. oh yes, oh yes. No, I’ve . no no no, that’s all behind me now. I’m happy here, I’m happy here.

When she speaks she has a way of sighing that seems to undercut the content of what she is saying.

Thossie    You never ask for anything for yourself.

Meg    No I’m happy, I’m happy. Oh yes.
Thossie: Maybe you’re a true Communist Meg. The kind that’s never read a book.

Meg: What a dreadful thing to say Thossie! Go on with you! No no no. Get away, I’ve got work to do!

*He watches her scrubbing.*

Thossie: They’re not all bad, you know, the Communists.

Meg: I’m not listening to you Thossie.

Thossie: Why d’you wear those rags?

*She stops work and straightens up.*

Meg: I have a family Thossie, as you well know. I have nephews.

Thossie: And they wear your dresses?

*He laughs, then stops.*

Meg: You are a very wicked man, Thomas d’Arcy. And it will do you no good.

Thossie: Yes you’re a Communist alright. The best kind. And I’ll tell you one thing; they’re better people than I’ll ever be.

*He turns away, wiping his eye, suddenly maudlin.*

Elizabeth narrates.

I said to my boys: whatever you do in life, boys, always listen to the other person’s point of view. Never fall into the trap of thinking that you know everything.

Robert: You mean, like Dad?

*Pause.*

Narrator: It is 1997. in my quest to know my grandfather, I stand in front of the old house just outside Mackay, Queensland. The original house has been long destroyed by floods and a smaller house stands on the site, just above the river. I try to imagine the parties; the coaches; the music; the huge fires. Cars rush by on a highway at my back. A twin-engine Cessna drones overhead. A sleek car sits in front of the house. Only the river is the same.
Elizabeth holds young Robert by the shoulders and looks him in the eye.

Elizabeth I have high hopes for you, young Robert. If you are your own man and don’t let your father sway you too much, you will rise to the heights in anything you do!

Crossfade to Thossie with his big, fat mistress, Annie.

Thossie Oh God! Annie, I just want to sink my face into your breasts!

She is calm, lackadaisical, phlegmatic.

Annie OK Thossie, I’ll give you a straw so you can breathe.

Thossie My wife is cold to me. You couldn’t believe how cold she is.

Annie Whereas you, of course, are warmth itself to her.

She strokes his hair, ruminatively. He nestles his head into her breasts. Crossfade, as Thossie rises, dons his jacket, and picks up his briefcase.

Thossie arrives home, with briefcase. Meg greets him, clucking and scolding.

Meg Another busy day at the office, Thossie?

Thossie That’s right.

Meg Whenever you come home smiling Thossie, oh yes, I know.

Thossie My dear little Meg. You are a housemaid. What you know doesn’t matter.

Meg One day Thossie you’re going to hit a brick wall.

Thossie One day? I’ve hit dozens of brick walls. I went through every one of them.

He approaches her.

Elizabeth out? Why don’t you come into my study for a while?

Meg scuttles away.

Meg Oh no, oh no! You’ve been busy enough for one day!
She dashes off, muttering. Thossie laughs.

Chorus.

Meg He grasped at his son, Robert.

Dawn “You’ll be the man to succeed me”.

Annie Let him go, Thossie, he’s his own man!

Thossie, marching up and down and saluting as his gramophone plays marching music. He is high on the music, feeling excited. Suddenly he slumps. He turns off the gramophone. He begins sobbing, his shoulders shaking.

Thossie Oh Elizabeth! I’m sorry! I’m so sorry!

Fade. The marching music continues in the blackout. We hear the tramp of feet, the shouting of orders. Fade.

Thossie approaches Elizabeth, who is busy embroidering.

Thossie That’s beautiful work.

Elizabeth does not look at him.

Elizabeth Thank you.

Pause.

Thossie You know .. if ever you feel .. perhaps .. I may have been .. unfair to you ..

She stops work and stares at him.

You can always come to me and we can .. discuss it ..

She shakes her head slowly and goes back to work. He produces his tin whistle and starts to play for her; the same tune he played when they first met. For a moment, she softens; he approaches her. Then she puts her hand over the whistle.

Elizabeth You poor fool.

Thossie at first hangs his head. Then he raises it defiantly.

Thossie You’ll never crush my spirit!

She ignores him. Slowly he turns and walks away.
Thossie speaks direct to audience.

Thossie There was a mad kind of feeling around. People were saying the sky’s the limit, Australia’s gonna grow like America did. I bought a hotel in Wyndham because men said the North would boom. You had to put your money where other mens’ faith was, you had to be part of the tribe. The Club was my tribe. Hotel keepers, bookmakers, sly grog merchants, SP bookies, racehorse trainers. All those blokes believed in was money, grog and sex, in that order it. If you had the right connections you could get away with anything And while we had Labour governments run by the Irish I had the right connections.

Elizabeth appears in spot and turns to him; he to her.

Elizabeth Thossie, remember you promised me that you would never do anything wrong with My father’s money.

Thossie I swear to you, on the lives of our sons, that I would never do anything illegal or improper that would besmirch your reputation.

She turns to audience.

Elizabeth The world of men was closed to me. I believed everything Thossie told me. I had no choice.

Elizabeth snoops in Thossie’s desk. She finds money in a drawer of his desk. She counts it, then slips it into her pocket.

Thossie and Elizabeth sit down, with their two young boys, and count piles of money - silver, copper and paper.

Elizabeth Once a week the whole family would sit down at the dining room table and count the money taken at the Trots that day.

Thossie I always made sure to take out plenty of black.

We see Thossie pocketing much of the money he counts. Elizabeth does the same.

Otherwise the taxman would only get it.

Narrator Thossie lost ninety-two thousand pounds in two years on the horses. He was not always able to pay.
Thossie fronts up to the Tattersalls Club. A man is leaving as he enters.

Thossie G'day to you Jack!

The man studiously ignores Thossie and hurries away.

Jack?

Thossie shrugs. He enters. Some men are studying a notice pinned to the notice board. When they see Thossie, they hurry away. He goes up to the board. He reads.

Thossie “Thomas d’Arcy is hereby posted for non payment of gambling debts to Tattersalls Club members. Until further notice”.

He stands, stunned. He turns.

Gentlemen, gentlemen, I can pay all my debts! Give me a little time!

Men turn away from him.

You capitalists will never break my proud spirit!

He storms out.

Elizabeth approaches O’Brien.

Elizabeth Mr Martin.

Martin That's correct. Mrs d'Arcy. I have seen you at the races but not yet made your acquaintance. How do you do?

Elizabeth I could wish that you had met me under better circumstances. You know what I've come about.

Martin It's an unfortunate business. But we can't overlook it. We must make an example of your husband for the sake of the racing industry.

Elizabeth Is it right that I, and his sons, should suffer because of his foolishness?

Pause.

Martin No. It's not right. But ..

Elizabeth If I promise you that he will pay his gambling debts forthwith, would you allow him to resume his membership of the Tattersall's Club?
Pause.

Martin I suppose any man is entitled to a second chance.

Elizabeth Oh thank you! Don't worry, I'll make sure that he pays up!

Martin I hope he appreciates you!

Elizabeth turns and walks into Thossie's study.

Elizabeth I want words with you Thossie. And I won't take no for an answer!

Dawn d'Arcy Thossie didn't stay away from his beloved club for long. He suddenly abandoned his defiant air, sold one of his country pubs, and came back to the fold, a momentarily chastened man. To the other jokes about him was now added the one about the Communist who sells a pub to pay his gambling debts.

Robert with Thossie.

Thossie So .. how are you going with your studies, Son?

Robert Top of my class.

Thossie And so you should be.

Robert I'm in the first eighteen, too. And opening bat for the first Eleven.

Thossie I'd expect nothing less.

Robert looks crestfallen.

Robert And I've given up Medicine. I'm going to do Law.

Thossie You mean you've failed Medicine!

Robert does not answer, but neither does he back down.

If you don't top law in your first year, don't come back to this house!

Thossie For all that I gave my son a hard time, he was the apple of my eye, young Lavus. He changed his name to Robert but I forgave him. He was tough, a fighter like me. I kept the boy at a distance for his own good. If he had known I admired him it would have been the ruin of him.
Narrator During the 1930s Thossie developed a new rort. I am once again standing in front of the Central Railway Station in Wellington Street. In this building, once a year, Thossie would visit the Railways Commissioner, Mr W.G. (Bill) O’Halloran.

Thossie walks into Bill O’Halloran’s office carrying a case of champagne.

Thossie G’day Bill! Here’s a case of champagne for you and your family!

Bill G’day Thossie! Funny you should come in today. I was just going through the tenders for the catering concession on the Railways. You did know that today’s the last day to tender, and it has to be in by close of business?

Thossie It had completely slipped my mind, Bill, to tell you the truth.

Bill Well I expect to see a tender from you before the day is out, Thos. As a matter of fact, I have to go out for a while. Just make yourself at home, will you?

Bill leaves his office. Thossie waits for him to go, closes the door, and goes to the desk. He starts leafing through the tenders.

Thossie Uh huh, uh huh. The usual lot.

He scoops up the papers and carries them out of the office.

Dawn Thossie would now go and meet Robert, who by now had graduated from Law at Melbourne University, in the East Perth Cemetery.

Thossie joins Robert among headstones. They sit on a grave and go through the tenders.

Robert Let’s see, which one’s the lowest?

They search.

Thossie Here we are. Prendergast seven thousand pounds! By God that’s low, Son!

Robert You’ll be going to beat that.

Thossie I can beat it on the grog, but not on the food. Look at this; he reckons meat pies are gonna cost him two
pounds five shillings a case! Where would anyone get meat pies for that money?

Robert The man’s obviously a crook!

They look at each other and laugh.

Thossie Re-arrange his figures?

Robert I reckon. You’d be doing the poor bastard a favour. He’ll go broke at that price!

Again, they laugh. Thossie alters the figure on the other man’s tender.

Thossie Two .. pounds ..eight ..shillings. There we are. Now the man can make an honest profit!

They laugh.

Robert Except that .. our quote is six pence a case lower!

Robert writes in a figure on Thossie’s tender document.

Thossie I think that’s fair, Son. After all, the public has the right to cheap meat pies!

Robert That’s what I reckon!

They laugh.

Thossie You haven’t got a bad business head on your shoulders, Son!

Robert glows with pride.

Now, what’s next? Lamingtons.

They examine the documents. Fade.

Crossfade Thossie returning to Bill O’Halloran’s office. Bill is at his desk.

INTERMISSION.

O’Halloran There you are, Thossie! One minute to five o’clock. My word you like to cut it fine, don’t you? Let’s have your tender.
Thossie Not just yet. Let's see if anyone else comes in before five.

O'Halloran shakes his head and laughs.

O'Halloran As you wish, Thossie, as you wish.

Thossie looks out into the corridor. He studies his watch.

Thossie Thirty seconds to go. Twenty five. Twenty. Alright. Here it is.

O'Halloran Received at fifteen seconds before five o'clock.

He makes a note of that.

Thanks, Thossie. I'll let you know how you went.

Thossie Of course you will, old mate. Of course you will.

Dawn The newspapers, at this time, were full of praise for Thossie's achievements.

Narrator reads newspaper report.

"Thomas d'Arcy is the very example of a man who, from humble beginnings, makes his way to the top of the tree, and in a remarkably short time too. Perth should feel grateful that Mr d'Arcy chose to come here from his native Queensland. He is an ornament to the Irish Catholic community in this State."

Thossie gives a little speech.

Thossie My dear employees: once again I have won the tender to cater for the West Australian Government Railways. And once again, you may rest assured, we will give good service to the public of this State! The railways are the poor man's coach-and-four, and the Railway Refreshment Rooms are the restaurants of the working men and women. Let the silvertails eat at their clubs. In this new democracy we are building, there will be no distinctions of class!

Cheers. Fade cheers.

Thossie crosses to his mistress, on a double bed; low light. He buries his head in her lap, then raises it, his eyes stained with tears.

Thossie Annie, Annie. Oh Annie. Why do I do these things?
She laughs.

Annie You know damn well why, Thossie. You’re a rotten lousy bastard. A crook, a thief, a liar and a cheat!

She laughs again. He sobs.

Thossie What happened to me?

Annie You love it.

Thossie You’re the only one who knows my soul!

Annie Oh, what a great privilege that is!

Thossie speaks softly.

Thossie Don’t let me get away with this, Annie.

Annie I’ve no intention of letting you get away with it, Thossie d’Arcy. Bend over!

Slowly, Thossie lowers his pants and bends over. She produces a belt. She starts to belt his bottom.

This is what happens to naughty boys who throw away their ideals!

He cries out. She laughs. She belts. Fade.

Meg narrates to audience.

Dawn, Thossie and his son got out of a few scrapes by the skin of their teeth. They seemed to imagine they were charmed and could not be touched, or that they were too clever to be hurt.

O’Brien and Martin approach Thossie, who is listening to a radio race broadcast, urging on his horse and clenching his fists.

Thossie Come on, Noble Grandeur! Come on, come on!

Radio.. And the winner is Country Boy by a head! Second was Noble Grandeur, then came ..

Fade radio.

O’Brien Thossie.

Martin  We can't stay. To tell you the truth Thossie, there's something we'd like to say to you.

Thossie  Oh? Well then, get it off your chest.

He squares up to them.

O'Brien  It's delicate.

Thossie  Pig's arse it is. Out with it.

O'Brien and Martin look at one another.

O'Brien  Thossie, a few chaps have been saying ..

Thossie  Which chaps?

O'Brien  Let me finish. Some men have been of the opinion that your .. friendship with the Communist Joe Chamberlain is ..

He looks to Martin.

Martin  Well, put it this way, it's not helpful in the business world to have friends who are ..

Thossie  I would've thought it would be very helpful. Joe Chamberlain is the most powerful man in the union movement in this State. And one of the most powerful in the country now that he's National President of the Labour Party!

O'Brien  Yes, but ..

Thossie..  And he is not a Communist. He is a Socialist.

Martin  The difference may mean something to you ..

Thossie  To me? To me? The difference exists, full stop.

O'Brien  Thossie you're a businessman. Your interests lie with capital, not labour.

Pause. Thossie paces, head down.

Thossie  I bow to no man!

Martin  No one is asking you to bow! You've made a place for yourself here. What we're saying is; don't throw it away. And don't get posted at Tatts again, either!
O'Brien And uh .. while we're on the subject .. some people have said that you have been seen in the company of .. well, frankly, criminals.

Thossie I can't believe I'm hearing this! Are you two telling me with whom I may associate?

O’Brien We are all free! How we use that freedom ...

Thossie As I please, Mister. As I please. I have a good mind to show you what I think of your friends and their opinions. If you think you can cage my wild Irish spirit ...

Martin .. No one wishes to cage your wild Irish spirit, for God’s sake, Thossie. We can all have wild Irish spirits if we wish. It’s a plain matter of using one’s common sense.

O’Brien People like us, the leaders of the community, have to set an example for our people. We're their models.

Thossie I am a model! I'm a working man who got ahead by struggle!

O’Brien Very well then! We’ve done our best!

They storm off. Thossie shouts after them.

Thossie And a damn poor best it is!

O’Brien Narrates.

O’Brien The sad thing is that Thossie does represent a large segment of the Irish population. They look up to him the way people used to look up to End Kelly!

Thossie gives money to a poor woman.

Woman Thank you Thossie!

Thossie Your husband was a good man. It was the bad working conditions in the mill that ended his life. You come to me if you need help.

Woman You're a good man.

Thossie No. No, I'm not that.

Crossfade to house. He agonises privately; marching music. He phones.
Pause. A voice.

Voice Chamberlain here.

Thossie Joe, I want you to be the guest of honour at a party I’m going to throw.

Chamberlain Oh? Any particular occasion?

Thossie Yes. I’m cocking a snood. And Joe .. you’re used to mixing with all manner of men, aren’t you?

Chamberlain In my job, I have to.

Thossie Good. I’ll send you an invitation.

Dawn Two days later, the party was attended by Joe Chamberlain and about ninety per cent of Perth’s underworld.

The Narrator moves to another part of the stage.

Narrator On this spot the Tattersalls Club used to stand. Now there’s a new office tower. And just for irony, they’ve incorporated part of the facade of the old Tatts. I can’t relate this .. facade .. to the building in which my grandfather spent so much of his time. He went in this door proud and came out disgraced. But what’s this?

He looks around him. He sees pedestrians going by in the 1990s.

No trams? The men in the street aren’t wearing hats!
There’s a lady without gloves on!

He turns back to audience.

The past seems present. It’s alive in my head. Until I try to touch it.

Robert approaches Thossie.

Robert I’m going to get married Dad.

Thossie Promise me the woman you marry will be from one of the best Catholic families.

Robert She’s a Protestant.

Thossie You wouldn’t.

Robert Her father’s a wharf labourer.
Thossie You’re not going to do this to me!

Robert But you hate the Catholic Church! !

Thossie My God when are you going to grow up? We’re talking about money here son.

Robert Well I’m going to marry her.

Robert narrates

I used to sneak out and see Dawn Warren when my father was with his mistress. I’d let down the tyres on his car so that he couldn’t follow me!

We see Robert doing this, laughing.

Meg turns to audience.

Meg I worked for that family. At first, for the money. It was hard after the War. Later, for my family. And later still, so that I could be here for Robert’s wife. She needed all the help she could get! Oh yes, oh yes. Oh yes.

Robert approaches Thossie and Elizabeth, who look very forbidding, with Dawn.

Robert Dad .. Mum .. I’d like you to meet Dawn Warren.

Thossie does not reply.

Elizabeth I understand you live in Fremantle.

Dawn answers very nervously, trying to smile.

Dawn Uhh .. yes.

Elizabeth Do you find the rats a great problem down there?

She turns away. Dawn to audience.

She never changed in her attitude toward me. Fortunately, I did have one friend in that house.

Meg approaches a very nervous Dawn Warren.

Meg I’d like to say “Welcome to the d’Arcy family,” Dawn. But all I can say is; be on your guard always. And you have a friend in me!

They embrace.
Dawn: Thank you Meg. I'm going to need one!
Meg: Why don't you come into the kitchen with me Dear?
Dawn: Thanks.

She smiles at Robert and follows Meg out.

Elizabeth: Well, she'll be at home in there, at least.
Robert: Mum...
Thossie: What does her father do?
Robert: He works on the wharves.
Thossie: Nothing wrong with that. I started at the bottom.
Elizabeth: Yes, but is this ..?
Robert: Give her a chance.
Thossie: Have you got her in the family way?

Robert moves at his father.

Robert: Don't you talk about her like that!
Thossie: Alright, alright. Don't let the hot blood rush to your head, Son. So you think you're in love with her?
Robert: Are you going to make her welcome, or what?
Thossie: I can't blame her for capitalising on her good looks to snare a wealthy young man.
Robert: I shouldn't have brought her to meet you.
Elizabeth: Oh no, not at all. Perhaps we could take her on to help Meg.

Fade.

Later. Thossie approaches Dawn in the garden.

Dawn: You have some beautiful plants here.
Thossie: Do you like music?
Dawn: Yes, I love it!
He pulls out his tin whistle and plays some Irish music for her. He does a few steps of a jig. She laughs and claps.

Thossie We'll get on well, you and I.

Dawn I hope so.

Thossie Just remember one thing. In our family, the men are in charge.

Crossfade. Elizabeth is getting ready to go out, putting on gloves and adjusting her hat in a mirror. While Thossie speaks to her, she ignores him.

Thossie darts around her, beseeching, imploring.

Thossie Has somebody been telling you lies about me? That I go with other women? There aren't many women in Perth who live in a better house than you do!

She brushes past him without looking at him, picks up her handbag, and exits, gracefully and with dignity, not once looking at him.

Tatts. Martin and O'Brien.

Martin A long way up but a short way down, O'Brien.

O'Brien You could say that. And I thought he was going to be an ornament to our community. I will see to it that his reputation disappears as fast as his gambling money does.

Martin He may learn his lesson yet.

O'Brien looks at Martin. Martin turns away.

Fade.

Narrator I stand on the spot where I built a plane. I was five. My father and grandfather were away but I didn't know where. I collected some packing cases, some cardboard boxes and some bits of wood from around my grandmother's house and I built an aeroplane on her side lawn, which had been the tennis court when my father and uncle were young. I remember being angry it wouldn't take off. Still, it was my first attempt.

Pause.

The spot has disappeared. A fence runs through it. The new house my father built occupies part of it. The thick,
springy buffalo grass has been overridden. The simple old Australia of the 40s has gone forever.

Thossie is driving a horse and buggy, with stock whip. He sees O'Brien, who is walking slowly, reading a paper.

Thossie O'Brien!

O'Brien turns.

Thossie I know what you've been saying behind my back!

Thossie now attacks O'Brien with the stock whip. O'Brien runs, screaming.

Thossie Let no one be in any doubt!

Crossfade. Dawn to audience.

Dawn I settled in to married life. But I soon found out who I was married to .. and it wasn't just Robert.

Thossie and Dawn meet at a table centre stage.

Thossie Dawn I've got a few documents for you to sign.

Dawn I don't understand, Thossie, why?

He looks at her as if she is stupid.

Thossie Because .. your husband .. my son .. wants you to sign them.

Dawn He didn't say anything to me about that.

Thossie No. He and I conduct the business in this family. He spoke to me about it.

Dawn What are they?

Thossie spreads the documents out on the table.

Thossie Just boring things. Insurance, stuff like that. We do know what we're doing, you know.

Dawn studies them.

Dawn These are deeds. This is a contract. I can't sign these!

Thossie Dawn .. be told .. your only friend in this world is a quid. And I look after the quids.
Dawn        I won’t sign them. Not until I talk to Robert.

Wearily, Thossie puts the documents back into his briefcase.

Thossie    Trouble, thy name is woman!

Dawn turns on her heel and exits.

Dawn narrates.

Dawn        I tried to get on with him for my husband’s sake. But as far as he was concerned I was suitable only for the bed and the stove.

She smiles.

Despite all that, I liked him in a funny sort of way. But I could never show it to him. He’d only take advantage of it. I don’t think he ever forgave me for not being as naive as I looked! And I always felt that underneath all his villainy there was a saint trying to get out. He always wanted life to give him more .. but life doesn’t have that much to offer.

Thossie’s fat mistress Annie appears, in a spot beside stage. She laughs.

Annie       Couldn’t bully your daughter in law into signing them, eh, Thossie? You’re losing your touch! Serves you right. You’re a nasty piece of work and if it wasn’t for me you wouldn’t have a friend in the world!

Thossie     I’m sorry.

She shakes her head.

Annie       No, you’re not. You don’t know the meaning of the word.

She winks at the audience.

And what about socialism, Thossie? What happened to the ganger from the canefields?

Thossie     The time is not yet ripe.

She laughs

Oh, I see. And you’re trying to hasten the time when it will be ripe, I suppose, by behaving like the worst kind of capitalist?
Thossie starts to cry.

Thossie
I married a conservative girl from the country.

Annie
No Thossie, you married above you. That’s why you’ve forgotten where you came from. You want to impress her don’t you? And then maybe she’ll let you .. have her again?

Thossie
You are a foul-mouthed bitch.

Annie
I make no claims for myself. And I forgive you, too.

Thossie
I want you to change your name. To Margaret.

Annie
Your mother’s name. Are you joking?

Thossie
My son will vindicate me. He’s a lawyer!

Robert enters; Thossie speaks earnestly to him. As he does so, he becomes increasingly frenetic and hysterical in his tone, as if chanting mantras of hate.

Thossie
Never trust a woman, son. Friendship is a game two can play but only one can win. just remember; “Do right, and fear no man; don’t write, and fear no woman!” The old Irish warriors had the right idea. They’d leave the women in the village and go off into the woods to play warrior games and tell stories. We Irish buckle under to no-one! Perfidious Albion couldn’t break us! Always remember, son; your only friend in this world is a quid. He laughs best who laughs last. “Twice armed is he who hath his quarrel just, but three times he, who gets his blow in fust”! Forget ideals, Son. They crucified Jesus Christ, didn’t they?

Dawn faces Robert, who turns away from Thossie and crosses to her.

Dawn
You’ve got to stand up to him! You can’t let your father run our life for ever! You’re a professional man. I tell you, mark my words, he’ll get you into trouble!

Robert
As a newcomer to this family it’s your place to listen and learn!

Dawn
You sound just like him!

Robert
I owe everything to him!

Dawn
Well I don’t want his values corrupting my son!
Pause. He goes up close to her.

Robert
Our son is a d'Arcy.

Dawn
Half of him is. But I'll make sure he listens to me, too. I have a family too you know.

Robert
Yes but .. you've married mine.

Dawn
My father's a fine man!

Pause

Robert
Yeah but he's a poor man. And in the final analysis ..

Dawn
"..Your only friend in this world is a quid!" Oh no. I won't let my son be moulded in that forge!

They stand toe to toe, eyeballing, stubborn.

Dawn narrates to audience.

Dawn
My father loved the sea. He only left it for my mother. He used to have Blue Peter magazines lying round in his room. My mother put up curtains on his window so that he couldn't see the ocean. He was always looking outside, toward the sea. I'm the same. I survive by looking outside, to the horizon, to what life might be like.

Elizabeth narrates.

Elizabeth
Many people have wondered why I endure Thossie. They don't say it to my face. I was brought up according to a code. It is not a code that would suit everyone. I broke that code when I left my home by the banks of a broad river to travel all the way across the country. I paid for breaking the code. I don't intend to break it again.

She smiles.

Dawn
You could've broken it to welcome me.

Elizabeth walks away from Dawn.

Thossie approaches Elizabeth as she sits herself at the big piano.

Thossie
Play for me, Elizabeth!

She plays; Chopin, Debussy.
That's right, that's right, keep playing.

Elizabeth I am!

*Thossie begins going through her music books, turning pages, looking for a particular piece of music.*

Thossie That piece that's got the "ding ding ding, ding ding ding" part!

Elizabeth In a minute. Let me finish this one!

*She doggedly finishes what she is playing, as Thossie impatiently thrusts another music book in front of her.*

*The Chorus:*

Annie Elizabeth had what he lacked.

Meg She became the life from which he wanted so much.

Dawn When he needed her she wasn't there any more.

Narrator Now begins the climactic chapter in this story. All the pieces were in place. All it needed was a spark to set off the fire.

*Crossfade to Thossie approaching Hugh, from earlier in the play.*

Hugh You do realise, Thossie, that if I report this conversation you could be in serious trouble.

Thossie There's not a public official in this State who is not, shall we say, obliged to me?

Hugh What you're asking is illegal, it's immoral ..

Thossie Spare me the Sunday School sermon, I have a wife for that. Hugh, I can be very generous to my friends. So let's confine ourselves to reality. Consider my offer and let me know.

*Pause. Hugh considers Thossie.*

Hugh I will certainly do that, Thossie. I will most certainly do that.

Narrator Thossie had neglected to do his homework. Harrington was already a member of the Army Reserve. He went straight to the recently formed Commonwealth Police,
and they were very interested. Unlike the State officials, they were not in Thossie’s pocket.

Pause

The Commonwealth Police arranged for the Bank of New South Wales to issue some marked five pound notes. Robert and Dawn were in the habit of playing cards with the Manager, Hal Winstead, and his wife Veronica every Friday night. Harrington took delivery of the marked notes from the Bank. Harrington and Winstead. Winstead gives Harrington the marked notes.

Harrington OK, so I’m to meet Robert d’Arcy as arranged at the Esplanade at the bottom of Christian Brothers College.

Winstead That’s right. The Commonwealth Police will be in a car nearby. Take off your hat and wipe your brow. That’s the signal.

Meg and Dawn.

Meg There there Girl, it’ll be alright.

Girl (Dawn) is crying.

Dawn I just have this feeling Robert’s going to be destroyed and there’s nothing I can do about it!

Meg No. There’s nothing you can do. We can only watch and wait.

Dawn That’s not enough Meg. I’ll do it. But it’s not enough.

Meg Try being the house maid.

Dawn looks at Meg.

Narrator On the Friday night the game of cards went ahead as always.

Scene; Robert and Dawn d’Arcy playing cards with Hal and Veronica Winstead.

Hal Mate I’ll see your pair, and I’ll up you by a quid.

Robert A quid! Ho ho! the stakes are getting high here! Alright. I’ll see your quid. What’ve you got?
Veronica  It’s what he’s got up his sleeve that you’ve got to worry about Robert!

They all laugh.

Robert  I know you bank managers. More tricks than a flea circus.

They laugh.

Hal  Ah no, Honest Hal they call me. Four of a kind.

He lays them out.

Dawn  Oh Hal, you’re good at this game!

Hal  Well it’s not every day I get a mug like Robert d’Arcy into my trap!

They all laugh out loud. Hal rakes in their money.

Crossfade: Harrington, drinking alone. He takes out the notes, looks at them, then puts them away. Crossfade to the card game.

Robert  I’m going to win it all back, you know. That money’s got my name on it!

Hal  Ah I think you’re going to come a cropper this time! Incidentally, how’s your Mum and Dad?

Robert  They’re fine, Hal, thanks.

Hal  She’s a very fine lady that mother of yours.

Dawn grows tense and looks away.

Robert  Yes, she deserves better than me.

Veronica  Be good to her, Robert. She’s ..

Silence as Robert and Hal look at Veronica to see what she is going to say.

We .. should all be kind to one another, shouldn’t we?

Hal  Except at poker!

They all laugh. Fade as they deal the next hand.

The next day. The Narrator is standing on a footpath.
Narrator This must be approximately the spot where Robert took the bribe money from Hugh Harrington. Hugh walked over to Robert and pulled out a brown envelope. He handed it to Robert, then took off his hat and mopped his brow. This was the agreed signal for the four men from the Commonwealth Police, sitting in their car nearby.

Lights up to reveal Robert with Hugh Harrington. Another man runs toward them, pulling an identity card out of his pocket. Robert pushes the man to the ground and runs away.

Meg Robert rushed home.

Robert runs up to Dawn, who is ironing.

Robert Quick, come for a drive!

Dawn My God, what's wrong? You're white!

Robert Quickly! I'll explain.

Dawn I'll just ring Meg and get her to come over and look after little Bertie!

Dawn picks up the phone, her hands shaking, as Robert paces, mopping his brow and sighing. Dawn to audience.

Dawn We often went for drives in the car. People did in those days. it was called "going for a spin in the bus." But this was no ordinary spin.

Robert and Dawn rush out. Dawn stops and turns to audience.

Dawn Our "spin" was a short one. We got as far as the North Perth Monastery when a big car full of men pulled us over. The men jumped out waving guns and came up to our car. Robert handed me thirty pounds.

Robert Put this in your purse. They have no right to search you!

Dawn Robert what's going on?

Dawn narrates. As she does, the scene is enacted.

Dawn A policeman approached me.

Policeman I would like to look inside your purse, please Mrs d'Arcy.
Dawn You may not.

The two confront one another for a moment. Then the policeman grimaces and withdraws.

Policeman As you wish.

Narrator Robert was arrested and released on bail. It made the evening paper - the first of many times.

Dawn I never recovered from this incident and the events which followed. Robert and Thossie, however, immediately set out to fight.

Thossie and his son at the East Perth Cemetery. They sit glumly on tombstones, in contrast to their glee and hyper-activity the last time they were here.

Thossie We’ve got to stop moping and do something, Son.

Robert “We”? You’ve landed me in this shit. Now suddenly it’s “we”.

Thossie What’s done is done. I went to bat for my son. What do you think we should do?

Robert Are you going to even say you’re sorry?

Pause

Thossie I thought you might .. need the money.

Robert No, what you thought was that you owned my life.

Thossie You’ve been listening to that .. wife.

Robert No I haven’t Thossie. But I should have.

Pause. Oh well, look, we’ve got to do the best we can with what we’ve got. They’re going to put me on trial first.

Thos We get a jury list. We approach the jury.

Robert I can’t be a party to that!

Thos You can’t not! You’re already facing the loss of your profession, . We’re not play-acting. I had the State Government in my pocket but not these Commonwealth people. But what I can do, is get to the
people who are from WA. They’ll be loyal to this state against these Eastern Staters who’re coming in and telling us how to run our own show! You know what this is really all about, don’t you?

Robert  No but I’m sure you’ll tell me.
Thos  These Eastern States silvertails, as soon as they see a West Australian Catholic getting a decent fortune together, they come down on him like a ton of bricks. They’re getting at me through you.

Robert  But Dad, you’re not a Catholic. You’re an atheist!
Thos  I am. And the more they know it, the better chance I’ve got of getting you off this.

Robert  I can’t be a party to approaching jury members.
Thos  Don’t worry, leave it to me. I’ll get you off this. Those bastards have been breathing down my neck all my life. They’re not going to break me!

Dawn  So, Thossie duly had a chat with one of his mates in the police force and got the jury list. To be on a jury in those days you had to be a property owner, so sure enough, there were some names on the list of people he knew - men who owed him favours. One of them was a publican who had a pub in what is now Northbridge, the night-life district.

Dawn storms into Thossie’s office.

Dawn  I want you to stop involving my husband in your low schemes!

Thossie leaps up and they confront each other.

Thossie  Don’t you speak to me like that woman!
Dawn  Haven’t you done enough harm?
Thossie  Your husband as you call him is first and foremost my son! Blood is thicker than water and don’t you forget that!
Dawn  My God! Don’t you know everybody in Perth hates you?
Thossie  I’ve got a right to my share of the wealth! So I’m not a nice man. So what? To get things done in this world
you have to cut corners. I'm a builder, just like I was when I worked on the railways!

Dawn You're destroying your own son!

Thossie I am the head of this household and I will have your respect!

She regards him. She speaks more quietly now.

Dawn You have sold out everything you ever believed in. You have brought down my husband because God knows why he is desperate for your approval. You have cheated and lied and connived.

Pause

My father may have worked on the wharves but at least he earned honest money!

Pause.

No. But you'll never have my respect!

She sticks out her jaw defiantly.


Elizabeth Thossie, I can't stop you taking my father's money from me because that's the law. I can put up with your mistresses because that means I don't have to put up with you at night. I can even put up with you being posted at Tattersall's. But I will not put up with you dragging my son into this!

Thossie He's always been the one who followed me! The other one is yours; weak and fat!

Elizabeth I won't divorce you because unlike you I am a Catholic. But it is over between us. In all but formalities, it is over between us.

Thossie I need you now.

Elizabeth You should have thought of that.

She turns and exits.

Meg approaches Thossie.

Meg Please, Thossie, stop now before it's too late.
Thossie And let my son go to gaol? Even if I have to go to gaol myself, there is no way I'm going to let him down!

Meg Can you hear what you're saying?

Elizabeth approaches a journalist.

Elizabeth You are David Dunn, who writes for "The West Australian"?

Dunn I am. And you are poor Elizabeth d'Arcy.

Elizabeth So you have sympathy for me?

Dunn Indeed I do. With all due respect, your husband

Elizabeth That's enough please. He is still my husband.

Dunn Of course.

Elizabeth I want to parley your sympathy for me .. into sympathy for my son, Robert.

Dunn Well I have to say, he is very mixed up in this.

Elizabeth He has been too much under his father's influence all his life.

Dunn I see what you're getting at. Well, I'll do what I can. I'm only one journalist.

Elizabeth Yes but in this small town ..

Dunn If I ever get into trouble I hope I have a woman like you behind me.

Elizabeth Believe me, I'd rather not have to be doing this.

She bows her head. Dunn moves away, shaking his head. Elizabeth is crying. He stops and looks back at her, then exits. She cries alone, in a spot.

Narrator Now I'm standing on the site of the hotel whose owner was on the jury list and who was approached by Thossie. And who, incidentally, was an old enemy of Thossie's. Why is this story so full of people approaching old enemies for favours? It's a vacant lot. The old pub has been demolished. Somewhere in the space above my head Thossie spoke to a man in a room. But it is dead, the event is dead. I can't see what Thossie saw as he approached it. Now, this sordid little piece of
Australian history has vanished. The dust covering this vacant lot may contain bits of the old building. In my mind I cling to these bits as being my only link with an event which has played its part in shaping my life. I stand here and the 1990s rush past all around me.

_Dawn narrates._

_Dawn_ The first time Thossie approached the hotel proprietor, whom I will call Athol Kennedy, Athol told him to come back in a few days time. In the meantime Athol approached the Commonwealth Police. They sent an agent.

_Athol and a man; the man has a pad and wears an overcoat._

_Athol_ You get in the wardrobe now, he’s due.

_Man_ OK, but remember to speak slowly and pause a lot, so I can get down every word.

_Athol_ OK.

_Athol bundles the man into the wardrobe. Thossie enters Athol’s office._

_Athol greets Thossie. Athol is very nervous._

_Athol_ Were you followed?

_Thossie_ Of course not!

_They go into Athol’s office. The set for this is a desk and wardrobe._

_Dawn_ In these pre-tape-recorder days, the agent was scribbling on a pad in the darkness, recording what he heard from the office.

_Athol speaks very slowly, with lots of pauses._

_Athol_ So, Thossie, tell me exactly what it is you want. I didn’t have time to deal with it the other day.

_Thossie_ As you know, my son is up on a charge. Look, it’s a lot of bullshit, Athol. I know you and I’ve had our differences in the past, but I ask you to give my son a fair go!

_Athol_ What do you mean by a “fair go”, Thos?

_Thossie_ Well you’re on the jury list, you know that.
Athol: Yes, I've had a letter.
Thossie: I want you to find in favour of my son. As simple as that.
Athol: Well .. that's illegal, Thossie.
Thossie: Bugger the law! Help me and my family, Athol, and I promise you you'll never regret it.

*Pause*

Athol: I'd be taking a risk, Thossie.
Thossie: A thousand pounds, Athol.
Athol: How much?
Thossie: You heard me. A thousand.
Athol: If I find for your son on the jury, you'll pay me a thousand pounds?
Thossie: I've said it twice!
Athol: Very well, Thossie. Let me think about that.
Thossie: Alright, you think about it. But let me have an answer within a day or two.
Athol: You'll have an answer alright.
Dawn: Thossie then went to our house in Mt Lawley.

*Thossie knocks on a door. Dawn answers.*

Thossie: Let me in. Dawn I want to speak to Robert.
Dawn: Thossie, I just saw a man on a motorbike pull into the bushes down there.

*Thossie does not even look.*

Thossie: Get back to the kitchen woman where you belong!

*He brushes past her into the house.*

*Dawn speaks directly to audience.*

Dawn: From this time on I had to start taking over. Robert and Thossie were totally absorbed in fighting the charges.
They were frightened but still arrogant. I began to make decisions and run things as I had never done before.

**Pause**

*The Chorus; the three women.*

Annie  When he grasped at me, I just laughed.

Dawn  When he grasped at power he missed.

Meg  When he grasped at self-destruction he proved his true vocation!

Narrator  So now I stand in Adair Parade. I remember this place from my childhood. That was all bush over there. Now, the edge of town is ten kilometres away. I remember the bren-gun carriers rumbling along that road on their way to military exercises in the scrub.

*He looks around.*

But the house has been demolished and replaced with a standard brick veneer.

Elizabeth  Thossie was arrested a couple of days later. His trial was brought forward so as to take place before my son’s - an old legal trick designed to make sure that the jury at Robert’s later trial would be as biased as possible. I stand now beside the old court house - now an Arts Centre. I think of my son in his cell below this building between appearances in court, his wife sitting outside the cell holding his hands through the bars.

*Thossie, standing in the dock. A court officer hands him a copy of the Bible.*

Thossie  What’s this?

Officer  This is the Holy Bible, sir.

Thossie  I won’t touch that dirty book!

*He drops the Bible; gasps from the gallery.*

*Thossie turns to audience.*

What I meant was, it had dust all over it. I like to keep my clothes very clean.

*He assesses the Audience’s reaction to this.*
No? You won't take that on board? Neither would the newspapers at the time!

Paper-seller on street corner.

Seller Accused calls Bible dirty book! Accused calls Bible dirty book!

*Elizabeth* direct to audience, haughty manner.

Elizabeth It might have been one thing for my husband to read those .. books at home, even to call himself a Communist ..

Pause. She takes a deep breath.

But in public...

Narrator No more fashionable parties at the d’Arcy home. Elizabeth’s antiques, like the Bible, gathered dust. The lounge room was locked.

Court. Thossie in dock, head high.

Judge I find the defendant guilty. He will remain at liberty until next week, when he will present himself to this court for sentencing. Bail will be continued.

He bangs his gavel. Thossie gives him the finger sign, hidden from the court by the dock, but visible to the audience; meanwhile Thossie’s face remains impassive.

Dawn My husband’s trial was next. It was a foregone conclusion. The day the jury went out was a hot one. I heard the jury deliberating through an open window as I sat below the courts, beside my husband’s cell, waiting for the verdict.

The scene; Dawn holding Robert’s hands through the bars.

Robert What will I do? I’ll lose my profession, I’ll lose everything.

Dawn As of this moment, you haven’t lost anything.

Robert What if I lose you?
He begins to weep. She touches his face through the bars. A uniformed policeman comes up to her with a drink of water.

Policeman Here, give him this.

Dawn Thank you!

The policeman turns away.

Pause.

Narrator Robert d'Arcy was convicted and both men began their sentences at an open prison.

Dawn d'Arcy Despite my hatred of Thossie I took around a petition seeking his early release. He was not a young man and prison could cause him great harm. My husband staged a hunger strike after a few months. Even though he bribed the gaolers to let him out most weekends. Nothing in his life had prepared him for what he was now enduring; His father had led him to it, but it was his father who most easily shrugged the whole experience off.

Robert and Thossie, in prison clothes.

Thossie They've got a couple of Irish victims; that should keep them happy for a while!

Robert You had no right to solicit a bribe on my behalf!

Thossie That's how the silvertails do business!

Robert No it's not. They do business with a wink and a nod. That way no money changes hands.

Thossie looks at him.

Thossie You're criticising me for trying to help my own flesh and blood!

Thossie sobs. Robert throws up his hands.

Robert I don't know how to get through to you Dad.

He turns away from his father.

Crossfade. Dawn confronts Thossie.

Dawn Will you ever, ever admit that the mighty Thossie could possibly be at fault? What sort of a man fills his
bookshelves with Marxism and his house with bookmakers?

Thossie  The cream of Perth society visits this house!

Dawn  Visited, Thossie. You won't see them again. And you've blighted the life of my husband into the bargain! You're the lowest, Thossie, the very lowest!

Thossie  Dawn, the bureaucrats have done this to me. They rule our lives!

Dawn  But Thossie, under Communism, don't bureaucrats run peoples' lives?

Thossie stares at her.

Dawn turns to narrate to audience.

Dawn  They were both released early. All they had left was their money. The old family saying "your only friend in this world is a quid" took on a whole different meaning.

Elizabeth  My husband was a different man after his time in prison. He talked to himself and never looked anyone in the eye. He returned to the Tattersalls Club but few men would speak to him or drink with him. His isolation was complete. He was no longer a hero even to those Irish who still admired Ned Kelly.

Thossie beside the gramophone. Marching music is playing, but he does not march; just sits, staring ahead.

Dawn  His health went downhill, too. He no longer looked after himself. He drank too much and spent most of his spare time with his mistress.

Thossie with Annie.

Annie  So, what happened today?

Thossie does not reply.

Dawn  Have you got some money on a horse at the Trots this Friday?

Thossie does not answer.

Thossie  It wasn't just a matter of bullet wounds, you know. I saw one man with the back of his head blown away. He
kept saying the same things over again, something about his fiancee.

_Annie stares at him._

_Annie_ Yeah. OK. OK.

_Lighting change. The Narrator comes on stage._

_Narrator_ The decline in Thossie's health continued. He spoke less and less until finally he would speak only about business or some practical matter. He developed several illnesses and did nothing about them.

_Dawn approaches Robert._

_Dawn_ Well, this is it. I've waited as long as I can. It's now or never, Robert.

_Robert_ He needs me. He's not well.

_Dawn_ He's had the best of you, and he treated you like shit. I need you now, and your son needs you. Either we go over to the Eastern States - now - or you and I will go our different ways.

_Robert_ I knew I'd lose you. Since this began I've had these terrible feelings of impending doom.

_Dawn goes to him, affectionately._

_Dawn_ You don't have to lose me, as you put it. I'm trying to save you. And myself. And little Bertie!

_Robert studies her._

_Robert_ Alright. We'll go.

_Narrator_ My mother and father and I duly went East, on the Indian Pacific train, a few weeks later. We began a new life in the Eastern States. I was never to see my grandfather again. I know him only as a ghost. I know him only as something in me. A spark of anger, perhaps. A touch of resentment. A streak of larrikinism. In 1953, eight years after we left Perth, Thossie developed a fatal illness and the family gathered at his deathbed. He still had never admitted fault.

_Dawn_ Much as I hated to wish someone dead, I began to hope that at last Robert and I might be free of this incubus.
Thossie on deathbed.

There’s many a man in this town’s got reason to be grateful to me! Nobody knows the number of families I’ve helped. Put bread on the table when the husband was out of work. Nobody knows.

Silence. Lights now reveal his son, sitting by the bed; Elizabeth and Dawn nearby; standing watching.

Thossie starts to cry.

Oh God I’ve been a terrible man! Why didn’t anybody stop me?

He weeps. Robert holds his hand.

I’ve let down the battlers! I went to gaol and let them down!

Meg You’re a bad piece of work Thossie, oh yes, oh yes, dear oh dear oh dear.

He weeps.

Thossie Why didn’t somebody stop me?

We now see Annie near the bed, but apart from the others, in her own spot.

Annie And none of this bullshit about askin’ for pity neither.

Thossie reaches out to her and she goes to him.

Thossie It’s too late.

Annie I’m going to have to punish you, you bad, bad boy.

She takes out the strap to chastise him. He shakes his head.

Thossie No. No it’s too late.

She stands there, staring down at him, as he lays his head on her shoulder.

Thossie Power never satisfied me you know Annie. I kept asking; is this it? Is this what it is? Is this all?

Annie Just forgive yourself, Thossie - because no other bastard will!
She laughs. She stops abruptly.

Look what you’ve done to your son.

Robert is drying his eyes.

Robert Thossie I don’t know..

He looks around hopelessly as if looking for help.

Thossie dries his eyes. Then slowly he begins to chuckle.

I got away with so much! No-one will ever know. Ha! Fools! There’s so many bloody fools in the world!

Pause. Thossie stares at the audience.

I started life as a working man. I never forgot that. Everything I did, I did it as a working man.

Annie Bullshit Thossie!

Thossie I’ll tell you this. This is all the wisdom I’ve learnt. Communism won’t work because people aren’t altruistic. Capitalism won’t work because people aren’t selfish enough. So most of us are driven by fear or hate. Otherwise, I couldn’t have got away with as much as I did.

He addresses his son.

What’s the matter with you? Haven’t you ever seen anybody die before?

Robert I’m here, Thossie.

Thossie You needn’t think you’re getting any of my money! “Being of sound mind, I spent it all while I was alive!” Ha ha ha!

He coughs. Suddenly he sits up and addresses them as if they were his gangers on the railway line.

Thossie There’s dignity in labour and don’t you forget it! Hold your heads high, you’re workers. There is a great change coming that’s gonna shake the house of capitalism to its rafters! There is a spectre haunting Australia - the spectre of Communism!

He slowly sinks back in the bed.
Do you know how much money I lost just on gambling alone during my lifetime? Do you?

Dawn We could all have done with it.

Thossie No one will ever figure me out. You, Robert, what’s the word you used?

Robert Paradox.

Thossie That’s it! Paradox. You smartarse! Let’s see how well you get on when I’m gone! Ever since I sent you to that fucking university you’ve used your education as a bludgeon against your innocent parent.

Robert turns away.

Thossie Don’t turn away from me, you’re my son!

Thossie cries again.

Oh my God, Son, I love you! I’m sorry son, oh my God I’m sorry!

Elizabeth moves to Thossie’s side. Robert, emotional, moves away, wiping his eyes.

Elizabeth Thossie I need the keys.

Thossie Which keys?

Elizabeth All of them. The safe, the files, the storeroom, the keys to the bar at the Railway Station, your office. All of them.

Thossie Why?

Elizabeth Because I have to conduct our business. Until you get well, of course.

Thossie I’m not dead yet!

Elizabeth There are matters that have to be attended to!

Pause.

He grimaces. From under his pillow he pulls a Colt .38 revolver and a huge bunch of keys. He gives them both to her.

Elizabeth I won’t be needing the gun!
Thossie You need one to guard the other. Now that I'm going you'll finally get the power you've always wanted!

Elizabeth Thossie, if I told you, you'd be surprised how simple what I wanted really was.

Thossie watches her as she walks slowly away, an old woman.

Robert moves to Thossie. He reaches out as if to touch Thossie on the head, but cannot do it; slowly he withdraws his hand. Thossie falls silent.

Robert He's asleep.

Narrator I grew up in a silent old house full of ghosts and guilt.

Thossie bursts out of bed and puts on a record of marching music. The development of 78 rpm records enabled Thossie to play his marching music louder. It becomes deafening. Fade Thossie and sound.

I preferred Elvis Presley.

Narrator walks up and down, hand in hip pocket, listening to Elvis singing "Heartbreak Hotel".

Dawn I watched my son as he developed a life and a culture of his own. In him I saw the first generation of Australians to turn away from all things British and toward all things American. He played baseball, listened to jazz, and wore American drape jackets. As for myself, I worked hard with Robert in a succession of businesses. He was never the same man, though, and in the end we parted.

Narrator In the northern winter of 1979 I took off from Heathrow Airport bound for Western Australia after eight years living in London. It was time to go home. We crossed the coast north of Perth and I saw the long white beach, the white surf rolling in slow motion. At Perth Airport the heat hit me like a slap in the face. Everything was slow, easy, dry.

I made the journey back to my past, only to find that the past had been conquered by a new country, a restless nation called "The Present" which continually redefines itself with each new wave on the sand.

Pause
There were only ruins remaining. The old house, now offices for, ironically, a mining company. A courthouse, now recycled. And many of the places where these events occurred simply demolished, wiped from the map by the artillery barrages of time. Thossie is now nowhere to be found; his body was cremated; now he’s the dust in my nostrils. Robert and Dawn died, so did Meg the housekeeper and I’m the only living person who can recreate these events. Do they matter?

Pause

I remember the smells of summer in Mt Lawley, and the almost innocent face of wickedness. As for me, my path from adolescence had led in directions entirely different to those of Thossie. I became an artist. I lived in Bohemia. Perhaps I have lived out the life of the mind, the life that he wanted, but never fulfilled.

Pause.

Someone had to learn from Thossie’s story.

Thossie engages in a barroom brawl, as at the start of the play. He moves from that across to the East Perth Cemetery where he joins Robert, sitting on tombstones. They go through tender documents. They laugh.

Thossie

Son we’ll be rich! We’ll be the richest family in Perth! That means power, Son.

They both laugh.

Anyway what’s everybody complaining about? They’re getting the cheapest tender, aren’t they?

They laugh.

Elizabeth appears with a priest. Thossie, seeing this, starts to sing, in a feeble voice “We’ll keep he Red Flag fling here ..!” He stops. He laughs, a long, harsh laugh.

Thossie’s laugh turns into a death rattle. He slowly dies. The entire family stands around him; a tombstone becomes his deathbed, complete with pillow and blanket which members of his family bring him.

Chorus: As a Marxist he believed that in all the Universe, there is only matter. His body was burnt down into that most ethereal form of matter, smoke. His life went up in smoke but his influence will not dissolve into the
material air until the last of those who knew him and came under his shadow - his grandson Bert - has died.

Narrator I'm no nearer to understanding him. But I've laid the ghosts of my past, and I suppose that's enough for one lifetime.

Elizabeth His death freed me.

We see her poring over papers at a desk, standing, dressed still all in white, a proud stance, dress to her ankles. She picks up the phone. She dials.

Yes give me the manager please.

Pause.

Oh Bob I have your statement here. There are some figures I want to query.

Fade.

Dawn She never recovered, however. She walked about the big old house for the rest of her life as if looking for him. She no longer had someone to hate.

Pause

His death freed me too, in a sense. But for there to be freedom, there first of all had to be Thossie.

Elizabeth approaches Dawn. For a moment they stare at each other, then they embrace, not passionately, but with a sense of finality.

Narrator The male line will die with me. If another little Thossie were to be born now, he'd have a hard time in today's world.

Thossie's disembodied voice is heard.

Thossie They'll never crush my wild Irish spiit!

Dawn Oh yes they will, Thossie, oh yes they will.

Slow fade on them; Dawn pensive, facing the audience; the others looking down at dead Thossie.

We see Dawn take Robert by the hand and lead him offstage. The Narrator follows. Elizabeth gets busy at her desk. Other actors exit. only Annie is left, looking down at Thossie.
Slow fade.

THE END.
PART II

ANNOTATIONS

INTRODUCTION

In developing these Annotations I had regard to two requirements. The first of these was that the Annotations should in some way follow, or parallel, the creative process of writing the play *The Male Line*. The second was that some investigation of theory would be necessary in order to enable the Annotations to break new ground. My Research Question therefore was: to what extent could my play *The Male Line* be seen as a traditional epic narrative, and if it could, in what ways might it, or its writing, advance our knowledge of the epic? I proposed from the start to use the Journal to interrogate these issues in a more subjective, personal mode, and the Theory Section to do so in a more scholarly manner.

I made the decision to examine certain ideas, traditions and theories concerning the nature of the epic in order to prepare the ground, as it were, for a possible follow-up study, possibly in the form of a PhD and written by another writer, which would develop a fully-fledged argument regarding the nature of epic drama today and its application in Australian drama. Accordingly the ideas presented in the following pages are to be treated, as the title suggests, as reflections upon the nature of the epic in drama, rather than as an argument for a particular approach to the writing of epic drama in Australia today.

During the course of writing these Annotations my ideas developed as I read more and more. This development is represented in the form of a curve, wherein I at first began by examining the creative act itself as
embodied in the *The Male Line*, and then realised that the play was in fact an epic - whereupon my reflections took a new direction, namely the examination of the epic itself. However, I was still, during this later phase, examining the nature of the creative act. It was merely that, now, the creative act was the act of writing an epic play.

Instead of an argument, then, these Annotations present a journey: a journey of discovery and investigation - a journey which has only begun.

**SECTION A: JOURNAL**

**INTRODUCTION**

This part of the Annotations follows the progress of the actual writing of the Script. It commences by addressing itself mainly to the nature of the creative act itself, as seen in the Script - this is the first strand of the Journal. In the Journal, I have decided to use a personal, subjective, anecdotal voice, especially where I am examining the creative act itself - because the creative act is very much bound up, in my opinion, with the internal thought processes of the creator. It seems to this writer that something so intimate as the creative act cannot be uncovered, examined, exposed except through personal, subjective language - the language used by a writer in the act of creation of a text. The artist and the person are not, in my view, to be distinguished - an insight into the one is an insight into the other.
Later, as it becomes clear to me that what I am writing is an Epic play, and that the Epic is, as yet, a very modest part of our national dramatic canon - and very little written about - a second strand of the Journal begins to emerge. This second section is an examination of epic drama, of the traditional epic stories and poems, and an examination of *The Male Line* as epic. All of these themes are followed up in more rigorous ways in the Section on Theory, Section B of Part 11. It is hoped that this DCA breaks new ground in both these sections.

This Journal had as its initial purpose the examination of a project to write a stage play based broadly upon the life of my paternal grandfather. By writing this Journal, in tandem with the writing of the play, I am able to chart the progress of the play, examine the methods which I use to write it, and follow any changes or growth which may occur during the period of the writing. It is an opportunity for me to respond, moment by moment, to the play as I write it. This opportunity applies in respect of changes in the direction or genre of the play itself as much as in the minutiae of techniques.

This Journal further allows me to explore the nature and use of language appropriate to a project of this kind. Merlinda Bobis, for instance, in her DCA Thesis *From Naming To Namelessness* (Bobis, 42-70) cuts from passages written in language that is sometimes extremely personal and subjective - or extremely poetic - to passages written in academically rigorous prose. I have to find my own pathway through these minefields of language. The flexibility of language referred to here enhances, in my opinion, the usefulness and focus of a DCA, making it a useful and flexible vehicle both for scholarly investigation and for the development of creative work.
This Journal also provides an opportunity to note theoretical aspects of the script as they arise. For example, if the script appears to be of a particular genre or to illustrate certain theories of the drama - then the Journal is an appropriate place to note this. Moreover, the Journal can be used to chart changes and developments in the process of a more long-term nature. I regard this Journal also as a piece of creative writing. Although in a sense critical writing, its ability to cast light on the process of creativity, and on the changes in me as artist will, it is hoped, give it a creative character.

The Prologue explains to a reader the impulses which prompted me to begin this project, and the biases which I understood myself to have at the time when I commenced it. In Creative Reflections On The Male Line I follow the actual day-by-day process of writing the play. At first, all the notes in this Journal were of this kind. Then, as I began to realise that more and more of my Journal entries were concerned with the nature of The Male Line as an epic play, I decided to separate these Notes, which reflect and comment only upon the act of creation itself, and the decisions I as writer made when writing the first draft of the script, from the increasing numbers of Journal entries which were concerned with the epic nature of the play. This was achieved by dividing the Journal into two sections: this one, Creative Reflections On The Male Line, and a new section, Reflections on The Epic and The Male Line.

Creative Reflections On The Male Line consists of Journal entries concerning the nature of the creative act, and Reflections Upon The Epic and The Male Line' consists of - mostly later - Journal entries about the epic nature of The Male Line. By having the title of the play
in both sections of the Journal, it has I hope been assured that the play remains the central focus of this Journal.

Part B of this Journal, which is concerned with theory, is broken into several segments, including "Traditional Theories Of The Epic", and *The Male Line* as Epic Play," in which these traditional theories are applied to the play¹. Part B attempts to develop these thoughts, ideas and observations up to the point where they could be considered useful source material for some future researcher wishing to develop, in the scholarly language of critical analysis, a more thorough-going theory of the epic.

The Section titled "The Mackay Research" is an account of research into the early life of my paternal grandfather which I conducted in Mackay, Queensland, in 1993.

**PROLOGUE**

The stage play which forms the core of this DCA project is based initially upon the relationship between a man, living today, and his grandfather who died in 1953.

Any relationship between them must be of two kinds: the relationship which they had when the grandfather was alive, and; the relationship which the grandson imagines them to have now, but which in fact exists only in his mind.
This second "relationship" is in fact more akin to an attempt on the part of the grandson to get to know, and to come to terms with, the memory of his grandfather. This is the personal or subjective side of their relationship, and is contained mostly within the Narration spoken by the Narrator, who represents the figure of the Grandson, who in turn is based upon this writer.

In the first draft of the Script the Grandson had a lot more narration than he has in the later drafts. I have given much of his narration to characters who were marginal in the first draft - in particular the women: his mother, Dawn, his grandmother, Elizabeth, and the housemaid, Meg.

The grandson has chosen to frame this project as a stage play covering significant moments in the life of his grandfather. To adequately cover his grandfather's life the grandson has to fill in some of these significant moments, which are missing from the data which the grandson has collected about his grandfather.

The missing moments include the initial meeting between the grandfather, then a railway ganger, and his future wife, then an infants school teacher, beside a railway line under construction near Mackay, North Queensland, sometime early in this century. All other members of the family being dead, the grandson has no option but to imagine - that is, to invent - these missing moments.

The play is therefore partly based upon what little is known of a human being who lived between about 1880 and 1953, and partly based on what might have happened in the life of that human being, and partly fictionalised to "distance" the writer, or grandson, from the discourse of the patriarchal figure, the purpose of this being to make
the patriarch more universal and less particular as a family member of the writer.

A major theme of this project, therefore, is to expose the operations, in an Australian colonial/patriarchal context, of phallogocentrism; to deconstruct the discourse of the imperial male figure as it has dominated history in Australia. Underneath Australian history a great gender war has been going on; yet this war has been little remarked and still less chronicled². It is one of the purposes of this DCA project to attempt to uncover, through the art of epic drama, some of this gender war and to subvert it by appropriating some of the power of the colonial patriarch to the hitherto marginalised women.

The grandfather’s name, throughout most of his life, was “Thossie”. This was how he was known by friend and foe, and he had plenty of both. The grandson I have called Bert, after a family nickname for myself - though, increasingly, “Bert” becomes more and more distanced from my historical self.

This Journal paralleled and followed the writing of the play. Each time I wrote a section of the play I also wrote a section of this Journal. However, in deciding how to lay out the Journal I departed from the diary mode of date entries and opted instead for a hopefully more integrated mode of delivery based upon headings related to issues which had emerged. Thus sequentiality has been sacrificed for the sake of a series of more coherent expositions. In this way, it is hoped, repetitions of ideas and observations may be minimised.

One more point needs to be made here. There are in this Journal some very personal, emotional, even intimate statements. Naturally I feel exposed because of this. Strangers will be reading this DCA and I would
not, as a person, normally expose my innermost feelings to strangers. However I am writing this not only as a person as such, but more significantly as an artist. It is very difficult of course to disassociate the artist from the person. The person informs the artist and the art, and to fully realise the talent of the artist it is very often necessary to use the person as guinea-pig, to expose and dissect h/her, to explore h/his emotions. This is what is done in an autobiographical work of art, and since this Journal follows the progress of such a work I have deemed it appropriate to allow some of these statements to remain. My hope and intention is that by doing so more light will be thrown upon Thossie, upon the Irish-Australian tribe of which he was a representative, and upon Australian society in his time.

Accordingly I have left the personal, emotional, exposing references in the text. The artist is a person who makes a laboratory of h/his emotions. Embarrassing as this may sometimes be to some - and, indeed, as it may sometimes be to the author of this Doctoral project - it is the core of art and the means, I submit, by which art achieves its goal of providing insight into the human condition.
1: CREATIVE REFLECTIONS ON THE MALE LINE.

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**Early Attempts To Write This Play.**

I have begun, numerous times, to write this story. My first attempt was in 1962. I made further attempts in the mid Sixties, early Seventies, late Seventies, several times during the Eighties, until the most recent attempt commencing in the second half of 1991.

Some of these attempts were in prose fiction. Two were in the form of feature film treatments and part scripts. Some dealt with the family as a whole - my grandfather, grandmother, their housemaid (the fact that I include the housemaid as a member of the family interests me), and their sons (one of them my father,) and his wife. Some dealt with my father's life. Some dealt with "The Troubles" experienced by the family as a whole from 1943-45. None was finished. I, who have never
experienced writer's block in any other writing project, was stopped by it every time I attempted to write the story of my family.

Perhaps I felt guilty that I was exposing private, family business to the world. Perhaps it was because some of the people involved were still alive. Certainly, I always felt that once they had all died - my mother was the last surviving participant in these sad, turbulent events - I could write the story at last. Probably, I needed to write it so as to free myself from the burden of my involuntary past.

I decided for the first time to write the story not as the story of my father - which had been the form of several failed attempts - nor as the story of my mother, as victim of the patriarchal family. Everything I write is informed with her life-long plea for men - and for me, her son, in particular - to make the effort to understand women, and in that sense when I write I feel I am, in part, her voice, still speaking in the world after her death; or at the least, a male voice seeking to continue her plea for understanding. Nor would I write it as a "family saga". The highway of Australian writing is already littered with the capsized wrecks of the juggernauts of family sagas. This time, I decided, I would write it as the story of my grandfather. This time, I believed and hoped that the correct form, the right moment to enter the story, the true subject matter for the story, had been found. If I could finish the play, and this Journal, then I would have passed a considerable milestone both in my development as an artist, and in my development as a person.

There might be a sense in which I, as narrator and grandson, am also the subject of this story. Perhaps it is the tension between us which is the subject of this story. Whatever the case, I considered it appropriate
that Thossie be at least the nominal subject because of his dominance of the family, because it was he who started the chain of events which brought him and the family down, and because, through him, all the other characters can emerge.

He it was who created and then shaped the family. It was he whose personality dominated it. It was his actions which converted a personal crisis, faced by my father, into a family tragedy, felt by all, and still influencing me all these years later.

The correct form is the stage play, using such techniques as the Narrator, the flashback, and promenade staging. This is a dramatic story, and drama can best do it justice. The time to enter the story was the seduction of my grandmother by my grandfather, sometime in the picaninny years of this century. To my delight, the project proved amenable to adaptation into a stage format.

This had been considerably helped by the fact that between 1984 and 1988 I wrote - and rewrote (there is an old saying: "you don’t write, you rewrite") - a stage adaptation of Albert Facey’s famous autobiography *A Fortunate Life*. This was originally commissioned by John Sumner of the Melbourne Theatre Company, who owned the stage rights. He and I disagreed fundamentally about the best way to stage the book. I disassociated myself from the staging of the play by the Melbourne Theatre Co.

Subsequently I rewrote the play, making it much more dramatic and theatrical - where his version had been literary (and far too long at four and a half hours) and this new version was staged by the WA Theatre Co. and by Brian Debnam at Harvest Theatre Co. Debnam and I worked
out the staging of the Harvest version, which was the one I eventually allowed to be published by Currency Press.

This experience provided the basis for the staging of The Male Line. This staging is theatrical in that it allows for busy street scenes, bars, horses and riders, and other scenes to be shown on stage - allowing the same freedom for the audience to be transported from setting to setting as is allowed by film - though at considerably lower cost. Because there often seems to be an inverse ratio between cost and intelligence, this kind of staging allows for both freedom of movement and an intelligent story, whereas film is often obliged to sacrifice the latter for the former.

I wrote the first couple of chapters in Perth in 1991. Guilt shadowed me, but did not attempt an ambush. Now, in 1992, a new start; this time in dramatic form. Sometimes I became frustrated, feeling that I was destined never to get past the first ten per cent of this story. Yet again, I went back to scratch and started anew. This is a story whose beginning has been written so many times as to involve more words than the entire finished script.

Use of Narrator.

I came up against the objection from some readers of the early draft that I had used a narrator - this was considered essentially undramatic. I marshalled my defences. Brecht used a narrator in Caucasian Chalk Circle. So have numerous other writers. In Chapel Perilous the protagonist, representing the author, Dorothy Hewett, is virtually a narrator as she leads the audience through her life history. When a
play covers the lifetime of a person, and a big slice of a country's history, you need a Narrator to tie it all together.

"Exposition is the death of drama", as William Goldman stated in his study of American screenwriting *Adventures In The Screen Trade*, (1991, 87). As a teacher of dramatic writing, this is one of the much-loved clichés by which I focus students' minds on the essential truths of drama. In an historically-based play of this kind exposition is unavoidable. I used narration to get this across, but I was already feeling that there was too much narration in the script. How to avoid this? The audience needed to know certain facts about these people. I could only show so much. I felt I must try harder to find visual metaphors and images to show the changes which form the progressive links of this play.

Another and compelling reason for using a Narrator was that the Narrator represented myself. If the play was to show a way forward, a way for life to be lived more equably and truthfully than was done by the major characters in this story, then it would be in the person of the grandson - the new generation - that this change would be manifest; away, perhaps, from a life based upon the struggle for power and wealth and toward a life based upon other values.

**Limitations of the Epic Structure.**

In prose fiction you can go into the mind of a character; in drama this is difficult. In the fiction version of the scene where Thossie seduces Harriet, I could lead the reader into her head, and show that she was more than curious about this wiry little workman and his enchanting music. In the drama, short of having Elizabeth speak -
uncharacteristically - directly to the audience, there is no easy way to do this. I had therefore to show her stopping, to show her allowing Thossie to talk to her; or use the tired old device of the diary. Such a girl, in that era, would keep a diary. How else to satisfy the audience that her interest in Thossie is plausible? Or should I just show it, and allow the audience to assume that she was, in today's terms, sexually attracted? Or that she was anxious to escape the dominion of her father? But with a working man? This dramatic credibility gap was difficult to bridge.

From earliest times playwrights have tried to take audiences into the mind of a character; soliloquies, monologues, confessions from one character to another, narrators - but all of them still looked outward; they did not create the illusion that we were in another person's head; in other words, they were not intimate.

Perhaps, in a chronicle of an active man such as my grandfather (he was nothing if not active) this is not so much of a handicap. It may be that "too much" interior probing might slow down the dramatic action and look like a novel on stage. In any case, all art forms have their limitations, and this is one I would have to live with in this project. As I got further into the project and decided to incorporate some exploration of character into this epic play, I began to find techniques which would allow me to do his; techniques borrowed from climactic drama.

What, then, was the explosion of conflict which began this play, which got it started? In the case of plays which are life-stories, such as this one, or Louis Nowra's *Carpentaria*, or my own *A Fortunate Life* based on the biographical book by Bert Facey, it has to be accepted as a kind of
dramatic convention - a convention which applies with particular strength to epic plays - that the explosion which commences the play is the birth of the protagonist. This is perhaps most often true in the case of episodic, non-climactic plays - plays where the action starts slowly and proceeds to gather pace, as distinct from a climactic play which commences just before the climax, contains backstory or exposition, and then moves rapidly to an inevitable and compelling climax at great speed.

Thossie's birth was the event which began his life - this play - and, now, his life is this play, which is the only way the world will ever know his life - all those who knew the man at all closely being now dead except for me. From the moment of his birth, I surmised - I chose to believe - that Thossie began to suffer from inner conflicts so intense and so total as to be painful.

This entry into the Journal was the first time that I began to see clearly that what I was writing was an epic play. Although there are earlier references in this Journal to epic, I had not previously had a total and unified vision of this as an epic play - at least in part because I had not fully understand, until about this date, what the definition of epic drama was. Until I did the reading for the paper I delivered at the ADSA Conference in 1995, I did not complete the process of learning about the epic and its technical characteristics. So, the process of writing this Journal has coincided with an inner process of learning about epic drama (both Brechtian and traditional.)
Using Some Material From Earlier Attempts.

I now approached the writing of the section where Thossie faced the father of the young woman in the father’s house. Up till now I had started from scratch, writing the play from notes and research without reference to earlier attempts to write it, such as my 1991 attempt to write it as a novel based upon my father. What I proposed to do, therefore, was to print out that scene from the 1991 novel version from my own computer at home, bring it in to the University, and use it as the basis for the stage scene.

Once I had written that scene for the play, I was almost into new territory. In the novel, I had progressed only as far as the arrival of Thossie and his new bride in Perth, which happened, historically, about 1907 or 8 (I only know that the old family house in Perth was built in 1910; it was what in Sydney would be called “Federation” style).

In writing this early section I had to leave out a lot of what was in the novel. An epic play of this kind, I would suggest, is necessarily more physical, outward, and action-based than a novel because the novel has the interior monologue and the omniscient author's description of feelings, states of mind, and interiors.

How much of what I had so far written was fact - “fact” - or legend; and how much had I made up to complete a picture? What I knew, or thought I knew, about these people was soon written. Thossie Gorman, my grandfather, did grow up in Rockhampton, may have had a Kanaka Islander forebear, was poor and a railway ganger. He did meet and charm - or seduce - Henrietta Edwards, daughter of a great local grazier.
How he did this was one of the mysteries of his story. Family legend says that he charmed her, somehow, while she rode past his ganger’s camp on her way to teach infant school. I invented the bit where he charms her by his playing of the tin whistle. However, it is established fact that Thossie played the tin whistle extremely well; it was said that he could “make grown men cry” by playing Irish jigs and reels. This device seemed a natural and plausible way for me to introduce his musical ability into the text at an early stage when the play was still largely dealing with exposition.

It seemed plausible that a young woman of Irish descent, who - I know - played the piano, would love the sound of Thossie’s music. If, on top of that, she was looking for a way out of Mackay and if she had already realised that the middle class men of the town would not provide that escape, then it is perhaps plausible that she would stop by Thossie’s tent. In any event, by all family accounts she did. They were different times. I was therefore obliged to find a plausible explanation for this. Henrietta (Elizabeth) was 30 by the time she met Thossie, and would have been considered to be “on the shelf” with few marriage prospects. Moreover, as she appears to have been something of a strong woman - ahead of her time - she would perhaps not have been attractive to local graziers and sugar growers seeking a submissive wife.

I needed to convey a clearer impression of Henrietta’s motives. Was it enough to show her choosing Thossie, or must I also spell out, or in some way indicate, why she does so? It was, after all, a surprising thing for a young woman of her type and time to do.
Linearity of The Male Line.

Some readers raised the question of the "linearity" of my play. Naturalism does not enjoy a good reputation in some scholarly circles, or among certain theatre directors. It is thought to be "more appropriate for television", "too 19th century", or "inappropriate for a full exploration of the possibilities of the live stage" (David Berthold, Dramaturg of Sydney Theatre Company, in a conversation with this writer on August 16th 1996 at the Wharf Theatre).

There is some truth in this. The debate is really, it seems to me, between those with a predominantly kinetic sensibility and those with a predominantly literary sensibility. Drama has always - perhaps mistakenly - been classified as a form of literature. To be sure, those writers who, like me, see drama as a means of exploring intelligence, and of conveying intelligent messages to intelligent audiences, often tend to regard the visual side of theatre as "trivial" "lightweight", "Carnaby Street", "merely fashionable" or even plain "unintelligent". I might also point out that people who criticise dramatic linearity never seem to be able to say how, in this time/space continuum, linearity could be avoided. Everything that happens, happens in time and space, and therefore in a sequence. How can theatre be any different?

In my earlier plays, and particularly in Bridey, which in earlier drafts was named A Short History of Desire, and is now called The Historians. I had experimented with different ways of staging communications between the past and the present. I was particularly impressed with the writings of some Irish playwrights, particularly Hugh Leonard and Brian Friel - who have used ingenious and believable dramatic devices to bridge the gap; having two actors play
the same character, either simultaneously or at different times in that character’s life, is one such device.

**Incorporating Flash-Forwards and Flash-backs.**

I decided to write, early on, some of the scenes from the climatic period of the play - the events of 1943-45 - as flash-forwards, inserting them into the script from time to time to increase the interest of the reader/audience, and write the story of Thossie as a series of flash-backs from them.

I opted to write scenes from 1943-45, in the order in which they occurred, as flash-forwards. What in effect happened was that I started with a scene from the climactic period - the scene chosen was a scene in the East Perth cemetery where Thossie and his lawyer son Robert were studying tenders, “borrowed” from Thossie’s friend the Commissioner for Railways, so as to be able to put in a lower tender, by close of business on that day, to secure for another year the contract to run the Refreshment Rooms for the Western Australian Government Railways.

The script then moved on to what was previously the first scene - myself as Narrator, many years later, standing as an adult on the spot where an event in Thossie’s life allegedly occurred and trying to “feel” that event. By the gradual building up of alternate events in this way, a pattern could be established which the audience would easily follow.

Some of these changes were prompted by the comments of my supervisors - another aspect of writing within an academic context with which I had to contend. Working with supervisors demonstrated
the advantage of working on a new script in this way, with a
disinterested observer making comments on my script as I went
along; a working method I had long been trying to set up, without
success. So, this method of working on this DCA was already providing
insights into my own way of working.

Examination in detail of one scene.

I decided to make an attempt at a "creative analysis" of a section of the
text. I had no developed idea, at that time, as to what a creative
analysis might be, but I suspected that I knew its purpose; to discover,
as closely as possible, the wellsprings of creativity; the triggers and
apparently random choices which shape the script, within its imposed
parameters, as the script it is, and not any other. I chose as my section
of text a small part of page 5, beginning with the words "Thossie plays
for her as she rides by" and ending with the words "Alright, alright."

The full text is as follows;

Thossie plays for her as she rides by. She does not acknowledge him,
but continues to ride sedately and steadily until she disappears off-
stage.

He is crestfallen. He stops playing. A workman steps up to him.

Man Come on Thossie, don't get down. She always does that.

Thossie turns and lunges wildly at he man, who backs off.

Man Alright, alright.
I attempted to discover and explain my choices; of words, of ideas, of actions. I also attempted to place the piece in some sort of historical context, and to examine it from the point of view of sexual politics.

To begin with, this section is part of an Action which commences when we first discover the gang working on the railway line, and ends when Elizabeth agrees to see Thossie, mounted, on a Sunday. It is a section designed to establish the character and background of both Thossie and Elizabeth, the two principal players in this narrative.

Within this small scene - couple of scenes - Thossie is playing the spine action “to woo”, Elizabeth is playing the spine action “to encourage Thossie’s wooing”, and the Man, a workman, is playing the action “to protect Thossie from hurt”.

There are several beats in this section. I identified them as follows:

first beat: Thossie plays his tin whistle; Elizabeth aloofly rides by.

second beat: Thossie is crestfallen, and stops playing.

third beat: Man walks up to Thossie.

fourth beat: Man addresses Thossie.

fifth beat: Thossie turns and lunges at man, who backs off.

My third, fourth and fifth beats could be seen as but one beat. I chose to divide them further in order to get a better look at the detail of the action.

Beat 1 exhibits certain characteristics. For example, the sentence is constructed in such a way - “Thossie played for her as she rode by” - as
to make it appear that his activity was dominant, and hers subdominant.

Interestingly enough, when I visualised the scene in my mind’s eye - playwrights usually visualise scenes before they write them - I saw Thossie as being on the left of my mental picture and Elizabeth, on her horse, on the right.

In cinema and also in stagecraft, figures on the left of screen/stage are seen as dominant - possibly because we read from left to right - and figures to the right of the screen/stage are seen as subdominant or passive. I have therefore seen Thossie as the active, and Elizabeth as the passive figure in this beat.

The fact that he plays “for her” indicates that in my mind I saw his playing as a gift which he was offering her. This, I suspect, is what Thossie is doing. In the early years of the 20th century, in north-central rural Queensland, it would I believe have been considered entirely normal for a man to make "offerings" to a woman so as to attract her.

The use of the word “plays” may be interesting. Play, in any form, was something of a luxury in that time and place. Men and women worked very long hours indeed. Twenty odd years before these events, over to the west of where Elizabeth and Thossie met, a couple of great shearers’ strikes had been held, leading to the formation of the Australian Labour movement.

Words like “work” “labour”, “struggle” and “hardship” were much more common terms in that country. There was no welfare system at all. In 1908 Justice Bourne Higgins handed down his Harvester judgement, which formed the foundations for what has come to be
called the “Industrial Relations Club” - ACTU, Commonwealth Arbitration and Conciliation Commission, the employers, and the Federal Government. This was a time of work and labour, not a time of play. Not until the 60s did the Hippies bring the notion of “play” into this country, as something which adults, not children, might do.

Therefore, if a man played - music, acting, tomfoolery - it had to be for a purpose. Play could be indulged in with children (provided that, with boys, it had to be “manly play”), or it could be used to attract a woman. Men could dance or play music to charm women. Typically, in rural society during that period, I suggest, play could be indulged in only rarely - perhaps on Saturday nights at a local dance, often not even that frequently, depending on the remoteness of the settlement.

In Thossie’s case it is fair to estimate that he and his men would have camped where they were working, and could have travelled for play, on Saturday night or Sunday, only as far as horse transport would allow. This would not have allowed them to travel as far as Mackay to play, unless they spent half a day travelling to and from. Women, of course, were expected to play. They were regarded by men as being similar to children, until marriage turned them into adults.

For Thossie to play thus, in the midst of work, would have involved him taking a risk. The Engineer might arrive, or the Overseer. He was breaking the rules, and a modern audience might not be aware of this. “Work is play is work” was not a slogan of those times. It might be that his playfulness, his willingness to reveal his soul, was what made young Thossie attractive to Elizabeth. The fact that she is mounted, and he not, speaks volumes too. She was a working woman, which was a comparative rarity in that time and place. Most mounted people then
would have been men. Her status as a teacher, and as a rider, would have made her an object of caution for the men of the district, accustomed as they were to biddable women, and afraid as they were of any woman who demonstrated either intelligence or independence - and Elizabeth demonstrated both. Not so Thossie, who took the bull by the horns. This led me to the speculation that his willingness to accept her perhaps acerbic nature, his willingness to accept her independence, was what made him attractive to her. Perhaps, too, she thought she could “mould” him, in a reversal of the *My Fair Lady* syndrome.

The question surely arises here: why would a man like Thossie, a man’s man, take an interest in an independent and intelligent woman like Elizabeth? Several possibilities arose. He may have seen her as his only avenue into the ranks of the rich and powerful. He may have enjoyed her intelligence as a companion. This can only be conjectured. Of course, she does not acknowledge him. Social custom would not allow that. Nor would my narrative storyline. I did not have to think hard to write that line. No sooner had I typed “rides by”, than the thought came into my head “she would not acknowledge him”, and thereupon I wrote those words. It was not possible for me to locate the source of the words, or thoughts, which came into my head as I wrote. All I could do was reveal the apparent causal link, and assume that the words formed in my brain because they were the words my brain needed to carry the narrative forward to its next stage, or in theatre terms, beat. As for the process by which the brain locates words and brings them forward to consciousness, that was beyond the scope of this Journal.

Elizabeth continued to ride sedately and steadily by. It would have been a gross tactical mistake on her part to have responded. For a start,
Thossie was a worker, and women whose fathers owned vast estates did not speak to strange workers; and to their fathers' workers only in a kind of codified, ritualised dialect in a patronising tone. Workers were not to be treated as men - as Lady Chatterley found. Only men of property or education - voters - were men. In acknowledging Thossie's presence, and speaking to him in normal, if stilted language, Elizabeth was breaking class taboos. She ran the risk of placing herself outside her class.

Another possibility might be worth considering here. Elizabeth may have found Thossie's autodidacticism interesting. He may have greeted her with a quote from Cicero or something similar, Latin in those days being the language of erudition. He may have indicated to her a desire to learn to speak better English, a desire to "improve himself". This might well have proved irresistible to a schoolteacher. This may be how they first got together.

Be that as it may I still preferred to stick to my choice of the tin whistle as the means by which Thossie first attracted her attention. My reason for this is that the tin whistle makes a much more interesting dramatic scene, and I am a dramatist, not a historian. Since it is not possible to know for certain how they first made contact, I considered myself at liberty to choose the more dramatically interesting scene rather than the more historically plausible scene. This is part and parcel of my choice to write drama, not history.

Elizabeth had to continue riding as if nothing had happened; much as, today, a young woman might walk past a group of building labourers in a city street. However, according to the convention of those times, her ignoring of him would not have been taken - and was not expected
to be taken - as total rejection. Total rejection would mean her father riding up to Thossie accompanied by half a dozen of his stockmen, and giving Thossie a damn good thrashing with the whips. Thossie would have known that. Because she did not tell her father, she was at least sparing him that.

The phrase “he is crestfallen” comes next. Crestfallen means, literally, that the crest has fallen. In medieval times the crest was a display of feathers or suchlike arranged on the top of a warrior’s or knight’s shield. When this fell - presumably in battle - the warrior was said to be crest-fallen, which meant defeated or at least shamed.

Thossie “stops playing” because his play has not succeeded in its object. (The fact that his play had an object at all might suggest that it was not really play as we would know play; or alternatively that all play has an objective and there is no such thing as “pure play”).

The next beat or irreducible action occurs when, Thossie having stopped playing, a workman steps up to him and speaks. The workman’s action in doing so, although clearly consequent upon, and caused by, Thossie ceasing playing, is nevertheless not seen, dramatically, as part of the same beat, but as a new irreducible action following; because it requires from its principal actor (every beat has a principal actor; in this case, the workman) that he have an Objective, or Intention, which is not the same as the Objective of the principal actor in the previous beat.

Thossie, the principal actor in the previous beat, played the action “to cease playing”. The word “crestfallen” refers to the colour, or emotion, or mood, which coloured his action - dramatic collars are usually expressed as adverbs, as in; “he played on, sadly”, where “played” is the
action, and "sadly" the colour infusing that action. Thossie's Objective was "to win the heart of Elizabeth" or something similar; it is when he apparently fails to do so that he ceases, crestfallen.

That the workman steps up to Thossie has two purposes. One is that in each new beat, it is often helpful if the writer requires the principal actor in that beat to take some positive action so as to make it clear that this character is indeed the principal actor, the character whose activity makes the beat happen at all. The second purpose is to create something for Thossie to oppose; partly because, at this relatively early stage of the play I was still establishing the character of Thossie as a direct, aggressive man, and partly because it is very difficult for actors to do their job well if they do not have something to "play against" - and a good writer of drama must always think of the actors who have to play the actions in the drama. Had the workman merely spoken to Thossie, without stepping up to him, it would have been harder for the actor playing Thossie to motivate himself to oppose the workman as vigorously as he did. Thossie's lunge at the man establishes a new beat with a new principal actor; Thossie.

The workman having said "she always does that" is, of course, part of the Exposition of the play; the exposure and elaboration of facts which an audience needs to know in order to appreciate and enjoy the play. His "don't get down" was a common expression of the time and meant "don't get depressed". He was playing the action "to console". (There is only one action which cannot be played in the drama; "to be". All actions are expressed as verbs).

When the workman backs off, saying "alright, alright" we are seeing that, despite Thossie's aggression, there is a bond of understanding
between him and the workman, because the workman seems to know
that by backing off in this way he will avoid being hit.

Taken as a whole, the section which I have analysed represents a
turning point, a watershed - almost like a long beat; a section of the
play in which a shift in dramatic gears takes place, prior to Elizabeth's
decision to accept Thossie's courtship - which is essentially what it is,
although I doubt whether either participant realised that at the time.

Shakespearean Technique suitable for Epic

I was impressed by a movement which has been going on in the
theatre with regard to the production and staging of Shakespeare's
plays. This, in brief, is a movement which aims to "de-naturalise"
Shakespeare by restoring what is claimed to be the original narrative
emphasis in them³.

Thus, for example, in a production of a Shakespeare play staged along
these lines, actors will not direct their energies and their lines straight
across stage, so to speak, to each other, but will instead turn their bodies
half toward the audience, directing their speech partly toward the other
actor and partly out, toward the audience. The effect of just this single
device is considerable.

For a start, it removes at one stroke the illusion that the audience is not
there; that the audience is a bunch of voyeurs, peering in, through a
"fourth wall", at some people going about their private lives. In
Shakespeare's theatre the audience was always, according to this theory,
part of the total theatrical experience. There was never any pretence
that the actors were interacting only with one another; on the contrary,
they “worked the house” every night, inflaming the audience’s passions according to the action of the script; the audience thus becoming very much a part of the action as well as the reason for the action.

It was not until late in the 19th century that actors, working with the growing new breed of directors, began to operate as though they were behaving naturally in everyday life - “naturalism”. Stanislavsky observed this trend and took notes, which became his writings, which in turn were transformed by American theatre practitioners into “The Method“⁴, (Stanislavsky, 423-31) However appropriate the Method might be for plays by O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, or the post Sixties plays of England and Australia, it is not appropriate, according to this theory, to the directing and acting of Shakespeare. It occurred to me that what was true for Shakespeare may be true for other non-naturalistic theatre.

For example, much of the Epic theatre of the 20th century, much of the Russian theatre from the 20s and 30s, and even recent Australian plays like The Ballad of King O’Malley, do not rely upon the notion that an audience is spying on private moments, but rather takes the action to the audience, embracing them, insisting that they see themselves as part of a performance which includes them. One has only to think of The Iк or Mahabhrata by Peter Brook. Or, for that matter, Brecht, who postulated a contract between audience member and actor that was anything but furtive; and who sometimes used narrators to emphasise that “alienation” did not mean a loss of moral responsibility on the part of an audience. Lark Rise, the fine English promenade play, is another example of a modern drama which could not be adequately performed naturalistically, being essentially inclusive in nature.
It seemed to me that this approach to theatre could be fruitfully applied to *The Male Line*. This is the reason I asked for a promenade type of staging; to involve the audience and break down the fourth wall. This was also my reason for employing a narrator to carry part of the narrative burden and to make the characters come alive for an audience by prying into their hearts to see those thoughts which action conceals, rather than revealing. It seemed to me, also, that I am telling a tale about a period in our history which was “larger than life”; epic in that sense; and about a man who, whatever his physical stature, was a larger than life, larrikin character.

Moreover, this Elizabethan method of staging throws the emphasis upon the text rather than upon the acting, as such - while still allowing for motivation and character to be explored. It gives a play a narrative and textual emphasis which seemed to me to be wholly in keeping with an epic play about the pioneer period of our history and the “wild men” and women who peopled that dusty stage. Further, if an epic play is one which tells the story of a people or a community as much as it tells the stories of individuals, then it seems appropriate that in the staging of an epic play, as in its writing, the wider community - represented by the audience - should be included, seen to be included, and made to feel included. An inclusive, "open" method of acting would seem to be more appropriate for such theatre.
Principles of Creativity

The nature and definition of "creativity" has been much examined. What follows is my own approach to an understanding of how creativity operates.

The basic principles of creativity, in a practical sense, I therefore take to be as follows;

The creation of images in one’s head. It then becomes the aim of the creator to realise those images; to bring together elements which, when constituted in such and such a way, will make that image real in front of the creator’s eyes - no longer a picture, but a part of his or her actuality.

The philosophical problems with these concepts are immense, and would be sufficient to make any would-be creative artist stop in his or her tracks; but we are not speaking here of the philosophy of creativity, but of the craft of creativity.

A second fundamental element of the creative act, practically speaking, is, as I understood it, the bringing together of two - or usually two - unlike elements, so as to constitute a third, new element. This is the "creation"; because two unlike elements, such as French quadrilles and African drumming, which may seem light-years apart, can create, when brought together, the foundation of Jazz, and constitute a paradigm for the entire development of African-American culture.

It is the aim of the artist, when bringing together these two unlike elements, to create something new which resembles the picture which he or she had in their head and which, like a grain of sand in an oyster, irritated them until they felt obliged to do something about it. The
pictures which artists have in their heads may vary enormously; and may, initially, have little to do with the final product - even though that final product is supposed to be a bringing to life of that picture.

For example, the playwright Louis Nowra once stated, (May 1995, Guest lecture at Faculty Of Creative Arts, Wollongong University) that he had had a picture in his head which would not go away. Some women where standing on a hill looking down into a valley. In the valley a battle was raging. That was the picture in his head. He had no idea where it had come from, but he could not rest content until he had realised that picture through a long process of writing which became his play, *Visions*, about the rise and fall of the brief Paraguayan Empire.

I had a picture of two naked men dancing while a battle raged about them. I transformed this vision, via a long slow process which travelled through performance art in London galleries, to eventually become the central vision and the climax of my play *A Manual Of Trench Warfare*. I literally built the play around that vision. Only after I had done so did I become aware of my underlying (unconscious) creative aim - to write a play about the difficulty of maintaining one's sensitivity and artistic sensibility in a world which is continually at war, and where daily life itself can be seen as a form of perpetual warfare.

As an example of how this creative picturing may work, I quote the following episode which occurred during the writing of these Annotations.

Thoughts often occur to me apparently at random. I take this to mean that I have been thinking about things, on the “back burner” so to
speak, for some time, and the moment which I regard as the moment of creation is actually the moment when the thought surfaces.

Riding in a train, I was deliberately trying to think of ways to make the script of Male Line more "experimental." I wanted to find ways in which to use the script to test my creative abilities, to make the play flow more seamlessly for the audience, and to exhibit, in the script, the techniques which I have been developing under the heading "epic techniques".

As a child of five, I had sat on the floor of my room in my parents' house and arranged my dolls in a semi-circle around me, giving each one of them lines to say in plays which I have long since forgotten. These dolls were subsequently taken and ripped apart by agents of the Commonwealth Police when they raided my father's house in 1943 and were looking for the thirty one-pound notes - I knew, but was not there to tell them, that he had buried them in the back garden: I remember this because as he dug, my father unearthed a West Australia legless lizard, which I at first took for a snake until he reassured me that it was harmless; a "grass snake", as he called it. However, although I attempted to write this scene into The Male Line I found it simply too confronting, and too personally traumatic, to do so, and destroyed the scene. That far I could not go in exposing the person, as distinct from the artist; here, then, was my personal line, where I made a division between the person-as-artist and the person-as-private individual.

There is, of course, nothing new in the world of theatre. Theatre has been in a ferment of experimentation since the 1890s, and there are only so many things which a person, or group of persons, can do (including say) on some sort of a stage or performance area in front of
another person or group of persons. New technologies such as laser may introduce new forms of "live" performance, but they can at best be peripheral since live performance by definition means a flesh-and-blood human being performing before another or others. Technology can enhance, but not replace - otherwise it is no longer live performance.

On the train - apparently out of the blue - it occurred to me to combine what I was doing with "Thossie" with another idea which I have been trying to develop, without success, for some time. This other idea began when, during the 70s, I staged a number of Performance Art events in London art galleries and in such places as Chelsea wine bars. I forget the names of some of those performances and their venues, but I remember that many of them involved human sized figures, made variously of papier mache, chicken wire, wood or stuffed bags.

Be that as it may I have always had a fascination with writing a play for puppets and humans combined. It occurred to me on the train that I should combine large figures, which speak, with the Male Line script. The obvious way to do this, it seemed to me, was to have Thossie and other characters become statues of themselves; as if a grateful citizenry had erected statues of these people in the public squares. Then, that the statues should speak; obviously, to the narrator. This way, we could have Thossie now - the ghost of Thossie - speaking about Thossie then, and so on.

This is an example of how the "creative act", understood as a sort of stroke of insight, can lead an artist astray. I rapidly abandoned the idea. It seemed to me, with hindsight a year or so later, that the idea of having Thossie as a statue or Figure was an untheatrical and retrograde
step. It began to seem to me to be nothing more than experimentation for experimentation's sake, rather than because an experiment had the potential to improve the way in which a play communicates with its audience - which must, in my view, be the sole reason for writing a play. Moreover, I could not see what the statues would add to our understanding of the complex man Thossie was. If anything, being puppets, they might seem, or be seen, to be simplifying him.

**Two Actors portraying Thossie?**

Another, technical problem which was exercising my mind was the problem of having two actors portray Thossie - one as a young man and one as an older man. Is there enough time between scenes to have Thossie "age up"? Actually, that would not be necessary between scenes; only between Acts. If Thossie is the younger man throughout Act 1 - Mackay through to the beginning of the Troubles in 1943 - then he can be an older man for Act 11 - or perhaps even then still be the younger man; and then use the older man only for Act 3.

My plan was; Act 1; 1880-1943; all exposition; establishing Thossie, what makes him run, and then running him up to the beginning of the Troubles in 1943.

Act 2; The Troubles; all action.

Act 3; Rounding off; bringing the story up to date, fulfilling the point of the play. Possible ending point; the death of Thossie in 1953.
A Writing Block

The block which, in earlier attempts at writing this story, prevented me from getting past the point where Thossie and Henrietta leave Queensland, had now been passed and I felt that this time I would finish the story. What caused the block I can only speculate about. I liked to think I am a writer who does not experience blocks. And yet writing this play was a necessary catharsis for me; I needed to purge myself of these events and the shadow they have cast over my life. How many times, at school, was I an outcast; and how much did this have to do with my family history - about which I knew nothing, believing myself to be unpopular because I was not a likable person, and only later realising that the sins of the father had been visited. My family could be said to have betrayed me by doing these things in the first place. As an adult, after a very troubled adolescence, I discovered that I was normally likable and got on well with all sorts of people. I could make and hold friends just like anyone else. So these events left me with a painful and difficult legacy and in that sense this play is both family history and personal catharsis. To the extent that I "universalised" the play by changing names, deleting some incidents, and adding or modifying others, it became a play of broader significance which can take its place in the Australian canon and serve an audience.

Because of the personal trauma these events caused for me this play is not a play I could choose to write or not to write; in some form, play novel or film, I had to write it out. I often said to my playwriting students that a play has to have a necessity about it - there has to be a need to write that play. Whatever broad social significance or use The Male Line may have flows from its painful reality as my personal heritage. Before it can be catharsis for any others, it has already been, in
the writing, catharsis for me. For this reason it was with some concern that I agreed to have a public workshop performance of this play in September 1997 at Theatre South. Subsequently, Theatre South offered me a full production of the play in 1998. I overcame my personal doubts about exposing my own family in this way by changing names and modifying events in the play.

When writing a section of the play which deals with Thossie meeting, for the first time, Perth businessmen of Irish-Catholic background who would help him invest his money and join their community, I found myself proceeding more slowly than usual, with lots of pauses and much staring out the window. The reason was that as I got closer to the present I was dealing more and more with family legend. I was also dealing with people some of whom may still be alive today - not Thossie's friends, but their children. I had to invent names and to imagine how Thossie came to be part of the Irish Catholic push centred upon Tattersalls Club and controlling such industries as catering, gambling, horse racing, the building industry, and transport.

I thought about it and came up with a simple scene where he meets two men - I chose two because it would give the impression of them representing a class or group, but without requiring too large a cast for the staging of this play, which I hoped can be staged using eight actors, all playing more than one role. In epic plays doubling of characters is often required because of the conflict between ever-tightening theatre budgets and the large casts which tend to be typical of epic plays. (Though not all epics, of course, have large casts: I would regard Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night* as arguably an epic
play, despite it having a small cast and but one set, because of its essentially episodic structure).

Rather than have the Narrator tell us how people met one another in those days, I assumed that Thossie had a couple of names given to him in Queensland of people to make contact with when he got to Perth. I did not see the necessity of adding this expository information to the script. I did not want to use obvious Irish names all the time, so I chose the name 'Martin' for the second man, the man whom I have chosen to be the representative of racial prejudice in Perth. I chose the name Martin from the novel *Bonfire Of The Vanities* by Tom Wolfe, where Martin is the tough little Irish cop who brings the silvertail to his doom. These men would return again and again. They would be used to represent the Irish-Australian push in Perth; a very well-established and loyal group.

**Coming to Terms with Corruption.**

It has to be remembered that what is today called "corruption" and held in very low esteem was, up till at least World War II, the normal way of doing business and running things.

Perth was small and everyone knew everyone. Sections of society - Law, Finance, Transport, and so on - were turned over to interest groups based upon race or religion. The Irish ran gambling, catering, construction, and trucking, among others. Later they came to be powerful in the Law and the public service. It may well be, and some people consider it to be the case, that there was some sort of inter-ethnic collusion to allocate industries in this way. Of course there is no evidence of any such inter-racial collusion\(^5\). And it is undoubtedly true that many Anglo-Saxon families regarded gambling and catering as
beneath them. Moreover, some Anglo-Saxons, Jews, Scots and others did become involved in gambling and catering, just as many Irish came in time to own land and even sit on the boards of big banks and insurance companies. Today these ethnic carve-ups have largely disappeared or become blurred, which may make it difficult to bear in mind how recently they dominated the Australian economy. Thossie, had he lived in New South Wales in the early 1990s, would have been appalled by the "treachery" of John Fahey in joining the Liberal Party.

Men who did the things that Thossie did did not think of themselves as "corrupt". They thought of themselves as men of the world, realists, adults, or just as being tough - which was highly valued. They knew that if they did not cut corners, accrue "black" (black money, i.e., profit you didn't tell the taxman about) other people would. "Insider trading" was not only not bad, it was the only way to gather information and make wise investments. It was often said to be the main reason for the Weld Club's existence. There was law, but it was not designed to trap men who ran things. It was designed to protect them. The law trapped the little people; trade union organisers, radicals, and criminals especially. Even today, in clubs and bars around Perth, you can hear businessmen talking about black money as if it were their right and a perfectly normal thing; as if cheating the taxman were accepted practice.

There are numerous examples in Australian history of men who began life as petty criminals and rose, by sheer intelligence, toughness and tenacity, to become big people. John Wren was an example - an Irish Australian who helped many thousands of his tribe with money, advice, or other help - my father among them. However criminal he may have been he was loved by the poor Irish who clustered around Fitzroy and Collingwood (Hardy, 1982). In the days before Government
welfare there was often no other way for a widow to survive, or for a young man on the way up to get a head-start. A hero to those people, a villain to the rest of society - the Irish accepted that they would be seen this way as they struggled for their place in the sun.

All of these thoughts are expressed in order to provide background to a reader of the play, to place Thossie in perspective as a citizen of his times.

**Surprises in Character Development.**

I frequently found that my characters surprised me. Elizabeth was an example. I remembered her the way a little boy remembers his grandmother. I knew nothing of her pain, her inner feelings, or her joys. From that scant knowledge I set out to paint a picture of a lively young girl who wants to break away from her stifling background, only to find herself in a yet more stifling one. In the process I found occasions when she wants to turn and talk to the audience; so I let her do so, and she surprised me with her knowledge of her situation. There were very few options available to her, and I was coming to terms with a woman who was a prisoner - though to me, in my childhood, she seemed austere and powerful.

I remembered her with her cousins, Kate and Biddy Hanrahan, who came to visit once from Queensland. Irish born and bred, they had immigrated to Australia, perhaps before my grandmother moved to Perth. Unlike her they were full of laughter - and usually grog. Derided in those days as “spinsters”, their lack of husbands did not deter them from the good life. They gambled, swore, drank, laughed .. and no doubt did other things of which I knew not. In their company my
grandmother changed; she became more light-hearted, she drank, she laughed, and she became rather girlish. These may have been the only times when she reverted to the girl she had been on her father's property, before making that fateful decision to reach for Thossie. The normal process of character building, where characters may be cobbled together from representative types the writer has met, is not possible here where the character is based upon only one real person.

So, as I came to understand her, I re-assessed her. I felt a great compassion for her and wished that I could say to her, with hindsight, that I understood. It was a strange feeling, where my "character" was also my relative. I had always worked in the past with totally fictitious characters. I felt, with characters such as Elizabeth, an obligation to "be true" to them. Not to make them do what they did not, or would not have done. I did not have the freedom to control them. If writers are controllers then characters based upon life are less controllable. When I said, earlier, that Elizabeth surprised me with the things she came out with and with her insight into her own situation, that is a phenomenon I would not expect with a character who was totally under my own control. I feel sometimes as if my characters know more than I do, and my job is simply to give them a platform.

Sometimes a character will create him or herself without any apparent impetus from me. For instance, when Thossie had arrived in Perth and was making his contacts around the business community and, of course, the gambling community, I realised that I would need some Perth Irish to interface with him.

Immediately I thought of a friend of mine, a man named Bronx O'Malley - his nick-name "Bronx" provided the name I used for a
character in my earlier play *A Night In The Arms Of Raeleen* - who is a big, florid, expansive man who drinks a lot and knows everybody; who gambles a lot, does business a lot, and is a mainstay of the Catholic community in Perth. This was the figure I had in mind as I created O'Brien. That surname came into my mind, apparently spontaneously, possibly by extension from O'Malley.

Once I had named O'Brien and had given him the job of telling Thossie to go into the business of running pubs, he began to take on a life of his own; so much so that I now see him, not looking exactly like Bronx, but rather like the proprietor of an Irish bar in the Upper West Side of New York with whom I formed an acquaintance in 1991. I saw O'Brien leaning back slightly as he stands, smiling slyly as if he knows many secrets - he may - and revealing only little bits of himself at a time; especially to me, his alleged creator.

The point is that having brought him into being I now must stand on the sidelines and watch as his character grew. He would tell me what he wanted to say, and I would merely write it down. He would do what a man of his type and time would have done, and I would merely record it. At the end of the play there will be this character and people will say to me, this and that about O'Brien; and I will pretend to be the "author" of this man; but the truth is he authored himself; I was only the channel for that act of creation. Each time I wrote words for him to say, or actions for him to perform, it would be because I heard him speak those words and then recorded them; or because I saw him make certain moves and then recorded them. In fine, the character "O'Brien" did not in fact develop as much as I had expected. The reason is that just covering all of Thossie's life took a full-length play without adding colourful bit players - and as I began to upgrade the
participation of the formerly marginalised female characters, O'Brien was himself marginalised.

The folksinger Bob Dylan used to say his songs wrote themselves (quoted in an interview with Dylan by Hunter St. Thompson, Rolling Stone Magazine, October 1977). Leaving aside the Barthes notion of the death of the author7, there is a sense in which an author is, if not merely a "location", then at least not much more than a channel for a character to make h/his appearance upon the stage. Without me, there would have been no O'Brien. I was the source of that character. But I was not in control of him. Nor should I be. I opened up my unconscious and let O'Brien flow out, onto the page, already with his likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses. I claim him, and he will always remain a thing of fiction; but he has his own life and if I wanted to shape him plausibly for an audience I must respect that life.

Applying Theatrical Terms

I now started to apply some established theatrical terms and concepts to an analysis of the play, The Male Line. I chose to do it at this point in the Journal because by now the style of the Journal had been established; the early part of Thossie's story had been told in the play, and some attempt had been made to analyse the creative process in some detail as it applied to this script.

Before I could usefully proceed further it seemed to me that I must lay out a basic analysis of the script in standard script-development terms. For further information about the process of script development - a process which will be applied to The Male Line as part of the DCA program - please see the book entitled National Report On Script
Consultancy (Dramaturgy), written by this Researcher in 1991 for Edith Cowan University and published in 1992 by Scarp Press at Wollongong University.

The analysis follows:

The most commonly used expression used by Script Consultants working on scripts is "Three Act Structure" a definition of which appears in the section of this Thesis on script analysis. The Male Line divides neatly into three Acts, shaped as much by geography as by the usual dramatic divisions.

Act 1 covers the period in North Queensland, circa 1880 - 1905.

Act 11 covers the early years in Perth and leads up to, and includes, the horrific "Troubles" of 1943. These Troubles give the play a natural climax, and also give the play its theme, which I understand to be "Arrogance Goes Before A Fall".

Act 111 covers the period from 1943-1960. It starts with the climactic events of the "Troubles" - the sentencing and the prison terms. It includes the Resolution of the conflict, the death of Thossie in 1953, and the beginning of a new world order with the young grandson whose orientation is entirely different from Thossie's. The tail end of this Act is the period 1953-60, including the adolescent years of Bertie, the grandson, the deaths of Harriet and of Meg, the housekeeper, the death of one of Thossie's sons, and the breakup of the other son's marriage.

The Turning Points in the play are as follows;
Turning Point 1, at the end of Act 1, is the decision of Thossie and Harriet to marry and to leave Queensland - with money.

Turning Point 11 is the charging with criminal offences of first Thossie's son and then Thossie.

The Climax of the play is the trial and sentencing of Thossie and his son, together with the sensational events surrounding that trial.

The play has what is called "Forward Motion". This is supplied by the initial drive, hunger for wealth and power, and need for approval of Thossie. At the same time a contrary impulse, a sort of death-wish, within Thossie militates against his drive. Internally divided characters are always the most interesting in the drama, and they always have immense energy with which to drive the action of a play forward; their ambition is the play's forward motion.

The Catalyst occurs when Thossie first sees Elizabeth; from that moment on, he wants her; his innate drive now has a focus and a target. Thinking nothing of her feelings, and caring little about her as a human being, he seeks to marry her. From the moment when he sees her there is a Play, and not just a Situation.

If one had to state the play's theme in a single sentence, one would say something like "unbridled hunger, leading to arrogance and power, leads inevitably to destruction".

Complications occur in the play when Thossie's dream, his drive, is curbed, diverted, frustrated or slowed down by external factors; as when old man Noble tries to stop him, or he gets into trouble with the law.
The Protagonist is Thossie. This means that it is his energy, his drive toward his Objective or Goal which must carry the play forward to its resolution. The Antagonist is the Law, which ultimately, after many defeats, brings Thossie down.

There is another type of dramatic structure which is commonly supposed by critics to be appropriate to epic drama. This is called Episodic Structure. One significant difference between episodic structure and what is often called Climactic Structure, as outlined in the notes above, is that episodic structure starts earlier in the story. Typically, an episodic play begins early in the protagonist’s life and proceeds to enter the crisis in that life less urgently and by slower degrees than does a climatic play, which typically begins not long before the climax and builds up quickly to it through a series of obstacles and complications which are overcome by the Protagonist’s drive.

Moreover, in episodic plays there is no necessary causal connection between one scene and the next. Scenes follow one another but do not cause one another. Any links between scenes are made in the audience's mind, so that a total picture of the action builds up over time by means of images piled upon images in a sort of slow, theatrical montage - another technique which, in cinema, has been associated with the epic since the films of D.W. Griffith, who influenced Eisenstein, the Russian director most commonly credited with inventing montage.

*Hamlet* (Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Craig, ed., 870) is sometimes quoted as an example of a play created with an episodic structure. Another example might be my own play, *A Fortunate Life*. (Gorman, 1987) I chose to write a play which flows as seamlessly as
possible from one scene to the next. However, it is true that many of
my scenes do not immediately cause the next scene in a chain of
causation; the exception to this being the period of "The Troubles,
when the rapid succession of events leading to Thossie's downfall do
indeed involve causation from one scene to the next - taped interview
leads to arrest leads to refusal to swear on Bible leads to higher sentence
etc.

Most of The Male Line proceeds through a series of scenes which
follow each other in time - except for the flash-forwards to the scenes
set in "The troubles" which are designed to stimulate suspense - but do
not cause each other to happen. Thus, move to WA is followed by, but
does not cause, birth of two children, which is followed by but does not
cause posting at Tattersall's and so on.

It can easily be seen how a play based upon a life will lend itself more
readily to episodic structure than to climactic. In this play I used a little
of both techniques - the flash-forwards emphasise the suspense usually
associated with climactic structure while the slower earlier scenes
suggest the flow of a life rather than a buildup to something. I
personally suspected the notion that episodic and climactic are
mutually exclusive. I saw no reason why they could not be combined
in The Male Line.

Thossie's Character

In the section where Thossie goes to Gallipolli I had an opportunity
both to broaden his character a little, and to plant some characteristics
which would prove to be part of his downfall later in the play. Thossie
is immensely sentimental. This is not just an Irish cliché; my
grandfather was sentimental. He could be cruel one moment, think
only of money and material advancement the next, and then suddenly
reveal a deep and powerful kinship with the suffering of humanity.
Thossie could suddenly switch from the meanest venality to an almost
lugubrious sentimentality. Lurking within or behind the
sentimentality, however, was a genuine concern for the suffering of
this world which never left him, however wealthy and powerful he
became. When, later, he was in prison, this quality stood him in good
stead.

He was at pains, however, to hide this softer side of his nature. One can
imagine that his background in the working-class of the Queensland
bush made him this way. Whatever influence on his life his allegedly
big, fat - and possibly part-aboriginal or part-Kanaka - mother had on
him, it is possible to speculate that she insinuated into his mind a
softer nature which had to be hidden from the rough people with
whom he mixed and grew up.

It is also possible to speculate that it was this softer quality which
endeared him to my grandmother; but too much speculation will not
suit this project. Although I must speculate - and indeed make some
possibly arbitrary decisions - as to what caused what in Thossie’s life,
there must be a limit to speculation and that limit will be imposed by
the presence, or not, of even the thinnest thread of evidence to support
it. Where there is no evidence, speculation will be beyond the brief of
this project; where there is evidence, it will be unavoidable if a creative
narrative is to be woven, using the known elements of Thossie’s life as
posts on which to hang the fence of the storyline. I planted his
sentimentality partly, also, in order to make him more sympathetic to
an audience. Protagonists, so the theory goes, must always be
sympathetic if an audience is to care whether they succeed or fail in
their endeavours. Thossie did some pretty unsympathetic things in his
life. So any chance to make him more sympathetic must be used, and
used to the full.

What I remembered - or believed that I remembered, or remembered
through the memories of my now-dead parents - was a man of
contradiction. In this context I sometimes thought of the reputed Mafia
dons of North America - good citizens, generous benefactors of the
poor, devoted family men, kind parents - and powerful heads of
criminal syndicates. Thossie's kindness and tenderness toward me, as a
child, is a cherished memory. He was supportive also of his friends.
One of his close friends was Joe Chamberlain, the union boss from
Perth who wielded a great deal of power in his day. Thossie was a very
loyal friend to Chamberlain, and was in fact a lifelong member of the
Australian Workers Union. (As a child, of course, Thossie would have
remembered the great AWU shearsers strikes of 1890 and 1892; these
may in fact have contributed to his decision to become a Communist
sympathiser; but again, this is speculative).

He was also a lifelong and loyal friend of General Thomas Blamey. I
assumed that he met Blamey at Gallipolli. Blamey, too, had reason, so
my father told me (without ever spelling out the details) to be grateful
for Thossie's loyalty. Likewise, despite his rages, his gambling, his
drinking and his womanising, he was a good provider to his family.
The house which he built on the corner of Walcott and William
Streets, North Perth (though the family always called it Mt Lawley,
which in fact begins on the other, Northern side of Walcott Street) is a
reminder of this.
Against this softer side must be placed his impetuousness - for instance, the sudden anger which could rise up from nowhere and make him lay his riding-whip about a man, or throw punches at men much bigger than himself (the latter, again, family legend).

Much has been made of the idea that conflict is central to a play. Of course it is; a large explosion at the start of a play - such as, in mystery plays, a murder - which starts the action, which consists of the playing out of the implications and energies of that explosion. A conflict, however, must have its roots in some underlying or deep-rooted Opposition. This Opposition must predate the actual explosion of conflict which starts the play or Action rolling. In the case of Thossie I believe that the Opposition which predates the play - the backstory, if you like - is internal.

Thossie was a man bedeviled. He was riven by deep inner conflicts. I will never know the full extent of them. I can guess; or I can access my own deep inner conflicts and then reason that, as his grandson, mine might be similar to his; or I can use my imagination. In fact, I have tried all three techniques to try and divine the mental turmoil and anguish which moved my grandfather. I believed contradiction was the key to Thossie's character - internal oppositions which could never be resolved. The gentle Irish dreamer and player of pipes who was also the idealistic Marxist who was also the ruthless capitalist.

I had to make a choice as to what precisely was the nature and the cause of Thossie's internal division. Was he divided between the "black" self of his possibly-aboriginal or possibly-Kanaka father and his Irish mother? Was he torn between his working class roots and his
new, wealthy situation after the elopement with Elizabeth? I could only guess; and I guessed that both were true. So, I chose to assert - and what a terrible assumption, to assert "truths" about a dead man who cannot answer back, who cannot correct me? - "Truths" which will go on the record as truths, even though they are no more than assumptions.

Thossie may not have loomed large in the history of Western civilisation, but he was my grandfather, and he had only one life, and in any case my responsibility as biographer was to seek the truth of the man, of his life, and of course also of his inner conflict - since that was to be part of my approach to him. Aware of my responsibility I chose to believe that Thossie had a deep complex about his father being black. I chose in fact to believe that his father was black - or Kanaka, or maybe even Chinese - and that this traumatised Thossie almost beyond endurance. All his eccentricities, such as those of his dress as described by my mother in Appendix 7, could be attributed to such an inner conflict. His irascibility, his temper, his criminality can all be explained by such a complex.

On top of that, and is if that were not enough, Thossie became enamoured of a woman who brought him considerable wealth. Suddenly, this working class roughhouse boy was rich. He could buy and sell. He could live in a grand house. He was suddenly a player in the market place. The conflict brought on by his guilt at his "abandonment" of his working class origins, of his mates who fought with his in the Sudan, in South Africa and at Gallipolli, must have been immense. As a child I had no way of understanding this. Neither, evidently, did my mother when she wrote those notes at my request. I have chosen to see Thossie, then, in these terms; a man divided by
shame about his race and guilt about his abandonment of his roots. If flaws are what drive people to be over-achievers, then Thossie was twice-driven. We have Opposition; we have conflict; we have Action; we have a play!

As a writer and as a man I was deeply mistrustful of any attempt to understand the human mind. Such attempts may lay the foundations for psychological fascism, where a certain view of the mind becomes obligatory. I preferred a scenario where numerous opposing views of how our minds work jostle for our attention, no one view ever becoming sufficiently dominant to shoulder out the others, and any view remaining always open to challenge in a democratic intellectual world. I did not suggest that attempts to understand the mind should not be made, only that they should be put forward, apologetically, into a crowded intellectual marketplace.

The human mind, I believed, was either far too complex, or far too simple, to admit of final analysis. I rejected the idea that all human behavior is deterministic. I rejected the idea that the roots or causes of human behavior can be known with certainty. So, in outlining my approach to the depiction of Thossie’s character, I chose to keep it simple and relate his known behavior to his known background. There were severe limits to what I knew of his behavior. This whole play is mythical if by that is meant that I had only one source - or set of sources - of information; my family. In other words, it is apocryphal and anecdotal, not historical - and that most of my limited information about him came to me during my childhood. Heaven only knows what I have forgotten. But there are even more severe limits to what I knew of his background and childhood - which is almost nothing. So in
making up a something to replace this nothing, I was making what amounted to arbitrary choices.

In the theatre we often use the expression “playing against”. We say an actor “plays against” another. A playwright pits the Protagonist “against” the Antagonist. And we can also say that a metaphor in a play “plays against” (or in opposition to) the main story. Does this mean that the metaphor is part of the subplot, which is sometimes said to “play against” the main plot? Not necessarily. A metaphor is in a sense displayed against the main story. Its very existence in a play calls into question the main story. An audience member is inclined to ask; what does that metaphor mean in relation to the main story? Suppose the main story is, for example; “this is the story of a man who behaves selfishly out of fear but learns, when a friend removes his fear, that service to others is more satisfying than service to oneself”.

The metaphor in such a play might be, let us say, a journey, an absence. The man may be on a journey - perhaps, about to move from a small town where he has lived selfishly and gained power within a company, to a big town and the head office of that company - where he intends to behave selfishly again in order to take over that company. There may be journey motifs in the telling of the dramatic narrative. A niece may journey to visit him. His house may be in flux as workmen pack his belongings. He may even be staying in a motel until his flight, which is in a few days time. An old man may warn him about travel - a warning he will probably misunderstand, but the audience will not.

The journey Thossie should have been taking - should in the sense that the playwright thought he should - was a journey toward self-realisation, better understanding; in short, a journey inward to
discover his real self. The journey he was actually undertaking was a journey outward; to power, wealth, arrogance. So the metaphor of the play would be working in a sense not so much against the story, but in opposition to it if by that is meant that the metaphor interweaves with the main story, but never becomes synonymous with it.

In creating characters I did not follow, or even make conscious use of, any of the theories of psychology which have come into existence and been fashionable during the late 19th and 20th centuries. I did this not in order to reject these theories (Freud, Jung and so on). As to their value I did not consider myself competent to make a judgement.

I put them to one side because I saw no way in which they could usefully aid my quest - which was to imagine the life of a man, not to analyse it. In imagining this man's life I could conjure up what I liked - provided, as I said above, that there was the thinnest thread of evidence to support it - and I could leave out what I pleased; provided that it was not one of the few things which I did actually know about this man.

Moreover, it may be that psychology - or character - is less important in the epic than in other kinds of, more naturalistic, plays. The epic being concerned with the community, the tribe and so on, tends to deal less in the individual's motivation, neuroses, and so forth. Later in the process I did make the decision to include an element of character investigation in the play, despite the widespread belief that character is marginal at best in epic drama, and that epic dramatic characters are, therefore, closer to stereotypes, or perhaps avatars, than to characters as that term is used in climactic drama.
Thossie was on a journey all his life. From Queensland bush to Western Australian city. From poverty to affluence. With urgency, with guile, with determination he pursued this journey until that very urgency, his very determination, brought him down. "Pride goes before a fall" is too simple a description of his story, because much more than pride is involved, and the pride that is involved is very complex, including in its makeup so much fear, so much envy, and so much guilt. Or, at least, so I chose to believe, in order to have a play rather than merely a set of memories and myths.

In this context, I began to think about the language that Thossie used. I remembered him only as a child, and with me he always spoke gently, genially, jovially even, as adults do with children. Yet I imagined that a publican with a tough working class background such as Thossie's would have spoken very roughly indeed in other circumstances. He would have had to.

I did not put this into the script in the form of stage directions. But I assumed that an actor would want to interpret the character that way; and that is certainly how I felt this character should be interpreted. On the subject of language; Thossie would have spoken in common-sense, down to earth, no-nonsense terms to his son; just as my father later spoke to me. He would have said things like "there is a lot of cant and bullshit in this life, Son." Cant was a favorite term of my father's, and I was sure he had got it from Thossie. This is one of those "educated guesses" I was obliged to make in compiling this portrait of a man about whom I knew so little.
The Play as Action.

Plays have often been called "Actions". I tell my students that plays contain - or consist of - action small "a" and action capital "A". Action small "a" simply means this or that particular action through the play. Thus, a character may pause - this is an action; h/she may lift a glass to their lips - an action; they may then say "no" quietly and firmly - this is an action. Capital "A" Action, however, refers to the play as a whole - an integrated system of sequential, causally linked actions which together constitute the play itself.

A play seen as Action is dynamic. It has a dynamic animus and it is its own Dynamic. Dynamic and play, in this broad sense, are one. A play is nothing without its sense of forward motion - which is another way of saying action, since unless we act in the world, or as a philosopher might say pro-ject ourselves into the world, we would be static, i.e., dead. It is impossible to live without acting, and similarly it is impossible to create a play which has no action, or is anything else but action.

In contrast to the play of actions, where one action opposes another and in doing so creates the tension - i.e. the unresolved action - of the play, is the play of words, where words are merely clever ripostes, not necessarily carrying the action of the play forward. Another variant of this is the "character-driven" play, as distinct from the "plot-driven" play.

A playwright, therefore, must write each action cleanly and without inflection. "Inflection" in this context simply means the attempt to instil meaning or significance into actions. Or to impose it on them. Actions speak for themselves. It is the speeches given by a succession of
uninflected actions which creates the dramatic story. In the case of this play, for instance, I tried merely to show Thossie. I showed him doing this or that, I showed him saying this or that. I did not put into his mouth my words. I did not inject into his actions my ideas or meanings. As for the meaning of human action, I believed that a dramatist does not speculate or explain, being content merely to show action, as truthfully as possible, and leave the interpretation to others.

It is not easy to keep dramatic action uncluttered. That is why it is often necessary to workshop plays after they have been written - so that the playwright, the director, and the dramaturg can see what action is really being played. The action is not played just by the actor in character - it should not be played inside the head of the playwright - as in poetry - it should be played inside the head of the member of the audience who is the person for whom the playwright must write.

By seeing and hearing what my characters do, my audience can identify with those characters and by doing so, can use what those characters do to deal with their own griefs, fears and hopes, which they bring to the performance of a play. The play lives only in performance, in my view, unlike a piece of literature; plays are not primarily literature; the play script is a blueprint for an Action, which only lives, or acts, before a live audience. Therefore I sought not to interpose myself between the character and the audience. A play, as I saw it, was an opportunity to take an audience on a journey, allowing them to make what they will of that journey according to who they are and what they bring to the performance or Action. They are "part of the Action". In answer to the question "where's the Action?" I replied "in the mind of the audience".
Approaching the Climactic Period of the Play.

I was now entering upon that part of the story which was most painful to me. In terms of time I had come up to the years of World War II. Thossie was at his most prosperous, despite his huge gambling problem. He had been posted at Tattersall’s, which is the bookies’ club, for non-payment of his gambling debts. This is the ultimate humiliation for a gambler, and one which they seek at all costs to avoid. However, his huge wealth and cashflow enabled him to ride this problem.

From now on I was writing of events which occurred within my own lifetime. The events involved my own father. I faced a moral dilemma; whether, in the name of art, and the clearing of my own past - to fearlessly and honestly call a spade a spade, even if that meant vilification of my dead father who, whatever his faults, never denigrated me to the world, or whether I should skirt around the facts. My problem, then, was now no longer technical - how best to fashion the play - but moral. On the other hand, since I was not calling these people by their real names, and since lie had now become, in these pages, art, and since, in any case, all of them are long dead and so are most of the people who knew them; why not tell the truth and call it fiction? For better or for worse, and even though this was a work of fiction, I could not bring myself to tell deliberate lies. I must say it as I saw it, otherwise not only would it not bring about my own emotional catharsis from these events, but it would not lead to dramatic catharsis either, since although fictional drama may in one sense be lies, lies in drama will never convince.
Emerging and Recurrent Images in the Play.

I next wanted to look at some of the images I was creating in the play, and in particular at one recurrent image. I refer to the scenes where I, as Narrator, stand on a spot where some historical incident connected with my grandfather took place.

This was at once both an artistic and a personal matter. In a project of this sort, in which I was writing about events which had enormous consequences for me, it was difficult to separate the two. To write on so personal a subject challenged my capacity for scholarly detachment and forced me to try to be two people - the man who inherited these events, and the artist who wrote about them. As a man, when I did in fact stand on sites where incidents in my grandfather’s life occurred, it moved me very deeply. I felt closer to him than I did on other occasions. Even though his death heralded a new beginning for me, and coincided with a new era for Australia, the Elizabethan era (Elizabeth II was crowned that same year, and I lay on my grandfather’s bed, weeks after his death, listening with my parents to the radio broadcast of the coronation from London), I felt a very powerful need to be connected with him, and to feel that in some way I continued what was best in him; a tradition which he started. Because I regret not having had the chance to know him as a man, to listen to him and learn from him, I grasped at the opportunities to stand on spots where he did things as a way of knowing him, as if I could somehow worm my way into his mind by doing so.

As an artist, I also wanted to worm my way into his mind. Here, however, the relationship was more clinical, I hope more scientific, more objective. I believed I could separate the two. When I stood as a
man on the spot where my grandfather took a whip to a man who had harmed him, I looked carefully around me to see what my grandfather might have seen.

The old Railway Station was still there, and the spot where the incident was supposed to have occurred was about half way between the entrance of the Railway Station and the Beaufort Street Bridge, and on the North side of Wellington Street. Right next to me as I stood there was a brand new multi-story carpark, landscaped with palms. That was of course not there when my grandfather was alive, having been built about 1990. The trees, however, were of a type which he would have recognized as common in the Perth area.

The Railway Station itself had been painted during the 1980s, whereas in my grandfather’s time it had been brick-coloured, and sooty and dirty from all the soot coming from the steam trains of his day. The telegraph poles would have been different, too. In his time there were high wooden poles carrying dozens of wires - each wire capable of carrying only one conversation, or one electrical charge. When I stood there the phone and power lines had been undergrounded, and the only poles were graceful curving cement light poles.

On the south side of Wellington Street was a row of old buildings, two or three stories high, with shops and awnings. These would have looked so similar in his day that, if he were able to look at them now, he would not at first notice any difference (later, he might notice that the signs were differently painted, or the goods in the windows different, or that the windows themselves were of a more modern design and made from aluminium, not wood). One building, however, was missing, and at the time when I stood there the site was a vacant
lot. This had been the Grand Cinema, fronting Murray Street, the next street south parallel to Wellington Street, with shops at its back. Just further up, and on the East corner of Forrest Place, used to stand the large Boans Department Store. Boans was taken over by Myer during the 1980s, and the old building demolished about 1987. A new Myer store stands there today, but at the time when I stood on the Site - which was in 1990 - the Myer building was still being constructed.

The traffic was very different, of course. The roads in my grandfather’s day, even in the centre of town, were uncluttered and traffic moved slowly. There were a great many horse-drawn vehicles such as brewery drays, bread vans, and just plain sulkies driven by ordinary citizens. It was, indeed, a sulky in which my grandfather was seated at the time of the incident - he disliked driving, and only later bought a motor car. There would have been more, not fewer, pedestrians on the footpaths, however, because so many people then did not have vehicles at all, and because Perth CBD was the only large shopping centre in the whole conurbation. There would have been trams, too, right along Wellington Street; and plenty of them because a number of tram routes converged into Wellington Street - just as the bus routes do today - because it runs alongside the Railway Station.

My grandfather, then, would have seen a very different cityscape in the 1920s, which is when I believed this incident took place. But there is another sense in which he would have seen differently. Because of his power and wealth, and because he knew so many people in the town, he would have seen Perth - and its streets - as very familiar to him. Moreover, he might have seen the city almost as if it were a personal fiefdom.
I believed that Thossie would have felt very secure in whatever he did in the streets of Perth. Knowing as he did that he had good friends among the Ministers in Government and among the senior public servants - not to mention the many police who were in his pocket - he would not have expected to suffer any consequences from an act of violence like this.

The recurrent images, then, are of difference. There was no way to reconcile these locations as they had been in Thossie's time and as they were when I stood upon these sites. I could feel closer to him and to his story by doing so, but I could not bring back the past.

**The World as Male Construct.**

I began considering the issue of the world as male construct. Since my play was about a male, and a dominant, controlling, chauvinist one at that, it could be said that Thossie's world was his construct - or the construct of the male group to which he belonged. It has been suggested that one of the ways in which males construct a world which reflects their values is through the word. According to this belief, if I understood it correctly, the word is the tool - tools also being male extensions - through which, and by means of which, the male constructs his value-reflecting world.

This involves the theory of logocentrism, which as I understand it involves the belief that words have equivalence the things to which they refer; or have some necessary relation to those things. To what extent then am I portraying a man who is part of a male plot to construct a world based upon his (shared) male values (which means male heterosexual values), using the tools of words which are seen as
shaping reality because they equal it, or have some necessary relation to it?

I am a heterosexual man. I am a male whose sexuality finds release in sexual activity with females. I am married, and marriage is seen by some as part of the male construct, and I am accustomed to projecting myself into the world, to use Simone de Beauvoir's phrase (de Beauvoir, 1954, 119) so as to achieve goals which I set myself; such as the goal of completing this DCA project. Does this mean that I, consciously or unconsciously, mimicked the male world of my grandfather and sought, through my use of words in this DCA project, to further the cause of that world or construct?

I would certainly not wish to be a part of any such project. Since my early teens - about the time when my grandfather was on his deathbed - I have been in rebellion against male domination and male authority; in short, the patriarchal enterprise. I have always seen this DCA project as a means of subverting the power of the patriarch - both within my own mind as a form of liberation from my own earlier conditioning, and also for my reader. I have been seeking here to deconstruct the patriarchal mystique by this examination of a patriarch whose mystique was considerable, and who was known to me.\(^{10}\)

Having said that, it remains probable that there was a bias - possibly unconscious - in my words, as in the words of my grandfather. There are assumptions as to how words reflect reality, and as to how words shape that reality. One of the most obvious of those biases was of course my assumption that logic is the basis, or the best basis, of human thought. I could not prove that logic was best without using logic to do so. My logic proved that I could not prove my logic.
I tried to be aware of this bias. I tried to be aware of it in my grandfather's words and actions. I tried to differentiate between the interests of my grandfather and those of the women in his life - his wife, his maid, his mistress(es). Sometimes those interests seemed to be the same - for instance, the safe upbringing and sound education of his and Henrietta's two sons.

Of course, Thossie himself, in this play, was a construct, because the entire play was a reconstruction of events past, events for which there was now very little evidence. As I was a male, using words to reconstruct another male, I laid myself open to deconstruction by critics, and I accepted that; as I accepted that these critics may have insights which were denied me. If Thossie as character in this play was not a real Thossie, but only the idea of a Thossie, then the actor playing Thossie was as real a Thossie as we were going to get, now. "My" Thossie, my construct of that name - who only "exists" when the play is performed - was now the true Thossie, since the original will never return to life.

Having thought this through, at least to this extent, I found that my confidence in my character and in my play had risen. My original thesis, that I could re-construct a man's life, filling in the lost parts from my imagination, seemed to hold up under analysis. Provided I realised that my Thossie was a construct - a fantasy, in effect - I could enjoy creating him; he could become more and more a work of art and not of life - and in any case art has its own life.
An Approach to the Creative Process at Work.

At this stage I felt I should perhaps inform the reader of these Notes about the creative process which I follow, from a practical point of view. In the first instance, of course, all my ideas just "come to me". Obviously, they do not come unbidden. I have, at some previous time, been wrestling with a problem in the play and trying to find a solution. Later - perhaps in bed at night, which forces me to decide whether to get up there and then and write notes in a bedside notepad, or trust that I will remember the insight in the morning (I never do) - perhaps in a train, in the car, on the toilet. I have wished to have one of those pen and pad sets which work under water, for when I get ideas in the shower.

This, in extremely brief form, is the theory of creativity with which I had become familiar - from forgotten readings, from conversations, or from reflection: first the brain wrestles with a problem; then the brain rests; suddenly the solution "comes" to the brain. This is how it works with me. Sometimes, while I have a problem in a play waffling around in the back of my brain, I will suddenly see something in life - another person's problem, a situation, an item in a newspaper, whatever - which "throws light on" my problem and shows me my solution.

Often, things which I tend not to notice, mostly, in my daily round - things such as women's fashions, or building cornices, or the details of the latest scandal in the Royal Family - will on one occasion, and without apparent reason, draw themselves to my attention; so that, for instance, I might pick up a soapie magazine when normally I never read them, and sure enough, there is an article about, say, the guilt of people who leave their partners - and that is precisely the nature of the
problem of one of my major characters. I read the article, and it contains information which helps me to solve my dramatic problem. Then I can go back to not reading soapie magazines. When the idea comes to me, it may be in one of several forms. It may be a line, or a few lines - sometimes a whole scene - of dialogue. It may just be a phrase or sentence. Whatever it is I write it down, in the first instance, in a small notepad which I carry with me always in my hip pocket. This note pad doubles as my wallet - I carry cash, cards and basic information (such as my credit card numbers and so on, ) in there too; so I am never without it.

Here is an example of a note I wrote in my pocket notepad on approximately 15th February 1994;

"That scene with Gwenn King where she's trying to slash her wrists and John was fighting her; As long as he fought, she tried; if he stopped fighting, she stopped trying".

Now that note related to an actual incident I was told about in 1961 when I was living in Kings Cross. I was using that dynamic where she tried to kill herself only when he was preventing her from doing so as an example of one of the dynamics which can occur in life: a pattern. I thought it was worth writing down because I might be able to apply it to a project I was working on at the time, a stage play about a relationship. This is a pretty typical note of the type which I often jot down. I am always looking for the archetypal; the incident which reveals itself as the manifestation of a recurring pattern or dynamic; and also for the paradoxical, for paradox interests me particularly (probably the reason why I am so attracted to my grandfather's story). I might have used that incident as the basis for a rather powerful
dramatic scene. One day, I probably will; but the play in which it would find its natural place has not yet been developed. This showed, though, how ideas might come to me.

Now I have a note on a piece of paper, a page of my pocket notepad. Later - perhaps when I am debriefing the notepad once it is full - I will transfer that note to a piece of paper, and place that piece of paper in one of the many manila folders in my files. Each of these manila folders contains material toward a play, film or novel. One day I will perhaps decide to work seriously on one of the projects. I will open that manila folder and read through all the notes on bits of paper. There might be scores of them, or only a dozen, and they might have been accumulating for several years. If I like what I see I will begin re-ordering the notes, rewriting them to be more succinct. In time, I might attempt a first go at an outline; crude, insufficient, rough. Then I might write a longer, more inclusive outline. Finally I might become enthused with the project and write a third, comprehensive outline. Then, all those notes on bits of paper which have not yet been incorporated into the outline will be labeled "A", "B" and so on; and if more than 26, "AA" "BB" and so on. These letters will then be placed at the point in the outline where I want the scene or idea contained in that note to be introduced into the script. In that way, I now have a long outline which incorporates every thought I have had about that project (of course, more occur to me, all the time, as I am writing the outlines).

This is an enjoyable part of the creative process; it's all about ideas, thoughts, themes, what I want to say, the building up of my characters, choice snatches of dialogue and so on. The next stage is the most enjoyable of all; I write the first draft of the script, using my outline as a
guide; I have it open before me, just to the left of my word processor. This first draft may, and often does, differ from my outline; but it is pure creation; the thoughts and ideas and snatches of dialogue now flow and coalesce into a script, a whole, an integrity; a work of art. However good or bad it is going to be, the tale will be told during this process. This Journal, of course, is a record of one such creative process.

The Maryborough Digression.

Early in the process of my research I gained the impression that Thossie had come from Maryborough in Queensland. I knew, from family legend, that he came from Northern or central Queensland. In fact, as I now know following my research field trip to Mackay, he was born in Rockhampton and worked in Mackay as a young man. At the time I wrote the first pages of this script I did not know that, and pictured him growing up in Maryborough. Someone in my family - probably my grandmother who used to talk to me at great length about the "old days" - once mentioned Maryborough. Then, years ago, I happened to read - I no longer remember where - about a great rugby Union player named Tommy Gorman who was at his peak during the 1920s; and he came from Maryborough.

In the 1980s I became friendly, through my ex-wife, with a woman named Mary Gorman. Because of our surname we naturally got to talking about family. Mary was at that time a journalist with the Rural Department of ABC Radio and travelled around New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland quite a bit. She told me that there was a
“clan” of Gormans living around Maryborough, but that she had no connection with them, having come from another clan of Gormans along the Murray River near the Victorian border.

This all meshed together. In fact, as my research on Maryborough discovered (letters to Council, Library, Historical Society), there are very few Gormans in Maryborough, certainly not a clan; and most of those are recent immigrants from Ireland. Therefore, all my information was wrong. It was just an impression built up over time as a result of misinformation. And of course, as I now know, Thossie took his surname from his mother; so he would not in any case have been associated with any clan of Gormans.

Manpower

I should explain something about Manpower, for which my father was Legal Officer in Western Australia. Manpower had immense power in Australian society during World War 11. It was set up and run, I believe, by “Red Ted” Theodore, former Treasurer with the Scullin Commonwealth Government.

Manpower was set up to mobilise all those citizens who were not actually combatants. So, a butcher could be told to shut up his shop because from now on he would be providing meat only to the local Army camp. A clerk could be told to leave her employment at, say, Bunnings Timber Company to be compulsorily transferred to a similar clerical job in the Department of Defence. All citizens could be mobilised for the war effort; the war must be a total war. This was the war in which the distinction between warriors and civilians effectively disappeared. Naturally enough, no one wanted to “be Manpowered.”
The potential for corruption therefore becomes obvious. If a Manpower official could be persuaded that a citizen was needed at h/her present job .. a bribe was the usual method of persuasion.

**Pride Goes Before A Fall**

My father and grandfather were caught because they arrogantly thought that they could not be touched by the law. Such was the power of the Irish-Australian community in the Labour Governments of that period that many people in Western Australia felt they were above the law. In a sense, my father and grandfather fell foul of the growing power of the Commonwealth. They were above the law - State law. They could bribe any official to get away with almost anything. It has to be remembered also that in those days WA was both remote and parochial. The new Commonwealth Police - Now the Federal Police - had just been formed as part of the war effort, and one of their jobs was to root out corruption in Manpower. My father and grandfather did not take note of this new element in the situation.

**The Cards Scene with the Bank Manager.**

In light of the above, I looked now at the scene where Robert and Dawn d'Arcy play poker with the man whom I have called Hal Winstead, the Manager of the Bank of New South Wales Head Office, after Hal had issued the marked notes which Harrington was to hand to Robert d'Arcy, and before they were actually handed over. What actually happened, according to family legend which I heard principally from my mother, was that they played cards as normal. Later Robert realised what coolness the manager must have had, knowing what he knew. The manager knew that he could not cancel the card game - for fear
that he would not be able to carry off being "normal" - because Robert might suspect something and fail to go ahead with taking the bribe next day.

Moreover, it was imperative for Robert to go ahead with normal life. If he varied his pattern in a small city like Perth, which then had a population probably not much more than a quarter of a million, and where everybody knew everybody, questions might be asked. Well, they might not, too; but a guilty man always suspects that everyone knows his guilty secret. Here is an example of how art does - and, I suspect, must - mythologise life; make it larger, expand it, make it archetypal. It is almost an example of the way realism operates, I believe, as a heightened form of naturalism. The actual scene would have contained tremendous tensions for the bank manager - probably not for his wife, who would probably not have known - and none at all for Robert and Dawn, my father and mother. So on one level it's a naturalistic scene - life as she is lived, humdrum, normal, reassuring - and on another level it's a scene charged with dramatic tension. In reality, the scene was charged with dramatic tension only for the bank manager. But now that a version of that scene is to be put in front of an audience, the audience, too, will experience that dramatic tension. It is always said that characters must not know too much about themselves or the patterns they are weaving. So my characters must know only what they need to know in order to play their actions. On the surface level, the naturalistic level, all characters are playing the same action; to have fun, to enjoy themselves.

On the realist level, if you like, the level which contains the dramatic tension, Robert and Dawn and Veronica are playing that action, while Hal alone is playing the action "to deceive". Or, if you like, the
principal action "to appear to have a good time" while also playing the sub-action "to deceive". He, therefore, is the engine of the scene, dramatically, and he must move it along. In real life, they were not "playing a scene". So there was no necessity for him to move anything along; except in so far as having a good time required everyone to crack jokes, laugh a lot, banter, and so on, as people do at an event of that sort. But in the dramatic scene which I wrote, to be viewed by an audience, it was dramatically necessary for the prime mover in the scene, i.e. the character who carried or played the spinal action of the scene (which in dramatic terms was "to deceive") to be the one who moved things along. Otherwise the scene would seem flat, despite having such powerful dramatic tension caused by the fact that the audience had information which Robert d'Arcy and Dawn d'Arcy did not.

So, I created a scene which was a heightened version of what may actually have happened - about which I had very little information indeed. In my scene, both Hal Winstead and his wife Veronica made remarks which, with hindsight, and with the knowledge which the audience has, were clearly provocative and pointed. "Watch what Hal's got up his sleeve" warns Veronica. "You're going to come a cropper" predicts Hal. It all appeared to be in the context of the card game, but the audience would put another interpretation upon it, thus carrying forward, by their understanding, the dramatic action of the scene. This sort of scene, where the audience knows more than a character, is of course referred to using the term "dramatic irony". I did choose to make Veronica "in the know".

The scene must also have a quality of inevitability about it. What I was in fact creating here, apart from being an epic play, was also a tragedy.
This was something I should have seen earlier. Now that I write those words I realise how true they are. I was at the time reading a play by Racine, "Phaedra", which is based upon a classic text and, according to Racine, closely follows the classic form. I was also writing a play with at least some affinities with Greek drama, in that it contained a sense of inevitability about its tragedy.

The tragic characters, Robert and Thomas d'Arcy, were increasingly looking like characters who were fated to be destroyed, as if by the Gods - or at least, in more humanist terms, by character.

Is tragedy a necessary element of the epic? Can a play have epic qualities without being tragic? This is a discussion perhaps more suitable for the Thesis than for this Journal; but certainly, at first sight, there might seem to be some truth in the assertion. So I included in the scene, in order to raise it above the merely naturalistic and into the more heightened element of realism, those jokes which, for the audience, had a double meaning. It was by virtue of these jokes that Hal Winstead got through what must surely have been a night of torture for him. In the real situation the bank manager and his wife were good friends of my father and mother; so this night was the night when the bank manager destroyed a friendship, destroyed a promising legal career, and destroyed the happiness of innocent people like Elizabeth d'Arcy and Dawn d'Arcy. A tremendous burden of responsibility to fall on one pair of shoulders. As a bank manager, he had to be an actor also. And a man who, in effect, stood in judgement on other peoples' lives. The tragic sense in this is palpable and it would be hard to over-estimate it.
Probably, in the real situation, the jokes with double meanings were not made. I do not know. The manager would have avoided them. He probably did not have enough imagination to even think of them. Imagination is a handicap for a bank manager. But I was writing a play, not a history. My play must have a life of its own, come to life, evoke life, present life’s issues in a starkly contrasting way to an audience so as to challenge them, to force them to think and to come to terms with moral dilemmas. Drama, even when based upon life, is not life. It is a thing of its own, dancing on its own stage, answering to its own imperatives. It must grasp and hold an audience and there is no other law of drama - if by law we mean a rule which may not, at any time, be broken.

**Personal Doubts and Hesitations.**

The section where my father was arrested was very difficult for me to write. Despite the fact that my father and grandfather, by their actions, made life much harder for me I felt a natural loyalty to him and to my grandfather. They were the only family I was going to get and I began to feel deeply disloyal writing this play - even if, as seemed probable during its writing, it would be seen and/or read by only a handful of people connected with a University in a town whose existence I was not even aware of when these events were happening. Should I discontinue writing the project altogether? As I approached the writing of the vital, climactic scenes, doubts assailed me and for some months I was unable to write at all.

To what extent could an audience of people in the Eastern States - people who were children or not born when these events occurred -
understand the events of this story? All they can hope to do is relate my story to something that has happened in their own time - WA Inc, perhaps. And the comparison is only partly apt. I am acutely aware that Wollongong in the 1990s is a million light years away from Perth in 1943. Its population of about 300,000 is about the same as Perth’s at that time, and both have mountains behind, beaches in front - but there are no further similarities.

Perth was a capital city of a State so far removed from the influence of Canberra as to be almost a separate country for all practical purposes.

In 1933, ten years before these events, West Australians had voted in favor of separation from the Commonwealth - the Commonwealth whose police were now hounding my family. There was thus considerable sympathy for Thossie and Robert. It had only been the votes of Eastern Staters working on the Goldfields which had stopped the vote from reaching the required two-thirds majority in the 1933 Referendum. Perth was an Anglo-Celtic agrarian capital city with a large middle class and little industry. There were many old families with considerable power. The heritage was British. And then, as now, larrikins were admired and rule-breakers occasioned mirth rather than ostracism.

I had made this play the subject of my DCA because I felt I needed that extra push from outside to make me complete it. Now, as I neared completion, I wondered if I had done the right thing. While it may be true that artists, when writing a play or novel, often make laboratories, as it were, of their own emotions and personal trials, it seemed to me to be quite another thing to expose these emotions and trials through Annotations as well as through a work of literature, where the
subjectivity of the emotions and trials could be disguised, to some extent, by a process of fictionalisation. Nevertheless, after a time off for reflection, I continued writing, and in due course finished the play.

This Play as Literature.

Is a play designed solely or primarily for public performance? Don’t many directors and writers believe that a play only exists at the moment of its production? Many other people, including Katharine Brisbane, Australia’s premier play publisher, believe that drama can exist also, and equally, as literature. They urge people to read drama for the pleasure of the reading, not merely to imagine what the play might look like in performance. Accordingly, although this is a play script, I intend to take the view henceforth that this playscript is also a piece of literature, and to ask that it be perceived that way.

My Feelings on Finishing First Draft

When I finished the first, very rough draft of the playscript I wondered what feelings I might have, after four years of work. I had expected a number of things at this moment. That I might never be able to write again, having finished the story which is most intimate to me, most personal, most fundamental. That I would experience a great sense of let-down. But in fact I felt very little. It was a little like my lacks of emotion when standing on spots around Perth where major events in my grandfather’s life had occurred. I was pleased to have reached this milestone. From now on I could feel that I was rolling downhill. I felt as creative in my other work as ever. The fact that I’d been trying for years to get this piece of work out, but always stopping part way
through, did not seem at this moment to have been significant. Besides, I would not really be finished until I finished the rewrites.

The Theme.

The first one that came to mind, on reviewing the first draft, was the theme of healing. This was a theme that applied not to the protagonist, Thossie, or even to any of the other main participants in these events, but to myself as the inheritor of all this strife. Is it possible for someone to be healed from the scars of past events by revisiting the past and reawakening memories of that past? Recently a friend of mine said he would never return to his home town of Fremantle because of painful incidents that happened to him there when his marriage broke up. I replied to the effect that I always believed in going back; otherwise you cannot go forward.

Having gone back over this painful family past, was I now in a better position to go forward? In other words, was I healed? If all the pain of the family had flowed into me, the only child of Robert and only grandson of Thossie, had I now released that pain not only on my own behalf, but also on theirs? As I said above, I did not feel anything very powerful, yet I had a sense of satisfaction at having at last “got it out”. Whether or not this story needed to be told, I needed to tell it. So it was therapy for me, whether or not it may also succeed as art.

That whole question of art as therapy is a vexed one. Some critics say that writers should not write autobiographically; this is mere self-indulgence; writers should research what readers want, and write that.
I have not done that with this play. I wrote it to heal myself. I wrote it as a DCA thesis.

Can the past be healed? My whole experience, of trying to "go back" to my own past suggests that it cannot. But a person such as myself, living in the present, can come to terms with it and in a sense lay it to rest, having examined it from every angle. But to be purged of the past, in the sense that Aristotle used the term "purge" - I think not. Their pain will always be my pain and I cannot escape it. I understand it better, but that only makes me want to reach out to them and to tell them how to live their lives less self-destructively. Because, ultimately, this is the story of a man who destroyed himself.

Focus on the Women

Not enough attention, I felt, had been given to the women. As some recent research has indicated Australian women, even when they did not occupy the high places, were still very much part of history in every area. In a second draft I would allow the women more voice - not only to comment, but also to pursue their own goals - while always remembering that this is Thossie’s story.

Three years into this project I read the Ph.D. thesis of Sue Rowley, a Senior Lecturer in our Faculty. Apart from being a very interesting deconstruction of selected Australian paintings in terms of their sexual politics, it set me thinking about my own thesis. Her theme was Journeys; the journeys of women in Australian art. She seems to me to
be suggesting that women had much more outward, journey-based lives than had previously been recognized.

I began thinking about the journey of Elizabeth. Having started out to write my grandfather’s story, I had seen her only in relation to him; which is what many of the painters did whose works were analysed by Sue Rowley. Now I began to think more about Elizabeth in her own right. Not to make her the central character; but to see her as going on a journey of her own, not merely as an adjunct to Thossie. What precise effect that would have, I did not yet know. I am glad that I read Rowley when I did, and believed that my own project would be the richer for it. As discussed above, it may be that this demonstrates the way in which information which may assist the artist becomes available to the artist at the time when h/she needs it: or, rather, that the artist notices this particular piece of information only when she/he needs it.

I did not seek to emphasise gender issues in this Doctorate. Yet I could not avoid them; nor did I wish to. My grandfather, according to feminist ideology, could not be viewed sympathetically. He was an unreconstructed man’s unreconstructed man. As my own life had been a progression from comfortable, blind acceptance of the myth of male superiority (in the 1950s) to a complete denial of any such concept and a passionate support of gender equity, so my grandfather's life entailed no such progression. He ended his life with the same views on gender issues as he began it; nor had he, in my view, at any time ever examined those views. I formed this opinion based upon what my mother and my father told me about him. Incidents which are shown in the script, such as when he tells my mother to “get back in the kitchen where you belong, woman”, make his attitude clear enough; that incident was related to me by my mother. Still, as a communist,
would he not have been subjected to feminist ideas? Was not feminism one strand of Marxism, particularly in Germany, and in Russia in the early years after the Revolution? Were there not major female figures on the Communist side in the Spanish Civil War (which my grandfather would no doubt have followed) such as La Passionara, for instance? Was not Rosa Luxembourg a leading Marxist with feminist views?

Rather than speculate idly as to why my grandfather did not take on board any of this, I could only assume - and assumption, in this Doctorate, must sometimes fill in the gaps left by time-eaten fact - that he was more influenced by his male peer society in Perth than by what was happening in the intellectual ferment of Europe. The isolation of Perth has often been remarked upon; the most isolated large European city in the world, as my father used to call it. Since my grandfather's own environment did not challenge his sexist preconceptions, he was presumably able to brush aside the example of Europe by saying "that sort of thing could never happen here". He died too soon to see how much it has happened here.

However, my grandfather's sexism raised a conflict for me which I was only now beginning to deal with in the writing of this work. If my grandfather's views on feminism differed so markedly from my own, how could I, in essence, hold him up for admiration as a pioneer figure? How could I make him the protagonist of my epic play? As protagonist, he would appear to be intended for admiration by myself as author, even if that were not my actual intention. It seemed that the answer to that must be as follows; A: I had only two grandfathers, and he was one of them. I was free to write about what I chose. In examining him, I learnt about aspects of myself. I believed very
strongly that unless we know where we come from we do not truly know who we are. We do not just invent ourselves, day by day. So, I studied my grandfather's life in order to know my own. B; an epic play does not have to have a sympathetic protagonist. An epic play, like Shakespeare's *King Lear*, can have a protagonist who is a fool to himself - and not a little knavish - but whose story illuminates us about some vital aspect of the human condition. Epic drama is not naturalistic in the same way as climatic drama, as described by Milly S. Barranger in *Understanding Plays*, (Barranger 260ff), and therefore does not need a protagonist with whom the audience member can identify, to be purged by truth and pain\(^\text{14}\) (See Theory section). C; because he was my flesh and blood I was at liberty to love him where others might not - the privilege of blood, perhaps. I was not blind to his faults. Like all larger than life, mythic characters, his faults were writ large. However if he served to tell us something about our recent, savage Australian past, his faults, like his virtues, could be dramatically constructive and socially illustrative, to positive effect.

It occurred, to me, while writing the preceding paragraphs, that my depiction of Elizabeth, now that I had completed a rough first draft of the play, was inadequate. Clara Mason, an Irish theatre director in Sydney who directed a production of *Manual Of Trench Warfare*, said that I, as a writer who in her view understood Australia, should write about a woman relating to the land in Australia\(^\text{15}\). I had wrestled with this idea ever since without ever having an image of a woman relating to the land - one which would take hold of me and force me to write the play of which that image was a part. (These images, it seems, do not have to be of climactic moments in the play; only of visually arresting moments). Again, with Elizabeth, I had tried to think of an image
which would link her to the land. Of course, one cannot force these images to come. It is the one part of the creative process which must forever remain unconscious. In the absence of any such image - and my grandmother was not a woman who had any known connection to the land apart from being a sugar grower's daughter - I had struggled to find a locus for her character; this struggle continues.

*The Male Line* as a story of the Irish in Australia.

After the completion of the first draft of *Male Line*, I began to think about the wider, Irish-Catholic community of which Thossie was a representative figure. Given my own family background it was perhaps inevitable that I would do so. I grew up with stories of being Irish, the struggles of the Irish, and the injustices perpetrated on the Irish by "Perfidious Albion", as my father called England. I am sure it would be possible to develop the theory that the oppression of the Irish produced a cult of self-destruction - alcoholism, gambling, self-mutilation etc. - much as it also did with aboriginal people in this country or with the Inuit in Alaska. Being powerless to express themselves or gain ascendancy in an Anglo-Saxon world, the Irish turned in on themselves, etc. etc. It would have been open to me to follow this line of thought further - in other words, to make of the Irish-Australian community a kind of hitherto marginalised colonial group which, in post-colonial times, began to push its way out of oppression.

For several reasons I decided not to follow this option. Firstly, I felt that the considerable success enjoyed by many Irish Australian during the colonial period would have made it difficult to portray them as an
oppressed minority beyond, perhaps, the year 1820 or thereabouts -
certainly not beyond the introduction of representative government in
the mid nineteenth century, or the aftermath of the Eureka Stockade
incident in the 1850s. Governor Bourke, and the later career of Lalor,
indicated that blocks to advancement by hardworking Irish Catholics
were few or non-existent, despite the supposed power of the Protestant
Ascendancy and the Masonic Lodge. Moreover, to take the
Annotations in this direction would be to take them away from an
examination of the creative act which, as I saw it, was their primary
function. I decided that it would be better if I simply told the story of
Thossie and left it to the reader to decide. I found the meaning of my
story outside my own telling of it; outside the figure of the Narrator;
outside this Journal, and I had no reason to doubt that a reader could
do the sam. I do believe that an artist is not always the best person to
know what h/she has written, its meaning or its wider implications. In
that belief I am in concert with a number of Postmodern thinkers. To
the extent that Thossie was a representative Irishman, therefore, and to
the extent that his actions were typical of oppressed people struggling to
find their place in a community dominated by others, this would
become apparent from the text, were I to simply tell his story as plainly
and as honestly as possible.

Writing from Pictures.

Having drawn attention to the DCA as journey, I turned now, once
more, to thinking about technique in writing the play. One thing
which had occurred to me in examining my own playwriting
technique was that I write from pictures. For instance, I would see
Thossie in a barroom brawl; I would see him laughing and joking at
Tattersall’s Club; and from these images I would write. The way in which I would do this was as follows. An image would come to me. It may be on a bus, lying in bed at night, in the shower. I mention these because it always seemed to come to me when I am relaxed - this is in line with a widely-held view of the creative process, a short description of which has been given earlier in these Annotations. According to this theory the first “leap” of the creative process occurs when the artist is relaxed, often thinking about something entirely different. It is what the artist does with this “unsolicited image”, as I will call it, that distinguishes one artist from another.

When I get the picture in my mind I do with it what, as I once read, traditional Chinese landscape painters did. They would view a scene, then go away and not return to that scene for maybe a year or more. Then, suddenly, one day they would sit at their easel - not in front of the scene - and paint the entire scene, from memory. The point is, their memory had been stylising, fixing, modifying, remembering and enhancing that image throughout the intervening time - albeit not in a conscious manner, but in some way, subconsciously.

I did something similar with this play, as I had with others. The image burned in my mind, as light burns into a photographic plate. I could not forget it or put it away. It returned again and again. Eventually I felt moved, or obliged, to do something about it. I did this because it was the only way to clear that image from my mind, to allow me to get on with other images, other thoughts. the image seemed to dominate my thinking, to demand to be acted upon. This is the way the image presented itself to me. When this happened, I believed that I was “meant” to write that story. By “meant” I mean that my brain had selected that story, that image, as one that suited my style, my interests,
my belief system, my POV, and so on. I then began writing what I saw in my mind’s eye. I described the characters as I saw them in the image. I described what they were doing. I wrote the words I heard them speak. This became the first scene. Often it was the opening scene of a play. Sometimes it was a scene which occurred well into the play. In my play *A Manual Of Trench Warfare*, for instance, the image which would not let me rest was of two men dancing, naked, in a trench while a battle raged all around them (Gorman, 64-66). At first the image was not located at Gallipoli. I made a conscious decision to locate it in Gallipoli because I thought that would increase my chances of getting the play produced - hardly a “creative” decision, yet sometimes creative decisions are of exactly this sort. Once I had located it there, I consciously decided that one of the characters was Irish because I am proud and conscious of my Irish descent, and because, having been deprived by the Anglocentric Australian education system of access to my own ethnic identity - in a way that would never be done in today’s multicultural education environment - I had always felt a strong desire to recover it, discover it, entrench it in my consciousness, and make it mine. I then decided that the play would revolve around an attempted seduction of a younger man by an older man, because this happened to me (as the younger man) in 1958, and I have always felt that that seduction - although it did not lead to me becoming homosexual - did lead, at least in part, to my becoming an artist because the older man awakened my own inner sense of myself as a creative individual with something to say.

So, in the Thossie play, the central image which occurred to me long before I began the play - and it should be remembered in this context that I had been working on this story since 1961 - was that of Thossie
storming up and down in his own house late at night, listening to marching band music which he was playing at full volume on his old wind-up gramophone - the same gramophone on which I later played recordings of cool jazz, to which I listened while pacing up and down the same room (at the time I did that I had no knowledge of Thossie’s similar habit). I wrote this image and then put the scene aside until such time as I would “catch up” to it. When I did, it seemed an unremarkable enough scene. Perhaps the reason that scene impacted on me so much was because of the looks on the faces of my mother and of my grandfather’s housemaid when they told me the story. I still remembered those looks vividly and I realise that they were frightened of Thossie.

**Ambivalence of Narrator**

At about this time, as I was commencing the second draft of *Male Line*, I began to be aware of a new problem in the construction of the play - relating, this time, to the role and function of the Narrator. The problem was that while it is acceptable for the Narrator in the play to be ambivalent toward his grandfather, it was not acceptable for the author of the play to be so. I thought the answer may be something like this: I, as author, had indeed failed to take a strong line for or against my grandfather’s behaviour. I suppose that the reason for this may have been one of the difficulties which arise in the writing of family drama; the characters are too close to the author. The author is unwilling to sit in judgement on h/her own flesh and blood. Moreover, the natural ties of affection which bind me to my grandfather’s memory made it
difficult for me to create - in this, his only biography - a memorial which was entirely negative toward him - as discussed earlier in this Journal.

An answer was forthcoming, however, and from an unexpected source. In a process which may be called coincidence, but which may be an element of the creative process which so far defies explanation, I had been reading Stephen Sewell’s play *Hate*, which was commissioned by the Bicentennial Authority in 1988, while writing the later part of the first draft of *Male Line*. This play, also about the oppressive hand of a patriarch on a family - especially on its women and on its aboriginal workers - takes a clear line to deconstruct the despotic narrative discourse of that patriarch. I thought I saw my way clear to do something similar with Thossie. In my case, however, I would not need or choose to entirely blame the man. He was, after all, a victim of the times in which he lived.

Bearing in mind Thossie’s background it was always unlikely that he would ever become a patriarch of a powerful family. That he did was entirely due to his relationship with Elizabeth. I had chosen to depict that relationship romantically - that is, mythically, interposing myth where history did not provide a text which might be regarded as factual. This romantic interpretation of their meeting and courtship needed in no way to diminish the fact that by wedding Elizabeth, Thossie gained entry into the ruling class. The gift of 10,000 pounds given to him by her father, an immense amount of money for those times, made Thossie an instantly rich man. I believed - and this was in one sense the thesis of my play - that Thossie was diverted from his earlier working class autodidact socialism by this huge amount. Rather than face the problem created by this - to be a socialist working man or
to be a "bloated plutocrat" - he pretended to himself that he would continue to hold onto his ideals while playing the part, in Perth, of the man of power.

He may even, and I believe he did, have told himself that with all this money he could actually help the struggle. I have chosen to believe, therefore - and there is nothing I know about Thossie which contradicts this - that he gave generously, throughout his life, to the Labour Party and to the trade union movement (this would explain his friendship with Joe Chamberlain, the Communist general secretary of the WA Trades and Labour Council, and later Secretary of the ACTU). I would add to the play script a scene, or several scenes, which make this inner conflict, this character ambivalence, in Thossie, clear. It later became clear to me that, dramatically, the best way to do this was through the scenes with his mistress, whom I have called Annie.

This, I felt, made my play far more exciting. I could now take a clear line condemning Thossie for his patriarchal sexism, his racism, his classism, his greed and his imperialism - while remembering that these were not just his sins, they were the sins of his time. At the same time I could blame the money for having corrupted him. It was not for me, a comfortable product of a comfortable home, to sit in moral judgement on a man who had grown up in poverty and was suddenly offered the chance to be extremely rich.

With these changes I could now proceed to further drafts of the play unencumbered by moral ambivalence about my portrayal of the character based upon my grandfather.
A Change of Title.

Following from this, one of the titles which I had been considering for
this play - it had long been apparent that the working title, Thossie was
a bit bland - was The Male Line. This title has connotations of "line" as
in confidence trick, as well as referring to the lineage. The male line,
too, is the male journey; in space and in time as well as through the
genes. In this case it was the journey also from idealism and struggle
through to luxury and self-betrayal. I thought I could make this a much
tougher, more uncompromising play. He sold his ideals out for
money, in my view. Not an uncommon occurrence, and not one
which excuses what he did - though in his day what he did was what
everybody did; the past is a different country, and they do things
differently there. Later in his life I believe Thossie sought power as an
end in itself. This, too, perhaps, is characteristic of people who let go of
their beliefs, which kept them anchored, and believe they can fly high
and free without consequence or price. Thossie, I believe, kept alive
only the shell of his old ideals.

These remarks represented me beginning to take a clear line on
Thossie, to make decisions regarding the sort of man he was, and to
make decisions regarding the way in which this play may be slanted,
ideologically. I decided at this time to add the following scenes to the
script for the third draft ( I list them so that the script so amended may
be compared with the first draft script).

List: a scene in which it is shown that Thossie takes pride in being
contradictory; a scene in which he feels guilty about betraying his
ideals; stays up all night marching to band music, crying and reading
aloud from Engel's *Condition Of The Working Class In England In*
1848”, (Engels, 1848), a classic Marxist text; (in this way his emotionalism and his love of rationality could also be exhibited and contrasted); a couple of scenes in which Thossie does good things with his money (reference John Wren in Melbourne); a Chorus consisting of Meg the housekeeper, the publican who shopped Thossie, and Thossie’s mistress the big fat woman Annie. This chorus would chant prevailing social attitudes, would stand outside the action and look in, and would see Thossie’s confusion;

(Later, after re-reading Dorothy Hewett’s play This Old Man Comes Rolling Home, (Hewett, 7) which also makes use of a Chorus, I restructured my chorus so that it consisted of Meg, Annie, and Dawn. However, I did not make as much use of it, in later drafts, as I had expected to: and I began seriously to consider dropping it altogether). I would invent a couple of new scenes where his son Robert attempts to impress Thossie with first his sporting, then his scholastic attainments, without eliciting more than a grunt from Thossie; then, Thossie demands that Robert help him to illegally fix the tender for the railway refreshment rooms contract, saying “I paid for your fancy legal education, now it’s time to pay me back”:

A new first scene of Thossie on his deathbed;

a last scene of Thossie on his deathbed; he dies;

A scene where Thossie’s daughter in law does indeed start to gather a petition on his behalf;

A scene where, after Thossie is rude to her and insults her, she abandons the petition. (In historical fact she did not abandon it; this is one of the instances where I am starting to prefer myth - because it is
more dramatically satisfying and structured - to historical fact, which often goes against the "dramatic logic" which should inform a play);

A scene where Thossie's daughter in law confronts him and tells him the truth about himself; that he sold out his beliefs for money; that he has lost sight of the romantic socialist who charmed Elizabeth out of the saddle. This is a mythic scene; it did not occur, historically;

A couple of additional scenes of Thossie with his mistress; where she taunts him for his failures, his arrogance, his sexism, his betrayal of his ideals; she is his conscience;

A scene showing Thossie turning on the charm; so we see that he can do this, which makes his success more plausible;

A scene where Elizabeth starts teaching him manners - which wine glass to use, how to use a finger bowl, how to make small talk, etc.;

More flashforwards - or delete the one or two that I already had;

A scene where he organises a meeting to unionise the railway workers on the cane railways; the police break it up;

A "postscript" scene where the connection is made between Thossie's shenanigans and WA Inc.; however I soon abandoned this idea feeling that it took the play too far from its orbit, and that in any case audiences would make that connection;

A scene where the Narrator is told, when he reaches 21, the whole story; this scene was not written because it seemed superfluous and undramatic, too "explanatory";

A scene or two where we learn more about the Narrator; his own ideals, attitudes, confusions, hopes, loves;

A moment where there is an important choice to be made - and a flashforward to show where that choice led.

**Further Reflections on drama-as-action.**

If a play is an Action, capital A, then the play itself is merely the carrying through, by means of words and actions, music and lights within an artificial environment, of an Action or journey. The idea of Journey is central to the epic tradition in which *The Male Line* fits comfortably\(^1\). The Journeys are the Actions, played out. There is also small "a" action; which is the particular and minute physical, verbal, illuminatory and aural actions which, together, go to make up, beat by beat, the Action of the play. In epic, the physical action is likely to predominate over the verbal. This is one of the reasons why estrangement, the element in epic theatre so noted by Brecht, and often claimed as his invention, occurs in epic. This will be dealt with in more detail in my Thesis section.

However I was now thinking about the large A Action of the woman previously named Harriet or Henrietta (her historical name), and now named Elizabeth. In the first draft she had very little part to play. She was his consort, basically. Up until the time she decided to marry and elope with him she had impetus and volition of her one, and therefore played out an Action of her own, a spinal thread. Once married, however, she seemed to lose that and become his appendage. I wanted to change that by giving her story a stronger spine of its own. This involved adding new scenes and giving her more narration.
I would first decide on an Action for this character, and then write specific, particular actions small "a" for her to perform so as to carry out her Action, to spin her thread, to traverse her spine. My paternal grandmother, Henrietta, was, in fact, somewhat devious. This at first sounds like an unsympathetic characteristic. How could I build a protagonist with whom an audience could identify while allowing her, based as she was upon a historical person, her undesirable predispositions? I could do this perhaps by pointing out, somehow, in the script - perhaps through narration, perhaps through her own musings direct to audience - that in her time, with a husband as chauvinistic as Thossie, there was no other way for her to have a life, a direction, options of her own, than by behaving deviously. Only by subterfuge could she gather money - even though she had helped to earn the money - because Thossie would not give her any, having been given control over her father's dowry - as was the custom in those days - by her father. Only by subterfuge could she get out of the house alone (I assumed this, assuming that her father, whom I have named Noble, would have her closely chaperoned when outside his house). Only by subterfuge could she have her own friends.

The mythical woman, based upon Henrietta, who is, from second draft on, the female protagonist of the play now to be known as *The Male Line*, would therefore use subterfuge to shape a life, and therefore a meaning, of her own - since in drama, meaning flows from and is fashioned by, indeed consists of, actions and Action. For this woman to have a thread or spine, and therefore meaning, she must have actions of her own; since she could not act the way a modern woman would act, boldly and confidently on the stage as an individual; she must act surreptitiously. I would have her, therefore, acting to interfere in
Thossie's relationships with his mates and business colleagues; acting to liase directly with journalists so as both to put her own point of view and so as to defend the interests of her son and, indeed, of Thossie himself; and acting to put aside money and to make other financial decisions.

In my research in the historical library in Perth I discovered a newspaper story emphasising that "poor old Mrs. Gorman" who had "done nothing wrong" was suffering because of the trial of Thossie and his son; and that for this reason, bail ought to be allowed. I therefore chose, in writing the play, to believe that this story resulted from an initiative made by Henrietta (Elizabeth) to a newspaper journalist. This was an example of the many small ways in which I would attempt to aggrandise the women in the play so as to reduce their marginality and, at the same time, to enrich and broaden the stream of the play as a whole. I therefore now acted to change the names of the protagonists so as to move away from the family-history nature of this project.

Henceforth, for the second draft; Thossie became Thossie d'Arcy; his wife became Elizabeth d'Arcy; his son, Robert d'Arcy and his son's wife, Dawn d'Arcy; the housemaid became Meg Leith.

Meaning, I would assert, is created by differentiation; this is different from that; this experience is different from that; undifferentiated experience would be meaningless. "Partake" means to absorb or consume or accept, as distinct or differentiated from another word, say, "habitat" which means dwelling or lived environment. If they could not be differentiated from one another neither could have meaning. In much the same way Elizabeth d'Arcy must be differentiated from Thossie for her life to have any meaning; for her as a character to have
meaning. As an appendage to him, she could have no meaning; she could only be part of his meaning. My play was not history; it was drama. Therefore although Henrietta did not, in fact, have a discernible life of her own - no spine, path, meaning, Action of her own - Elizabeth, though broadly based upon Henrietta, would. She would carve this path out of the undifferentiated universe by means of subterfuge. This would make her a more interesting dramatic character, in opposition to the open, blustering, aggressive Action of her husband.

Women in 19th century Australia, it could be argued, had only an inner journey of the mind, or a journey which was concerned with interiors - paintings, furnishings, wall decorations, clothing, ablution, cooking, sex, entertaining, serving a man. This was the journey which my grandmother, Henrietta Gorman, made. She had power - over Thossie - when he was courting her. Because her father had money, and regardless of whether that was the reason for his interest in this thirty year old, rather stiffly proper schoolteacher, Thossie had to dance attendance upon her, which I imagined him as doing. Once married, however, she became virtually the property of her husband, and I imagined him and her father negotiating over her fate - how much dowry (for that's what essentially it was) would be given, and on what terms. She was now helpless. She could urge her husband, or her father, to this or that course of action, but she could not determine the outcome. This state of affairs continued through the voyage to the West, the setting up of a new home - I imagined him controlling the building, her controlling the interior - and the setting up of businesses; she managing the house, he the business.
determining the timing of conception, her as resignedly accepting his affairs, his drunkenness, his gambling and his outrageous behavior.

So, she stole from him. When I was a small boy my father and mother used to joke about the fact that every second chair in the house had a five pound note stuffed into it. On Saturday mornings after "The Trots" (where Thossie had the catering concession) we would all sit around the big dining room table in Henry’s house (Thossie having died) and count the takings. My father and mother and I could see Henrietta, presumably from long habit, taking five pound notes from the table and slipping them into her dress - despite the fact that, Thossie being dead, she was stealing from herself. We knew that in earlier years it was this stolen money that she used to send regularly to her two sons while they were at Melbourne University as “help out” money - Thossie, though he wanted them to have an education, was extremely mean in funding it and resented the intellectual power over him which this would give them.

So, the character whom I was now calling Elizabeth would be a thief; but never, in the final analysis, for herself. The money always went to others. So that what power she had - the power to control that stolen money - was used not for her own advantage. This, then, was a not untypical woman’s “journey” during this period of our history. But how to creatively “build up” the myth of Elizabeth in the way that I had been trying to build up the myth of Thossie?

The exploits of Thossie - railway ganger, street fighter, the mystery of his father, knockabout, married rich farmer’s daughter, got rich, journeyed to Perth (so many myths are based upon journeys -Ulysses, Bourke and Wills, Candide, Don Quixote, The Durack clan, Lawrence
of Arabia - that a journey could almost be said to be an indispensable element in any myth), became a magnate, gambled extravagantly (profligacy is another common element in myth-making), kept mistresses in flats, kept politicians and policemen in his pocket, stomped up and down at night to martial music, and so on, that it is not difficult to create a myth out of the man’s life; in fact, the mere recitation of the facts of his life can be enough to create a myth.

The events of Elizabeth’s life, however, are much more difficult to make a myth from. As far as I know she was never unfaithful; her assertion to my father, on one occasion, that she merely tolerated sex with her husband seems to support this. As far as I knew she never travelled anywhere on her own. As far as I know she never made any money on her own account. As far as I knew she never gambled. And as far as I knew she never joined a club, behaved outrageously in public, abused anyone in a bar, or fought in the street. In short, she stayed at home, reared children, managed a house and served her husband. Hardly the stuff of myths. I do know that she was a devout Catholic - much to the contempt of her husband. Hardly the stuff of myth either, however.

Mythic individuals risk all. They journey far from home. They combat and win, or lose gloriously. There is much about them that is not known. They often do not care what people think of them. If they are mythic heroes they do all this on behalf of their tribe or group; Ulysses. If they are mythic outlaws they do all this against their tribe or group; Squizzy Taylor.

However, a way to endow Elizabeth with some mythic aura did in time occur to me. If an outwardly conforming, quiet individual is secretly
subverting the status quo then he or she can be mythic, perhaps. If Elizabeth was stealing from Thossie, plotting on behalf of her sons, attempting to influence justice, then she could be an anonymous mythic hero, revealed as such after her death; or, at least, a stoic heroine. Accordingly, in later drafts of the script I would insert a number of scenes in which Elizabeth did precisely these things. In this way, though the dramatic character Elizabeth could not overthrow the patriarch Thossie - altogether implausible in a play set during the first half of the 20th century in Western Australia - she could begin, at least, to subvert him, and in so doing point the way to a world in which tyrants would no longer oppress others. And, in so doing, she could act consonantly with the way in which Henrietta, in real life, did act; action small "a" and action large "A" moving as one.

As part of this move to subvert the possible "heroic" stature of Thossie and to avoid the danger of imbalance I proposed to write a new scene in which the wife of Thossie's son, Robert, whose name was now Dawn, attacks Thossie.

I would set the scene probably at Thossie's house - or at his office. (Several reasons for the second possibility; 1; I had not used his office as a scene in the play, yet he spent a lot of time there and it was famous all over Perth; 2; it would make a great setting, under the roadway of the Horseshoe Bridge over the railway; 3; in an epic play, to avoid boredom in the audience, a playwright should use a wide variety of different settings.)

The roles of other female characters could be expanded, too; though not always, necessarily, to the level of the mythic. Historically, my mother did not, so far as I knew, confront Thossie and attack him for the way
he treated people, including his son. However, I may simply have been ignorant - she may have done. Moreover, even if she did not, she would certainly, in my view, knowing the gutsy and proud woman that she was, have wanted to. I knew that she felt angry about his handling of human beings because she had often said so to me; including in the notes which are one of the Appendices to this DCA project. I therefore proposed to write the scene that she would have liked to have acted out. I would do this not only to seek a better gender balance, but also to subvert the idea of the patriarchal hero, and to redress the historical balance for my mother.

That this scene was probably fantasy took the play one step further into the realm of myth and one step away from family history. In fact, since family history is history, it may be argued that the first step away from family history into the realm of make-believe supposition, what-if, myth or legend, was the crucial, indeed critical step - since from that moment on, it could not ever really be history again, but only a story approximating history, whose purpose it is to iron out all of history’s idiosyncracies, lapses of smoothness, the “crinkly bits” wherein real-life tales rarely conform to the “rules” of narration.

By means of scenes like this, and by means of a number of new Narrations which I would write, spoken by the women in the play - Elizabeth, Meg Annie and Dawn, and by bringing these women together as a Chorus, I would further the project of demythification, or de-heroisation, of Thossie d’Arcy, patriarch.
Reflections on Creative Decisions in Writing.

Just a brief diversion, now, to examine the way my thought processes went then - harking back to an earlier part of the Journal where I was examining the moment-by-moment process of creativity itself. I noted that I had made up my mind, during the weekend just gone, to write this new scene among others. When I was putting this information onto the screen my mind was calm, not excited. I was focused, relaxed in my chair, merely recording information for the Journal; an observation, no more.

I then went on to make further notes as to where the scene might be set. All scenes have to be set somewhere, and I have trained myself - not being a naturally "visual" person - to think of the setting of every scene I write, so that I can visualise that scene in my mind's eye, which helps me to write a scene which is theatrical rather than merely literary. (by "merely literary" I mean words having dominance - their meanings being what the writing is all about. By "theatrical" I mean that images, appearances, movements, attitudes, poses, expressions, clothes, lighting, sound FX and facial movement all have their part to play in conveying meaning; i.e., establishing differentiation.)

So I thought of the most obvious place to set the scene - Thossie's house. No sooner had I begun to write those words on my keyboard, however, than an "alarm bell" rang in my head. It is difficult to say what I mean by "alarm bell". I perhaps mean something like; I was immediately jerked alert - to use Tom Wolfe's marvelous phrase when experiencing a moment of illumination about the meaning of postmodern art - by, probably, some sort of electronic connection between some of my brain cells.
From this moment on, things changed. I noticed that my relaxed body posture gave way to body tension; I sat more upright, leaned forward, studied the screen more intently. My thoughts, which had been moving comfortably along at about the speed of my fingers on the keyboard, now began to leap quickly ahead, as if energised by a turbocharger. My fingers began to race across the keyboard - causing a lot more literals - as I tried to keep up with my now racing brain. In the event, the only major thought which my racing brain came up with was the thought that the scene should be located in Thossie's office. I have no idea why I initially chose that location; it literally just came to me. It was only afterwards that I rationalised that choice by saying it was good in epic plays to vary locations of scenes (it may be, but I had never thought of that before).

Now that I had decided to use Thossie's office, and found ways to justify that decision, my typing slowed once more to about the speed of my - now slower - thoughts. What this means about the creative process is not easy to say, for a non-scientist - and it would take years to learn enough science to say more. It clearly means that there is a complex set of processes which accompany a burst of creativity; that it is in some sense an explosion of thoughts; that out of those thoughts can come a new thought, much as a sub-oceanic volcano may produce a new island.

If creativity is an explosion, a rush of electrical discharges between electrons, a burst (explosion) of energy, then clearly it can only occur in brief, separate bursts, interspersed with calmer, more deliberate periods when the results of the explosion are duly noted and written down. How this might help me to be more creative I was not sure. I had always done it this way; but now, as part of the exercise which was this
DCA project, I was trying to become more conscious of what I had always done. Becoming aware of this process did not necessarily mean that I would be able to reproduce the same effects again, at will.

The Uses of a Chorus.

I deliberated, at some length, as to whether or not to use a Chorus in the play. My idea was that the three women would form the chorus. From time to time they would comment on the action and draw, perhaps, conclusions from it - much in the way that a song might do in an opera or musical comedy. I decided, after some thought, not to use a Chorus. I would instead stick to the convention which I had already established of using Narration by different characters, who turn out of the action of the play and speak directly to the audience, momentarily distancing themselves from the action. My reasons were simple. Although the Chorus is very much a device which one might expect to see used in an epic play, it is not one associated with Australian drama.

Indeed, as Australians are a laconic people, not given to long-winded explanations of their behavior or motives, the Chorus seemed to me to be an un-Australian theatrical device. It is difficult at the best of times to extract drama - which depends upon heat, words, conflict - from such a taciturn people as Australians; perhaps drama is not, after all, natural to this country - but to draw forth from Australians emotion spelled out in song or chant seems altogether too improbable.

Subsequently, I decided to leave in the few Chorus segments which I had written during my earlier deliberations. At the time of completion of the Third Draft of the play I had still not decided whether to leave
the Chorus in or not. Indeed, even up to the Seventh Draft, no decision had been made. I had decided, rather, to wait until the Workshop of the play, due to take place in September 1997, and to see then whether or not the Chorus seemed to work. The main issue seemed to be; is a Chorus really necessary? What function does it serve which can not as well be served by Narration? Is the element of Fate, so dominant in Greek tragedies, as crucial to this play? I now approach the end of this section of the Journal. I refer back to its very beginning, which went as follows;

" This is a stage play based upon the relationship between a man, living today, and his grandfather who died in 1953.

Of course, any relationship between them must be of two kinds:

the relationship which they formerly had when the grandfather was alive, and the relationship which the grandson imagines them to have now, but which in fact exits only in his mind."

It will be seen immediately that at the end of this Journal the play, and this Journal - and indeed the whole DCA project - have changed course dramatically, if the pun may be pardoned.

The play is now a historical epic - no mention of that at the beginning - and although a character loosely based upon my grandfather is still the protagonist of that play, he is no longer the only protagonist. The entire project has been re-conceived during the six years that I have been working on it. It is now a multi-dimensional and multi-directional play which moves forward on several fronts and is no longer a simple linear narrative.
The term "epic" now includes the need to subvert the dominant discourse of the narrative of the character named Thomas d'Arcy and loosely based upon my grandfather. So the Journal has itself completed a journey, just as all epics do; a journey, in this case, of discovery.

Not only has the Journal charted a major change of course during the Project, but this Project, even in its inception, is different to the earlier attempts I made, commencing in 1961, to write the story of my grandfather and his troubles.

My grandfather's tumultuous life, and his troubles, have been both a blessing and a curse for me. A blessing, in that they provided me with a ready-made story full of family intrigue, violence, power, sex, money and human frailty. A curse, because all my attempts to write this story, until this one, have been unsuccessful. There is, perhaps, something to be said for the idea that a writer should never write h/her best story; or their most personal one.

Method of Creation of a Scene: Tatts.

In this Journal I tried to show how my method of writing the play was, firstly, to conceive of a section of the play in my mind. I would do this, typically, by walking up and down, often at night, with my mini-cassette recorder in hand, talking aloud through the ideas and images of the scene until it began to form in my mind - whereupon I would speak into the cassette recorder an account of how it was forming. Then I would go inside and debrief the cassette recorder onto paper in note form; this would then form the first skeleton outline of my proposed scene, which I would develop in further written notes before writing
the whole thing down as a scene with complete dialogue and stage directions.

So, for example, when writing the scene where Thossie enters the Tattersalls Club to find that he has been "posted" for welshing on debts, I first had to think about how that scene would be constructed. Typically, ideas for scenes occur to me when I am; in the toilet, in the shower, driving, or lying in bed about to go to sleep. There is no accident about this, though at the time, unable to grasp pen and paper, it may seem as if it is a conspiracy to prevent me from writing. Ideas occur to me during those times because that is when I am "unengaged" in the daily workings of my creative life. my mind is in "relax mode"; I am absorbed with routine/mechanical functions such as washing, sleeping defecating or driving; my brain is free to roam, like a computer when it is "off-line". At that time, thoughts push their way to he forefront of my consciousness and draw themselves to my attention. Presuming that I get to pen and paper and actually write those thoughts down, they will in time form the basis of scenes.

So, I got the idea for how to write the Tattersalls Club scene when I was in the shower. Typically, I had a sudden vision, unbeckoned, of Thossie d'Arcy walking into Tatts, all chipper and chirpy, cocky and proud and a bit arrogant as usual wearing his inevitable suit and waistcoat and tie, and no doubt a hat in his hand. He was surprised when men turned away from him. I saw that, in my mind's eye; the cloud that passed over his face. Then he went deeper into the club and saw men clustered around the notice board. Knowing him as I do, I realised that, although he was aware of being in debt, it would not occur to him that the notice concerned himself. Then I saw his shocked face after he had read it.
These images were enough. I got to work. A lot of the scene consisted of stage directions. I did have some family legend to go by; my father once described this scene to me. Then, as I wrote, my imagination took over, operating as a series of mentally visualised moving images. I saw Thossie’s instant reaction - the fightback reaction of an insecure man, a man not born to wealth and power and not convinced that he deserved it. I had him say something to the effect that “they” would not crush his proud spirit. (My father once referred to Thossie’s ‘proud Irish spirit’ and it is this that I was remembering here). it did not occur to Thossie that he was to blame; “they” must be to blame; this characteristic might mark him as a tragic protagonist.

**Decision to Allow Play to be Staged.**

As I approached the end of this section of the Annotations I finally resolved a problem which had been nagging me, and reappearing in these pages, since commencing the project: should I, or should I not, allow this play to be shown before the public?

I now decided that it may be shown. My reasons were simple: the protagonist had been somewhat distanced from my paternal grandfather; I had made changes to the extent to which my father was actually involved in my grandfather’s skullduggery, and the extent to which he was a prime mover in those activities; there had been changes in the pattern of narration to give more narration to the protagonist’s wife, housemaid, and daughter in law; then through changes which saw new scenes created to give greater weight and emphasis to the roles played in his life story by his wife, his
housemaid, and his daughter in law - roles which subverted his patriarchal power.

Henceforth I can claim that, though the story remains based upon my grandfather's life, it is no longer just that life. It was now a story about pioneering life in Western Australia, about one of Perth's early mining entrepreneurs, and about the rise and fall of patriarchal power in general. It is also the story of the Irish - Catholic tribe in Western Australia, and by extension Australia, with Thossie as the representative of that tribe. In fact, in his close identification with the organised working class, he was very much representative of Irish-Catholic Australians who, in the period 1800-1945, were the most numerous group within the Australian working class, and within the leadership of organised Labour. I added a new scene in which Thossie and O'Brien argue about whether or not the "leading citizens" of the Irish community should set an example for the workers; Thossie avows that he does represent the working class Irish, because he is one of them who has risen through struggle. I felt it was necessary to include this piece of exposition to overcome any objection a reader might have to the idea of a man like Thossie "representing" his tribe. He did not represent the Irish in the way that Oedipus represented his people: but in a different, more democratic way, he was the exemplar of his tribe. For this reason I now felt that by exposing this story to the world, I would not be exposing intimate details of my family's life - details which, were they alive, they would not want exposed. My other reason for wanting this play to be exposed to the public is that I am proud of it. I would not want any observer to misinterpret any reluctance on my part to have the play produced as a lack of faith, on my part, in the play.
With those comments I will end this section of the Journal. Although it is rambling and at times unfocused, I have allowed it to be so because I wanted any and all thoughts to spill out of my mind onto the page on the subject of the play, its writing method, my family, the epic, history, gender subjugation, and so on. I felt that it was better to let it all fall out rather than try to make the Journal a formal document - but rather, to follow the process as it evolved, hopefully throwing some light on the workings of creativity. This makes it an ideal vehicle for charting slow change, which has indeed been the function of this Journal.

2: REFLECTIONS ON EPIC DRAMA AND "THE MALE LINE".

Note: This section of the Journal was made separate because its entries referred predominantly or entirely to the epic drama as such. They therefore started once more back in 1992 and proceeded, as did the entries in Part 1, Creative Reflections On The Male Line, up to 1997.

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**Montage and Epic Structure.**

Some time into the construction of _The Male Line_, after the Third Draft, I began to reflect upon the method of construction which I had been and was using to make the play. This led to a consideration of the differences between what may be called "narrative" and what is called "montage".

The latter first. Montage of course is a term associated with the Russian film director Sergei Eisenstein, who used it to describe his method of building a film by presenting a series of images - uninflected images as the American playwright and film director David Mamet called them (Mamet, 1991)- which contain no attempt to tell the audience what to feel or how to interpret the action, merely a picture - a moving picture. Eisenstein developed his theory of montage after he saw a film, _Birth Of A Nation_, which had been made by the American film pioneer D.W. Griffiths, who pioneered most of the camera techniques which
are now used in the creation of montage sequences. As described by Konigsburg in *The Complete Film Dictionary* (Konigsburg, 216) Eisenstein adopted montage and other techniques from Griffiths, including moving the camera - though the Russian director minimised camera movement in favor of editing.

Transferred to the epic theatre, this theory of montage would seem to have something to offer, and it is the method upon which I did, in part, base the construction of my script. I was striving to present a series of pictures - moving pictures, constructed upon a stage - which followed one upon the other, each one leading to the next not in a "climactic narrative" sense (a storyline which requires for its completion the series of images which fill in its stages, and where one image causes the next) but purely as uninflected sequence without necessary, or implied, linkage. In other words, episodic.

That is to say, one image - say, of Thossie fighting in a bar - would be presented, without inflection; i.e., without clues or signs within it which indicate how I wished an audience to view that incident, or what attitude I wanted them to have toward any of those involved. Then, I would present another, also uninflected image. The connection between the two was not; that one occurred straight after the other, or that one implied the other, or; that one necessitated the other; but simply that one followed in dramatic sequence after the other, i.e., with some degree of apparent causality, upon the stage, before the audience's eyes. It is the audience, then, that does the work of narration. It is the audience which links together these images to form a smooth flowing storyline. And, in this method, it is the audience which creates the storyline, since, unlike in the climatic method, the storyline has not
been constructed for them. In this sense, arguably, the epic structure using montage techniques is a postmodern form of drama.

This method of play construction was, I believed, well suited to epic theatre. It is often referred to as "episodic". It was at this stage in my creation of *The Male Line* that I began consciously to use the term "epic" to describe the play, and to research epic techniques.

Epic theatre, I would argue, requires leaps. There are sideways leaps, as from one group of characters to another. There are leaps in time - back to the past most often, sometimes forward to the future. These leaps can be linked by the mind of the audience, which creates connections between them - necessary, implied, but necessary and implied not by the construction of the images or by any links interposed by the playwright, but by the need which the audience have to link together disparate images to form a whole, an integral chain of dramatic narration which is their creation, though my intention. The images which mount upon the stage one by one create meaning, the meaning of the play, not by literary narration but by differentiation. As each image appears, its contrast or difference to the one that went before gives it, and therefore the play, meaning.

It was my hope to begin to lay down foundations, within this Journal but more particularly in the Thesis which accompanies, of a theory of epic theatre which is not Brechtian, and still less in the tradition of the Nativity plays. The writer Bob Ellis once said (in a speech to the final night dinner of the Australian National Playwrights Conference, May 1982) that the quintessential Australian form of performance (I do not think that he said "drama") is the monologue. Perhaps all Australian epic plays are monologues in which the monologist gets a little help
from some mates. In the Thesis I tried to develop this idea a little further, and a little more rigorously, than was possible or indeed desirable in a Journal.

**Ongoing Creative Decisions in the Epic.**

Writing the section where the two sons of my grandparents, Lavus and Morris, had been born and were growing up, I encountered more decisions. I had been sketching out the growing distance between Thossie and his wife - particularly sexually - and Thossie’s growing attachment to his mistress, who was, according to family legend, ‘big and fat like his mother’. Here was one of the places in the script where I would have to make decisions as to what actually happened. My grandfather, if he could view my Labours, might have been turning in his grave. If so, I apologised.

I made the decision to suggest that it was probably he who went to the mistress before Henrietta denied him sex. Perhaps I had a man’s instinct for what another man’s mind is doing - or a playwright’s instinct for his character; Thossie was a man, I believed, who was driven by his appetites. Knowing myself, and my father, I might well have been merely projecting backward to Thossie and assuming that he followed his appetites rather than his heart. I remained open to the possibility that Henrietta was in fact cold and denied him sex, forcing him into the arms of another woman. We will, of course, never know. As the self-appointed custodian of this man’s history I chose in this instance to judge him as I judge myself. In making this assumption, therefore, I intended no more disrespect to his memory than I have for myself or for any other man.
I had always been fascinated by men whose behavior exhibits sharp contradictions. I had in mind, for instance, those American criminals one reads about who run dark and evil empires based on corruption and death - but attend church on Sunday and are generous benefactors in their local community. Indeed, we have only to look at our own John Wren, the powerful Irish Catholic underworld lord in Melbourne between the wars - a man who knew both my father and my grandfather, and had a lot in common with the latter - to see such a man; friend and confidante of Archbishop Mannix, generous to widows and the poor, but the king of a criminal empire based upon violence and power - even if, as some writers have pointed out, gambling and sly-grog were criminal only because illegal: today, Wren would not have to behave illegally to run such empires. In referring to Wren I was, of course, referring to another epic story.

I could not say whether I loved my grandfather any more or less because of these contradictions. I had to bear in mind, too, when trying the (probably impossible) task of assessing him as a human being that he was never hypocritical about religion. An atheist all his life, he used to sneer at Henry's obeisance to the Church, saying "woman, those priests have got you intimidated!" Yet, in deference to her, he had his boys educated at Catholic schools and a Catholic university college.

There were other contradictions, though. As coldly calculating as he could be in business, he was in other areas of his life often impetuous. It seemed, in retrospect, that he was a man who had great difficulty in keeping a rein on his feelings. A man whose violent and impulsive emotional nature was continually at war with that intellectual side of him which made him the autodidact socialist. These notes are relevant to this Section of the Journal because, I believe, they relate to
the laying down of a character portrait of Thossie as an epic protagonist, and to my ongoing creative decisions

I also faced another creative decision, regarding the passage of time in my epic story. After having completed a first draft I began to wonder whether it would be better to skip quickly across the 1920s and 30s and get to the meat, as it were, of the play, which is the period in 1943 when events in the life of my grandfather came to a head.

I made the decision that this should not be done. This was shaping up as an epic play. An epic play, in my view, had to have breadth and scope. It had to move more slowly, in a more stately fashion, to a more exalted climax, than ordinary plays. The stakes had to be higher, the scale more vast, the action slower. Did this mean that epic plays must "drag". Must audiences fidget, count the lights, fall asleep, and wish themselves elsewhere?

In a sense, this did seem to be correct. An epic has to play on an audience rather in the way that life does. Life has its dull moments, it sometimes drags, bits of it seem to go on forever - but that is all part of what might be called the epic quality of life. Epic plays, in this way, approximate life more than they do art; or, more than do other kinds of art. If an audience finds an epic play moving too slowly, he or she nevertheless knows that a big climax is coming; that the play is heading somewhere; that the stakes are high, the scale vast, and the journey, of necessity, long. He or she does not mind this quality of drag during the middle parts of an epic play. In order for an epic play to reach a very powerful, high climax, the action of the play must rise for a long time. In order for the protagonist to fall a long and tragic way down, he or
she must climb a long way up. This takes time. It can not be hurried. It is drama, not short-order cooking.

Of course, a play must entertain an audience. Unlike a reader, an audience member must sit in a seat for two hours or so. Holding the attention of such a person therefore becomes vital. An audience member cannot pick up a play and put it down as they would a novel. It requires their full attention for two hours - or more. However, as stated above, in epic plays the need to build to a high, slow, long climax outranks the need to entertain. So the golden rule of drama - entertain, if you do nothing else - is suspended in epic drama, to the extent necessary to allow this slow, long buildup to occur, this vastness of scope to be established, this dramatic continentality to be evoked, this theatrical Titanic to be raised.

Entertainment as Factor in Epic Drama.

This discussion did, however, raise another, equally interesting question. This is; what place might entertainment play in plays written, like this one, as part of an academic thesis? For that matter, what place do the "dramatic values" - tension and conflict, protagonist/obstacle, pace, forward motion, three-act structure, high stakes, and so on - play in such plays? Are such plays written primarily in order to illustrate the theme of the thesis? If so, do they have no more importance than, say, a plastic skeleton used by a lecturer in a school of medicine when demonstrating to first year medical students how the human skeleton works? That is, is a play like The Male Line, written as part of a thesis, a plastic skeleton of a play, useful for illustration, but not really intended for presentation to an audience? Or
is it essential that a play written as part of A DCA, as distinct from a play written as part of a PhD, be "of performance quality"? Would it be possible, therefore, for a thesis containing a play to be awarded first class honours even though the play, itself, was of very poor quality? I was not sure whether there was an easy answer to that question, if only because of the difficulties of defining "quality", but it was one that concerned me. I asked myself whether such a play ought to be judged successful by audiences - and by critics - before the thesis to which it is linked could be judged successful?

**Opposition and Paradox in *The Male Line***

Signification is the central action of the drama, whereby an actor, opposing the character he or she plays, i.e., playing that character, is therefore playing against that character since, at the time of performance, the audience sees the differentiation between actor and character. The audience, in perceiving the difference between the two, performs the act of signification. Signifier becomes flesh. The signified and the signifier are the two terms of the theatrical act, the play of words and actions; or, actions, and words-as-actions. (Dialogue is often called "action by other means").

Similarly, when the written word becomes spoken, as when a script is realised on the stage (the only moment when the play actually exists, since the script is merely potential, a coiled spring of dialogue needing the actor to release it) the signifier and signified oppose, and that opposition, too, is the play. The play therefore operates on several levels, all of them created by the act of opposition; the opposition of acts. There is also the opposition - signifier; signified - of two characters
opposing one another. This is the level at which drama is usually discussed; but the discourse of drama is multi-layered and no drama can be adequately understood without a consideration of all the levels, or at least the major ones.

I took the major levels at which opposition becomes play to be;

written word v. spoken/becomes spoken;

actor v. character/becomes character;

character v. character/becomes character (there is a symbiosis in drama which hinges on paradox: great characters, in depending on one another just as good depends for its livelihood on evil, become one another; the best dramatist is one who can show the audience the good in a bad character, for instance, or the bad in a good, and the contradictions in both.

Thus, in *The Male Line*, I showed an actor - based on myself, acter in the true sense of one who took part in the actions which inspired this play - becoming a character, the Narrator. I opposed the Narrator as I became him. I also opposed the actor who played me becoming the Narrator. I, as audience, therefore found myself creating, by my act of witness, the opposition between myself as acter becoming myself as Narrator; I therefore created myself, for every character is created in the mind of an audience member.

Furthermore, I had written the script; I wrote myself as acter becoming myself as Narrator via the body of someone else as actor. I therefore exercised power over myself, in all my guises. This power was restrained by my memory of what "actually" happened in the past, or my "knowledge" of what actually happened; these, which may
themselves be fictions, nevertheless guided me in the creation of a fiction which purports to be the truth, and is presented to an audience as such.

The act of distinction which an audience member undertakes - between actor and character, written word and spoken word, character and character, and so on - is an act which a writer also undertakes, for different reasons; the writer to persuade, since every play is a selling document for a set of ideas - and the audience member to understand - though the audience member, while attempting to understand, will also attempt to stand back from the play lest he or she be seduced or persuaded by the writer.

Thus a writer is also playing (on) - opposing - the audience. Brecht understood this very well, and it was part of what distinguished his Epic theatre from naturalistic theatre; epic theatre was self-reflexive which in this context meant, essentially, that it drew attention to itself as artifice, and the manner in which it did so was to encourage the audience member to distance him or her self from the seduction of the drama; from the drama as selling document. Yet, paradoxically, Brecht’s drama was a selling document - for Communism. This sort of paradox is what, increasingly, I looked for in the drama. Drama is a rich source of paradox, and I was more and more attracted to the idea that paradox was the source and heart of drama, not merely a quaint, occasional occurrence in it.

Changes in Supporting Epic Characters.

Certain issues came to the fore concerning the roles of supporting characters: the Narrator, and Elizabeth. In this epic play I was writing
myself as heroic protagonist in the one sense - though in the strict sense Thossie was the protagonist and not heroic - I was perhaps the sub-protagonist: the character who, though not the apparent or named protagonist, was in fact the real subject of the play, the character whose changes justified the writing of the play. Thossie's fundamentally unsympathetic nature was a problem, even in the epic theatre where forces are often vast and the stakes too high for one individual to encompass, but it may not be a problem in an Australian epic theatre, which may prefer an anti-hero, or a non-hero - a fool, in other words - to a hero in the classic European sense, or even in Brecht's "proletarian" sense. In the Theory section I dealt with this question of the unsympathetic epic protagonist.

The other character whose role was changing was Elizabeth, Thossie's wife.

Since I had first begun writing about my family, in 1961, there had of course been a massive change in public ideology. In particular, the feminist movement had become the dominant ideological current of our times. With this in mind, some readers may feel that it was a brave decision of mine to write my DCA about a man who was without doubt a male chauvinist.

In respect of Elizabeth I had been thinking about two issues; the question of the journey and who goes on it, and the question of women in Australian colonial or early postcolonial society and what journey did they go on? One dimension was the journey of adaptation. Australian women, brought up on the myths and standards of Europe, were obliged to adapt those attitudes in response to the Australian climate. When an Irish migrant woman found herself, for instance, on
an outback property - as did my great-grandmother - in a situation where supplies came by bullock dray every six months or so - provided the floods were not too severe - and where pianos went out of tune and there was no piano tuner; where the nearest neighbor with whom to have tea might be sixty miles away by horse drawn waggon; she soon realised that standards would have to be abandoned. It was the woman who defined the family's attitude toward standards, striving to keep alive those standards which could be maintained - moral, religious, practical - while letting go of those - social, decorative - which were incompatible with colonial society.

This was a journey, every bit as soul-wrenching as a male explorer's journey to discover new lands, or an entrepreneur's journey from rags to riches. It is an inner journey, but no less a journey for that - indeed, arguably a more painful journey. My grandmother, Henrietta, went on such a journey. From being a young, hopeful girl, following a career as a primary schoolteacher, to being the marginalised wife of a "great man" in a faraway city, would have obliged a massive process of adaptation in her. True, she did not have to forgo fine furniture and social life. Her house was one of the social centres of Perth at a time when Mt Lawley was the best suburb. She rode to hounds in what is now Morley Park.

She did, however, have to accept the loss of her career. I believed, and again this could only be my conjecture, that she was much more in tune with the times than was Thossie. I believed that Henrietta was aware of, and probably followed, the early development of feminism when she was a young girl in the 1890s. Her father, of Irish descent but born in Britain, was something of a Radical in temperament. I had been told by my father that he followed some of the more interesting
movements in Britain, such as that of William Morris\textsuperscript{23}. A man like that might be expected to have a daughter who, perhaps doting on him, would be influenced by him to take an interest in matters radical. That this would later bring her into a marriage with a Communist railway ganger, though perhaps logical according to the hypothesis I was developing, would nevertheless have mortified him. When she came to him saying that she loved Thossie, he might have seen the logical development of his own influence upon her, and at the same time an impending tragedy of King Learian proportions. I could go to speculate that, like Lear, Henrietta was taken in by the smooth words of Thossie, only to find that the fruit which was so sweet in contemplation was bitter indeed in the eating.

I would never know the answer to all this, but I took it as true for the purposes of subsequent drafts of the script. And it formed the basis for a dramatic journey, in scenes added to the second draft, for Elizabeth to take from trusting naive young woman to bitter older woman. As the mistress of a house in Perth, which she managed while her husband had his business empire and had mistresses, there was very little to which Henrietta could aspire. He would not have allowed her to go to University. It was out of the question for a man in his position to have a wife who ran her own business - unless it was a folly, a tax loss, an indulgence. She must have felt frustrated. That she did not break out is probably more an indication of the paucity of ways in which a woman in her circumstances could break out, rather than an indication that she did not want to. I knew her much better than I knew my grandfather because he died when I was very young and I was away from Perth for so long. I believe that within the restrained, steady old
woman I knew, there was a young girl, radical in spirit, full of vigor, who never got the chance to come out and find expression.

Allowing the formerly subjugated characters to "come out" dramatically brought to the fore another problem; how to show change in a character. Of course, in naturalistic drama this is much easier. The character reveals h/herself in dialogue. The character behaves differently after a change than h/she did before.

In epic drama it was not so easy. The necessity to maintain some sense of distance from one's characters obliges a writer to rely entirely upon showing rather than telling. Thus, I could show Thossie as an angry young railway ganger, fighting in a bar, seeking to discover his identity, discovering communism, seducing Elizabeth. Then, toward the end of the script, I could show him behaving arrogantly, expressing contempt for women, and riding roughshod over his son whom he included in his criminal enterprises as though he were only a form of cheap labour, a legal gopher. The audience would then, I hope, "create" in their minds the changes through which Thossie had gone. An audience member - and audiences, I believed, like to have some work to do - would forge a bridge between the early Thossie and the later one, saying; "this is how wealth and power change a man". That would then be the meaning of Thossie as character; differentiation between the two Thossies.

The catalyst for the change that Thossie went through in the play was the entry into his life of Elizabeth. From that moment on he was able to dream dreams of wealth, power and "quality". These dreams may clash with his Communist sympathies, but he dealt with that clash by sublimating his Communism and reducing it to the status of a sort of
hobby, an undercurrent. Like so many intelligent people born into the working class,

Thossie desired nothing more than to get out of it. He may ideally have subscribed to the socialist notion that the working class liberates itself as a class, rather than individual-by-individual, but in the real world he would have known that the Revolution would be a long time in coming; meanwhile, he had his own destiny to fulfill, and he did not see that destiny in terms of Labouring on the sugar cane railways. In charting these changes for the characters I was mindful of the fact that in Brechtian epic drama character is supposed to be of secondary - indeed, some say, negligible - importance. Character is downgraded so that social issues, class conflict, and massive structural change can be forefronted in his plays.

In seeking to base my epic play upon the traditional, pre-Brechtian theories of the epic I believed I was giving myself more room, as a playwright, to manoeuvre artistically, without sacrificing the advantages of the epic form in highlighting social change and social issues. In particular, traditional epic gave me, I would assert, more room to introduce the notion of character into my play, so that the problem of examining the creative process, and the problem of the examination of the theory of the epic as it applied to The Male Line, could be examined together. Thus, Male Line was simultaneously both "bourgeois" play of character and epic play, combining the challenges and the advantages of both forms.
Myth in Epic Drama.

Mythology, I would submit, is a collective fantasy of origins\(^2\). Cuchullain did not in reality drive back the sea from what is now Holland with his bare hands. Wild Bill Hickock did not do many of the things which legend has attributed to him. Likewise, our heroic pioneers were often less than heroic. We selectively remember their deeds. So, in painting Thossie as he was, warts and all, was I creating a myth? I thought I would be when I began this project. Now, however, at about the halfway point in the development of this script, I began to realise that I was actually in the process of demythologising a man who could, as easily, have been presented in a heroic light. The man who built up the Railway Refreshment Service. The man who built one of WA's early fortunes. The man who pioneered mica mining in WA. If Albert Facey could be made into a myth by his own hand, why could not my grandfather, by mine?

When I was researching *A Fortunate Life*, my stage adaptation of Albert Facey's biography of the same name about the legendary WA bushman, I met a couple of very old men one day while drinking in a pub in the Darling Ranges. Seeing that they were bushie types I asked them about Bert Facey. They debunked him. They said that most of the exploits in his book, which he attributed to himself, were actually performed by others. Bert heard about them, or saw them, and added them to his own stock of tall tales to tell about himself. One must remember that "tall tales" were a staple of the Australian bush: many a cheery night was spent around the campfire listening to them, told by those bushies who had a flair for invention, caricature, mime, wit, satire and pure fantasy.
I did not deny Bert Facey the right to do this. After all, as soon as he lifted a pen he was a writer. Today we accept that much history is in fact invention, or distortion. Writers invent characters and events and make them seem real - but they are not real. So, I was able to justify my inventions in the course of this Journal. The gaps in my grandfather's life which I had filled in with plausible invention produced a seamless, and credible, story. I did not ever forget that I was storytelling; but this was a Creative Writing journal in a creative writing doctorate. Storytelling, lies, is what I was dealing in. In writing about Facey, as in writing about Thossie, I had some history to go by, and even that was partly family myth and rumor, garnered by talking to his children. I had a few facts - births, deaths - and on this I had to build a narrative. Did it really matter if Bert Facey aggrandised himself? Perhaps Australia needed myths. Was it therefore the duty of a writer to create them? Was I, in writing this, attempting to carry out that duty? In truth my approach to the work was to use my grandfather's life as a starting point only. I was now telling the story of a man born of mixed parentage, from a working class background, who retained Communist sympathies all his life, but who rose in society to be a power in a city, only to fall through his own arrogance. There might be many men whose stories would read like that, not only in Australia but in North America and Europe. Put like this the story became an epic myth if by "myth" we mean, in part at least, a story about a person who is no one in particular, but everyone in general - a representative figure who is larger than us but is yet someone who displays characteristics - sympathetic or otherwise - which are in all of us, which are of his tribe.
The foregoing note served to demonstrate how quite a few of the ideas which ended up being explored in the Theory section had their origins in musings in this Journal. It could be said that one of the functions of this Journal, in a project of this kind, was to flush out ideas which could not be fully explored in a discursive journal, but might be explored at greater length in a thesis. In this way, perhaps my decision to write both a theory section and a journal would be vindicated.

In the Theory section of this DCA, I explained the process whereby I, too, had moved to a position of subversion of the mythic figure of my protagonist and away from the mythic heroisation of that protagonist. Subversion is, in fact, the third stage of the process of transforming myth to art. Having established the mythic dimensions of the protagonist, having then transcribed his deeds into dramatic form, the status and position of that protagonist is then subverted. This will be the task of subsequent drafts of my script.

The Male Line and DCA as Epic Journey.

A realisation dawned on me not long after the halfway mark in the development of Male Line through subsequent drafts, that the direction of my entire thesis had changed. It had been necessary, I now saw, for me to come this far in order to recognize that my DCA itself was a journey. A commonplace enough observation; of course any thesis must be a journey, a journey of discovery. But that realisation was made doubly significant when the thesis was itself about epic drama, and epic drama had its one of its central characteristics the notion of the journey. Just as my nominal protagonist, Thossie, embarked upon a journey, an exploration, so did my thesis. At the
beginning I wanted to write an play, and a journal about the creative process of writing that play. So, the emphasis was upon the examination of my own creativity.

Gradually, however, the emphasis had shifted. Although I still examined in this Journal the process of my own creativity, I also, and increasingly, found myself examining the notion of Epic itself. So, the Journal became more about the definition of epic, and less about the definition of creativity. In fact, what had perhaps happened was that the examination of the Epic had become the form taken by the examination of the creative act; that they were one and the same: the same examination, the same journey27.

Certainly, if there was to be an Australian epic tradition, and if this tradition was, in any way, to differ from the Brechtian definition of the epic, then the Australian epic must surely, I reasoned, involve a journey. Not only did aborigines, before the British came, journey incessantly across the landscape in search of food and water; but our pioneers did the same, and for the same reasons; Eyre, Wentworth and Lawson, Bourke and Wills, Strezlecki, Lasseter, Leichardt, Kosciusko, Sturt, Mitchell, Gipps, Kennedy, Stuart, and many others made their journeys in search of water and pasture across the wide brown land. Later, pioneers moved in family and community groups into the areas which had been discovered. Later, restless Australians crossed the country in search of jobs or peace. Retired people flocked to Queensland, young couples in search of better opportunities flocked to Western Australia, migrants streamed into the country seeking jobs and homes. "The journey" was part and parcel of this country, this continent.
My DCA being a journey, therefore, put it in line with both the nature of the country, and the nature of its subject matter. Rather than going back to the beginning of the journal and rewriting earlier sections to include the notion of the journey I proposed therefore to leave it as it was. I would rewrite the play, by adding many new scenes and perhaps cutting or modifying a few existing ones, but keeping the earlier draft for comparison. But I would not rewrite the journal, because it was the journal not only of a process, but also, and more so, of a journey - and of the process in, and through, the journey. The Journal itself would suffer, and its purpose be abrogated, by any cutting of earlier sections.

Theatre Du Complicite's and the use of Gesture as Epic Device.

I had been reading an article concerning France's Theatre De Complicite'. Some of the theories on which this company's work was based were theories which might seem to have relevance for epic theatre, and which are sometimes said to be epic dramatic techniques. I refer to the use of exaggerated, often grotesque body movements and gestures, whose purpose is to reveal, physically, what is happening mentally to that character. As used by the Theatre de Complicite', the gestures were intended to be as ugly and grotesque as possible; to alienate the audience from the characters. Perhaps it was this alienation - of a physical kind - which had suggested to some scholars that this was an epic technique.

The objection which seemed to be appropriate here is that not all of the mental workings of a character are, or need to be, ugly and grotesque. Characters in epic drama may legitimately experience uplifting, fine, romantic or sensitive thoughts and feelings - and some earlier
definitions of the Epic, as discussed in the Theory section, insisted that the Epic should be uplifting in character. Indeed, not to allow an epic character to feel or think such things is to deny that character - and the play - the ability to express a vast range of human emotion and feeling; which surely goes against the very nature of the word “epic” because if epic means anything, it means inclusive and sweeping, not narrow.

Yet, there may be a case, when staging an epic play such as Male Line, for experimenting with some degree of gesture use as a way of externalising the internal. In all dramatic writing the great problem is how to reveal what people are feeling and thinking. Solutions to this problem have included narration, voice-over on sound system, asides, monologues, program notes, characters talking about other characters when they are not present on stage, and scenes where one character confronts another, telling them face to face what precisely is wrong with them and what they should do about it.

Perhaps, to this list of techniques, should be added “exaggerated gestures, whether grotesque or lyrical” - though lyrical is decidedly out of favor with contemporary playwrights. I doubted that I would be writing any such directions into the script. However, it could well be that a production of the play would benefit from the use of some such techniques.

The Universalisation of The Male Line.

I wished to gain some perspective on the changes in the direction which my DCA project was taking. I had for instance decided, as noted above, that from now on the DCA was not “about” my own paternal grandfather, but about a man, loosely based upon my grandfather who
may also be partly based upon other men. The project was now also no longer exclusively about this man, but was also about his wife, a woman based loosely upon my paternal grandmother. So this play was undergoing distancing - i.e., becoming more epic. I had decided to make more of the epic nature of my project, with particular reference to the notion of “journey” as found in most epic traditions.

While continuing to seek some Australian elements in an Australian epic tradition, I was now more inclined to accept that there were elements in common between the Brechtian tradition and any newly emergent Australian epic tradition; not only because the few “epic” plays written by Australians had been written mostly by socialists influenced by Brecht, but also because the Australia tradition of the yarn and the “tall tale”, together with some Australian writings, whether dramatic or literary, about journeys (Chapel Perilous, Kings In Grass Castles, The Overlanders), had elements in common with Brechtian epic drama\textsuperscript{29}.

\textbf{Divergence between Real Life and The Male Line.}

The divergence between real life and dramatic life in my project was now small but growing. For instance, in real life my mother did begin to gather a petition to have Thossie freed from prison - despite his rudeness to her and his arrogant dismissal of all women as weak or subordinate.
In the script she abandoned the gathering of the petition because of Thossie's attitudes. The scene where Dawn takes around a petition to get Thossie out of gaol was subsequently re-inserted into the script, because it helped to develop the character of Dawn by enabling her to become a more important player in the drama. To some extent this may be seen as rewriting history from a "politically correct" point of view. It is true that during the period when these events were happening - World War II - the women's movement, though dormant because of the overriding necessity of winning the war, was nevertheless still slowly emerging because so many women during that time were taking on traditional men's jobs; my mother, for instance, drove an ambulance because the usual, male driver was away at the war. Dramatic truth, cultural truth, social truth, political truth, all required, it seemed to me, that I as a dramatist depict the journey of women. Therefore, the bare facts may in this case be sacrificed to the overriding dramatic truths which I as a playwright served.

My scope for modification of the script, now that the first two drafts were finished, was probably less than I might have hoped - unless I decided to depart so far from the story of my grandfather as to actually create a whole new storyline from my imagination, abandoning the one he created with his life. So, I might decide to start the story not in Mackay, Queensland, but in, say, Bourke, Bendigo, or Coolgardie. Part of the story might lie overseas. I might use as my protagonist a woman. She might be of non Anglo-Celtic extraction. In short, I might do as I pleased. In fact I did decide to keep the name "Thossie" and the beginnings in Mackay; there seemed, ultimately, no good point in distancing the play too far, too much, from my family's story.
I had a choice, in other words, between treating the storyline offered by my grandfather’s life in a more creative way - moving from filling in the blanks left by historical ignorance to actually blowing up incidents to make them more dramatic, or deleting some incidents, or inventing a few new ones, or playing down those which embarrassed me - and cleaving fairly closely to history while modifying it for the sake of dramatic effect, or for the sake of universalisation. In making this choice I was treading a line between the personal and the objective, making one the other; this could not fail to fully engage me as a person, as distinct from me as a writer or researcher. I chose the first of these alternatives. I would expand some parts of the narrative - for instance, by making my grandmother a more important protagonist - and I would modify some incidents, maybe invent a couple, and so on.

Kate Macomber Stern, writing in Antipodes, the American magazine of Australian literary studies, (Antipodes, 1995, 65) states that a biographer - which, effectively, I was, when writing the story of my grandfather - has a duty to h/her subject. That duty, in particular, is not to make assumptions. Now assumptions is precisely what I had been making, precisely in order to fill in the gaps left in the historical record of Thossie’s life. This simply made it all the more clear to me that I must distance myself from the subject, move away from biography, move away from family history, and make this more of a play about an archetypal patriarchal industrial pioneer of the early 20th century.

Contemporary Implications of The Male Line.

This brought me to a consideration of the contemporary social and political implications of my play. Arising as it did, initially, from my
own family's tragedy, it brought into focus the more recent incidents collectively known as "W.A. Inc." and which also involved corruption in high places and the relationship between capital and government. When one thought of Laurie Connell, Ray O'Connor, Brian Burke and so on, the similarities with my story were evident.

This was probably no accident. Western Australia had always been different, in that it was a State sustained almost entirely by mining. Anybody could drive into the vast desert, stake a claim and begin processing dirt - and thousands of people do just that - and there was a larrikin insouciance about many people in the West, a defiant individualism, which had long been submerged in the more densely-populated and settled East. This contrast interestingly parallels the contrast found between "Western" and "Eastern" values in the epic American Western movies, where the individualistic, male, violent, pioneering cowboy represents the West and the female, prudish, civilising, school-m'arm is said to represent the East. It is in this environment that larrikin trouble-makers, robber barons and arrogant administrators can flourish. Lenin was said to have opined that Australia would be the last bastion of reactionary capitalism. He might have said Western Australia. So this was a story about men who behaved as though the patriarchy were still dominant. To some extent, their behavior could make it so, but only to an extent. Time and change would creep in. However, I believed that The Male Line put the W.A. Inc. saga in some sort of historical perspective.

It could also be borne in mind that in both my story, and W.A. Inc, the entrepreneurs who came crashing to earth were all Catholics. Despite the considerable power wielded by Catholics in Western Australia's history through the Labour Party and the trade union movement, the
State had also been a refuge for the most reactionary, anti-Catholic elements of the Protestant section of our population. To this day, the National Party in WA, despite having a Catholic at its head nationally (Tim Fischer), is well known for harboring anti-Catholic bigots. So W.A. could be seen as being behind the rest of the country in that way, too; that long after sectarian conflicts have been all but forgotten in the East, they remained active and influential in the West.

Theatrical Staging of *The Male Line* as Epic.

I began to realise, as I worked on later drafts, that I had not written about the intended use of music and lighting for the play. Epic theatre has, often, been linked to expressionistic lighting. This was a tradition which I decided I would like to continue with this play. I saw the stage as being drenched in light which is meant to symbolise the light of the Western Australian bush. Drier than in the East, the bush seems constantly on the verge of dying out, of giving way to bare sand. The washed-out, faded yellow of the sand, sometimes white; the black trunks of blackboys and small trees, especially those which have been burned; the pale, pale green of the leaves; the pale distant blue of the sky. The trees all twisted, stubby, unadorned. The countryside vast and dry. Yet, Perth was a small city much like any other - though here and there, the local yellow stone had been used, sometimes on colonial buildings, sometimes in new ones echoing the colonial heritage. These colours would be paramount in the lighting and in the set. Both would also try to convey the sense of space - even though the action takes place in Perth - because I would want the landscape of the West, the
oldest landmass in the world, to be reflected in this play, to be an ever-present, brooding presence.

The music, too, should reflect the vast spaces of Western Australia and the boundless optimism which goes with them. I did not believe that aboriginal music, though it undoubtedly reflects the landscape, would be appropriate. This is the story of the appropriators of aboriginal land, the conquerors. It would be a cruel irony if their music were used in the tale of their oppressors. I heard, instead, pipes, maybe something similar to Irish pipes and penny whistles. Perhaps marching music, in view of Thossie’s attachment to it. Perhaps stiff, correct, formal orchestral music at times, to reflect the Victorian attitudes which prevailed in Perth much later than elsewhere.

3. The Mackay Research.

I travelled to Mackay in the winter of 1993 with funds from the Research Fund of the University of Wollongong. My purpose was to research my grandfather’s life in Mackay. I was particularly interested in his meeting with my grandmother, Henrietta, whom I have called Elizabeth in the play. I also wanted to get a background "feel" of Mackay. I hoped, moreover, that some titbit of information might be unearthed by the research which would throw additional light not only on the life and character of my grandfather, but also on the nature of Australian bush capitalists of his type.

My wife accompanied me. We arrived in Mackay and I immediately began phoning people. I had only a few contacts, whose names I had gathered by writing letters beforehand to such people as the Town Clerk, who gave me the address of the Historical Society, and so forth.
My initial contacts were disappointing. Nobody in the Historical Society knew of my grandfather or of any Gormans (I had already ascertained that there are today few Gormans in the Mackay district - and all of those, as in Maryborough, had come, in recent times, either direct from Ireland or from other parts of Australia.)

I went to the newspaper and searched the years when my grandfather and grandmother were in Mackay. I "knew", from family myth, that they had gone to Perth sometime between 1900 and 1910 - the big old house in Walcott Street Mt Lawley had been built around 1910. I found little to satisfy me. There were a handful of references to old Gilbert Edwards, my grandmother's father, but none to her or to Thossie. I should not have been surprised by that, I suppose, as he was a man of no substance in the district. Looking up Gilbert Edwards' death, however, I did find that among the people sending condolences were his daughter and son-in-law from Perth, Western Australia - which suggests that Henrietta maintained contact with her father after leaving Mackay. I remembered her as a great letter writer.

My grandmother had told me, when I was a child, that her old family property had been called "Hamilton". This was the name of the house in Walcott Street. I therefore began searching for the name "Hamilton". Initially, I assumed that there was a Hamilton village or district, but none of the people I spoke to in the Historical Society knew of any such district. I then began asking about a property named "Hamilton". There was no longer a property of that name in Mackay. However, there was a property named "Hamilton Park". This property was located about forty miles to the west of Mackay.
We rented a car and drove west. When we reached the top of the valley of the River, the road passed by a bluff over which aborigines had been pushed to their deaths in the late 19th century - I wondered if anyone related to me had had anything to do with that - and wound up into the mountains, which were almost as steep as the Escarpment behind Wollongong. The country above the tropical-clad hills was dry and rolling, inhabited by scrub turkeys, feral cattle and little else. We stopped at a bush pub which must have changed little in the past 100 years. Country music was playing and all the men in the bar wore ten gallon hats. Eventually we arrived, after driving through some pretty wild scrub country inhabited by huge Brahmin bulls, at the homestead of "Hamilton Park".

Disappointment; this was not the place. One family had owned it and lived here for more than a century. Moreover, they knew nothing of any property called simply "Hamilton". By now, my time was drawing short and I was becoming desperate. I went back to the library of the Historical Society and made a breakthrough; the Secretary, Ms Betty Clark, had found a member of the Edwards family who was believed to be descended from Gilbert Edwards, through a brother of my grandmother's. We went to his property which was only about fifteen miles from the town of Mackay. It was situated on the banks of the river, at the point where a local road crossed the river.

Near where the road crossed the river was a railway bridge. It had been built within the past fifty years to replace an earlier one which was built in the 1890s to carry the railway across the river from Mackay to link up with the properties across the river to the North. I walked down to the river bank and studied the ruins of the old bridge, destroyed by floods not many years after it was built. I had seen pictures of this bridge on its
opening day, at the Historical Society premises and I had studied the figures standing proudly on the new bridge, wondering if one of them was my grandfather, and if he had helped build that bridge.

We spoke to the young family named Edwards living beside the bridge on the northern bank. They were indeed descended from Gilbert Edwards, and therefore related to my grandmother and to me. This, however, was not the property at which she had lived with her parents as a girl until meeting my grandfather. They did, however, know where that property had been. It was nearby, also on the north side of the bridge, a little further up the same road and also on the bank of the River. Sadly, however, the old homestead in which my grandmother had lived had long since been destroyed by a flood - the floods up there must be fierce, because this river has very high banks - and the present house on the site was built probably in the 1920s or 30s.

We went to visit the place where my grandmother had lived. We drove in to the house and knocked on the door but nobody was home. Not liking to stay, and there being nothing more to see, we left. I had found the site of the house in which she was living when she met my grandfather. By now, however, information was coming in to me. From the Historical Society I learned the location of the local Infants School. Since this was the only Infants School near her home at the time when she was there - I ascertained this looking up a list of Infants Schools in the Mackay District which had been published by the Queensland Education Department - this must have been the one to which she had ridden sidesaddle all those years ago. In the pioneering days many people were hired to teach infants schools who had only a modest formal education themselves, such as my grandmother may have had - being a woman in the bush.
I now followed the logical, shortest route from her home to the school. To my delight, the road - just wide enough for one car and winding between fields of sugar, high and green at that time of year - followed a railway line for part of its length. However, this was not a railway line built by the Queensland Government Railways. If I may backtrack here, I had already been writing to the Queensland Railways, and had been puzzled when they had written back to me saying that they had no record of a man of my grandfather's name working on any of their lines, or in any other capacity for them, at any time - near Mackay or anywhere else. Now I discovered why.

The railway line which ran beside the road from my grandmother's house to the school where she would have taught was one of those private lines, very narrow gauge, which are used to carry the cane out of the canefields at harvest-time, on those funny little trains that look like the ones used to carry children in zoos or fun-parks. My grandfather had worked for a contractor building a private sugar-cane railway. There would be no record, anywhere, of this.

However I now had a section of perhaps three hundred metres where the road and the railway ran side by side. I stood there, trying to soak up the atmosphere. On either side were high green cane crops. Here and there a tropical tree or palm stood alone beside the road. Otherwise, just grass, dirt, bitumen and railway line. Although I knew that I was standing on the place where my grandmother and grandfather had met - a meeting which had changed their lives and brought about mine - I could not feel the excitement I had hoped to feel. The surroundings were too prosaic, too workaday. Of course there would have been cane then, too, rather than bush; it would have looked much the same
except for Thossie's grimy gang of workers, sweating and ragged in contrast to the white lady on her horse.

Later, we found some other members of the Edwards clan. They knew they were related to "Big Bill" Edwards - my second cousin, my grandmother's nephew, a pharmacist in Brisbane until his death in the 70s, a man I had met on a visit to Brisbane in 1958, and the man who helped found the Lawn Tennis Association of Australia and who raised the money to build the impressive tennis complex in Brisbane. But they knew nothing about their great grandfather, Gilbert Edwards, or about his daughter Henrietta who shocked Mackay by running away with a ganger on a sugar-cane railway.

Shortly after leaving Mackay I discovered one more important fact about my grandfather when I received his birth certificate for which I had written to the Queensland Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths. He had taken his name from his mother, one Margaret Gorman, of whom I have been able to find nothing more. Family legend has it that she was an immigrant from Ireland and a big fat woman - which was perhaps why Thossie's mistresses, whom I have rolled into one character in the play, Annie The Mistress, were all large fat women. On the birth certificate there is a blank in the space for "Father". Obviously, Margaret Gorman had no wish to acknowledge him. I imagine that by the time Thossie was born, the father, if he had ever been more than a passing figure in her life, had moved on. So, I was matrilineal.

I returned from Mackay feeling that I had learnt little, but that at least I now knew there was little to learn. Family myths about Thossie and Henry had been to a small extent confirmed, which gave me some
confidence that other myths might also be credible. The trip was worthwhile, if only for the small amount of information I did glean. I confirmed, from the newspaper, that Gilbert "Gogger" Edwards was indeed a prominent man in the district.

He had been part of a syndicate which had built the first sugar mill - I saw the mill, long since rebuilt of course - which is still active, on the south bank of the river close to the city of Mackay. So my grandmother would have been a prosperous lady. People in Mackay did wear white to reflect the tropical sun, and ladies did ride sidesaddle. So all that was true.

It was after this trip that I realised that there would always be large gaps in the story of my grandfather. I had begun my search for him a little too late - all his generation were dead. He himself had left very little in the way of memorials behind him, at least in Queensland. It was after the trip to Mackay that I began to fill in the gaps in my knowledge of his life with invention. Not all of this dinosaur could be found, but the missing bits could plausibly be reconstructed. It was after this trip, then, that I began to move away from a play based upon the facts of my grandfather's life and move toward a more general epic of pioneering life. This trip to Mackay, as well as any distaste I felt about exposing my family's dirty linen, propelled me away from history and toward dramatic licence.


In February 1997 the first stage of the workshopping of the play was carried out at Theatre South. The Artistic Director, Des Davis,
Program at the Faculty Of Creative Arts as Associate Director, in the cafe at the Theatre in Coniston, Wollongong.

I made some remarks about the play - its origins in my investigation of my grandfather and so on. Des talked about the play, and then it was read by the actors. From time to time Des stopped the reading, or I did, to discuss a certain point in the text. The emphasis at all times was upon the text, not the acting, although questions were raised from time to time about staging.

I found the process of listening to this reading extremely helpful, and took several pages of notes for a rewrite, which I completed within one month of the reading. After the reading there was discussion. As usual with such events, I found this discussion less helpful than hearing professional actors read my text. The opinions of actors are of no particular importance to me - no more, at least, than those of audience members. Unless, that is, the actors are discussing their craft - for instance, if one of my lines is difficult to utter.

After the rewrite, Des Davis and I began meeting at regular intervals to read and discuss the text. At these meetings, conducted in his office, I took notes for yet another rewrite. Des had just been to a conference in Brisbane on Dramaturgy and was eager to put into practice what he had learned. He was a very fair and thoughtful dramaturg, and his comments were always helpful and positive. He had a strong sense of the throughline of a play.

The third stage of the workshopping was a moved reading of the script, performed in front of a small audience in Theatre South at the end of October 1997, after a few days' rehearsal.
The first rehearsal for this workshop process took place all day Friday, October 24, 1997, at Theatre South. Des Davis had gathered four professional actors, and Janys Hayes had recruited four of her senior student actors to make a cast of eight. Three of the eight would play only one part each - Thossie, Elizabeth and the Narrator, whom Des regarded as the key characters "whose story this is" - and the four students would play all minor characters, including the young Elizabeth.

The day was taken up with a careful read-through of the script with frequent stops so that Des, Janys and the cast could consult with me as to the script. We made a lot of changes, all small ones, and about half suggested by myself. No attempt was made to block the play.

On Monday, October 27th, the day was spent blocking, with a few amendments to the script. I sat next to Des and made suggestions to him from time to time, following the convention that at rehearsals, the writer should not speak directly to the actors. Des and Janys and I got on very well and agreed all changes without rancor or acrimony, but with regard only to improving the play.

Some work was done on FX and staging, helped by a stage manager, Leonie.

The blocking was ambitious for a workshop reading, but all moves were written on scripts by actors so that they would not be forgotten.

On Tuesday, October 28, I was not able to be present at rehearsals due to teaching commitments. The blocking was completed and a complete read-through of the play, with moves, was carried out.
On the evening of Tuesday 28th, at 7.30 pm, the public reading of the play took place before a small, mostly invited audience. The play ran surprisingly smoothly, considering the complexity of the blocking, and the actors had made considerable progress in developing their characterisations, bearing in mind that character development is something actors like to have some time to perfect before going public.

The play ran to approximately two hours, in two acts. I could see further scope for numerous small cuts. Seeing and hearing actors perform my work was of inestimable value to me in assessing how to improve the play. I now embarked upon the tenth and final draft of the script.

At the time of this writing, December 1997, The Male Line has been programmed to be produced professionally at Theatre South in May 1998. Des Davis is exploring possibilities of co-production with other companies and venues including the Playbox, Melbourne, the Q Theatre Penrith, and the Riverside Theatre Parramatta.

With this play I have, I consider, achieved the seamless, flowing forward motion which I associate with the epic genre. This has been the result of massive rewriting and the positive benefits of two rehearsed readings. Des Davis intends to take four and a half weeks to rehearse the play next year, rather than the usual three and a half, so as to allow further time for some more editing. However, I consider that the play is to all intents and purposes completed. It is said that writers do not finish plays, they abandon them. This play has not been abandoned, but it is finished, as far as humanly possible, at least for now.
SECTION B   THEORY

APPROACHING THEORY IN EPIC DRAMA

Preamble

When I began this research project it consisted of writing a play about my paternal grandfather, Thomas or Thossie Gorman, from the point of view of myself, returning to the city in which he lived, Perth. Along with the play I proposed only to write a Journal in diary form which would follow the process of writing the play and in so doing examine the nature of the creative act itself. My own purpose in undertaking this project was to exorcise the ghosts of my family's past and to come to terms with my origins. My grandfather lived a tumultuous life which included great wealth and political power, criminal intrigues and massive gambling. I had been trying to get that story off my chest since the 1960s. In this alone of all my projects I had come up against a block again and again, and so the project had never been finished. This time, I was determined to finish it.

Traditionally, the epic has been seen as a male discourse, complete with heroes, good and evil, and conquest. In the course of writing this project I began to see another approach to the epic. As I began to work it became clear that what was being attempted was in fact a historical epic, based upon family history. I therefore realised that the original brief would have to be widened for both practical and scholarly reasons. Practical, because there was not enough of scholarly interest in a straightforward narrative of the life of a rich and powerful man. Scholarly, because it became obvious that the project needed a
theoretical core, which I decided to call the Theory Section, and in which I would attempt to make a preliminary approach to outlining some of the parameters of a possible theory of the epic, applicable to my play, The Male Line, and owing as much to traditional epic theory as to Brecht.

Then, in the course of writing the script - which at this point was a linear, broadly naturalistic narrative play about the life of one man - and the Journal, I realised that there were certain significant gaps in the chronicle. There were periods in his life, and incidents in his life, about which nothing was known. For example, according to family myth he was supposed to have met my grandmother when she, the school teacher daughter of a wealthy squatter, was riding sidesaddle past the spot where he, a railway ganger, was building a railway into cane fields near Mackay, Queensland. But how? He and all the family had died and there was no other source of information. The only record there had ever been was family legend. This was the first crisis in the project; what in narrative terms might be called the First Turning Point.

In the course of the research I had read a paper by Goran Printz-Pahlson, "Historical Drama and Historical Fiction; The example of Strindberg", in Scandinavian Studies, No.62, 1990. He quoted Goethe to the effect that the need for dramatic characters to "drive toward the issue and only meet obstructions" can lead to, in Prinz-Pahlson's words, "further disassociation of historical fact from dramatic imagination". He went on to point out that in some of Strindberg's historical plays, the veneer of historical detail sometimes wears very thin.
Emboldened by this I decided that with respect to the missing parts of my grandfather's life, I would have to so disassociate historical fact - to which I had no access - from dramatic imagination - to which I have, like all dramatists, perhaps too much - as to replace the former with the latter; though only in these sections, so as not to interfere with the smooth flow of the story line. On what basis could this be done?

Kate Macomber Stern, in her article "Two Views of Christina Stead's Biography" in the June 1995 issue of Antipodes, the American journal of Australian literary studies, asserted that a biographer must not make assumptions about his or her subject. If this were true it would seem to prevent me from simply making assumptions about the nature and detail of events which occurred in the gaps of my knowledge of my subject's life. It became clear that I was, in fact, writing a biography. It would be unthinkable to pass off my imaginings as to what might have happened in the gaps as if they were historically true.

Leaving aside the question of what we can know about the past, and whether there are any historical facts, to mix fact and fiction and pass them both off as fact would be both confusing and unethical. While ever I continue to be writing a historical play based upon fact, the only thing I could do, when I came to a gap in my knowledge, would be to stop the play and canvass several possible plausible scenarios as to what might have happened in the gap, before moving on to the next known section. This might work in a prose biography, but it would not do in a play script. Since a play is told through action, the action of a play cannot simply stop.

There was only one solution. Henceforth the entire play would have to be treated as if it were a fiction, based loosely upon historical fact:
The Strindberg option, if you like. I would now be writing a fictional, though still epic play, loosely based upon the life of an actual person, with gaps supplied by the author. The gaps, in other words, had taken over the play. The dramatist's imagination had to triumph over history.

Most dramatists, perhaps, are not natural historians; they are natural dramatists. In most dramatists' work, should a choice arise between the dry requirements of historical accuracy and the warm passion of dramatic imagination, passion will win every time. And, for a dramatist, so it should. Again, history often does not make for good drama. Most people do not live their lives with the idea that they will some day be the subject of a play. Moreover, history is prone to tedious repetitions and wrong turnings which slow down the forward motion of the drama. I remember, for instance, in my own adaptation of Albert Facey's autobiography *A Fortunate Life* for the stage, how irritating it was that the man worked on numerous farms and had one funny experience at each of them - so that the dramatist was forced to bend history by blending all those farms into one, for the sake of dramatic pace and tension.

So it was at this point that my historical epic biographical play became a historical epic fictional play. I was now free from the constraints of inconvenient history, to invent a play that would be dramatically viable, if historically hopelessly compromised by that invention. Having solved this problem I now continued with the project - until I became aware of a deeper and more intractable problem - what might be called the second major crisis or Turning Point Two.
To introduce this problem I refer to Helen Gilbert's article "Monumental Moments; Michael Gow's 1841, Stephen Sewell's Hate, Louis Nowra's Capricornia and Australia's Bicentenary" in *Australasian Drama Studies*, No. 24, of April 1994, in which she says, inter alia; "the epic drama offers us a way to remember and to centralise hitherto marginalised histories within our history:" and she mentions the histories of women, of aborigines since 1788, of marginalised gender groups, and of non-Anglo-Celtic people. Their stories, she says, are often forgotten in the ritualised patriarchal narratives of discovery, convictism, gold, wool, war and technology. The epic, she states, works as allegory, enabling the playwright to empower the audience by evoking past journeys which, by seeming to mirror the familiar journeys of our own time, allow the audience to draw conclusions, as in Gow's *1841*, about opportunities lost to make Australia a more humanitarian society, thus by implication placing the responsibility on the audience to ensure that the outcome of today's journey does not end the same way.

The use of allegory in the epic need not, she says, be a system for the suppression of marginalised groups and voices. It can be the site for a new and changed discourse in which allegory as subjugating mode of appropriation is replaced by the opportunity for contestation and counter-discourse. In the course of the epic play new allegories, which subvert the received shibboleths of the European colonial enterprise, can be opened up, this revitalising the epic and its allegorical function in non-subordinating ways.

It was immediately apparent that, in my determination to finally complete the project begun in the 1960s, namely to write the story of
my grandfather from the point of view of myself as grandson viewing his life, I had utterly neglected these other journeys, other discourses, other allegorical possibilities, which had been marginalised by the protagonist’s classic, “colonial enterprise of appropriation and subjugation”, as McComber Stern stated. My linear narrative needed to become multivocal.

In beginning to rethink the project in this way I had recourse also to Stephen Sewell’s play Hate and to Frank Hardy’s play Faces In The Street, both of which seemed to me to have at least some of the characteristics of epic drama.

In Hate Sewell confronts a despot in such a way as to subvert that despot’s subjugating narrative. In Faces we see society itself as despot, through the allegorical setting of a mental hospital. Of course, life is never that simple. People are never simply despots, and even the most despotic society has other dimensions. But epic drama is often characterised, among other things, by the simplicity and directness of its narrative line, in which the complexities and confusions of life as we experience it are replaced by black and white certainties, where good struggles to overcome evil, and where we always know which is which.

In my play, however, I determined not to strip away the complexities of character - in the protagonist or in any other character - but to emphasise them, thus making it more, not less, difficult for an audience to fasten upon the allegory and make it their own. As critic, viewing myself as artist, I can only guess at my reasons for doing this. My guess is that some instinct, born of my life’s experience and of my experience as an artist, compelled me to shape, for an educated and
intelligent Australian audience, an allegory which would not insult them; on the basis, too, that audiences love to do the work of writing a play in their own heads, as they watch it.

Be that as it may, it certainly seemed to me from my reading of the tiny canon of Australian epic plays, that they deal much more in the complexities of character than is the case, often, with some of the classic European epics such as Cervante's *Numancia*, which dramatises the mass suicide in 133BC, of the besieged Celtiberian community at Numancia rather than submit to Roman occupation. Like many epic plays it deals with group emotions and destinies and tends to avoid the confusions of, for example, paradox in the manifestation of character. It is heroic tragedy with tragic heroes.

A major concern was that, in writing this story, the protagonist might seem to emerge as a mythic hero; and while he would always, and necessarily, remain a mythic figure, the status of the heroic would more properly be assigned to those whom he had subjugated in his rise to power. It was they to whom history has assigned the role of tragic heroes. Therefore, it became necessary to broaden the base of the narrative so as to give more prominence to the marginalised. The story needed to proceed on more than one front.

At about this time I encountered the Ph.D thesis written by Sue Rowley, now Foundation Professor of Fine Art History at the University of New South Wales, entitled "Gender and Nation Foundations in late 19th Century Australian Bush Mythology", University of Wollongong, 1993. In this thesis Rowley deconstructs a number of selected male 19th century Australian painters. She shows that in these paintings the journey of women is restricted to the
territory encompassed by the home and the garden. Rowley’s notion of journey linked with the notion of journey as central to the epic.

Granted that the need to expand the journeys of such characters as my grandmother had been demonstrated, how was this to be achieved? Henrietta Gorman, named Henrietta d’Arcy in the first draft, did not in fact describe a journey beyond the limits described by Rowley. In order to enable the script to present the allegory to its audience it would be necessary to expand her journey, if necessary by means of fiction.

At this point it became apparent that great liberties would have to be taken with the character based upon my grandmother. She would have to be allocated powers, she would have to be given a much stronger voice in the form of narration. By these means she could carry the burden of subverting the dominant narrative of the character based upon my grandfather.

So, in order that the tyranny of the patriarch might be overthrown, the tyranny of mere fact, with which my play had begun, must also be overthrown. If the source of his story was family legend, the source of her, new and expanded story must be imagination. The past would have to be engineered in order to create a drama that might serve the present. The annoying irrelevancies, wrong turnings, and repetitions of mere historical fact must not only be smoothed over by plastering in the gaps with fiction - the entire play must become a fiction whose purpose was not to revisit the past, still less to record it, but to exploit it for present purposes. A natural dramatist would feel much more at home, now that the need to bow to history had been done away with. Henrietta d’Arcy was now renamed
Katherine d’Arcy (later, Elizabeth d’Arcy) so as to symbolically end the play’s dependence upon the tumultuous but mere facts of my grandfather’s life. The play would now be able to reveal, through Elizabeth d’Arcy’s initiatives, the underlying trend of the late 19th and early 20th centuries of the slow growth of the power of women.

There would not be time to completely rewrite the play along these lines. The project had already been underway for five years. Nor could too many liberties be taken with historical fact - that defeated but not destroyed tyrant - for fear of losing plausibility with an audience which knows its history, and which knows that the progress of women during this time was slow indeed, and by no means apparent on the surface of everyday life. Certain historical facts could be built upon in order to create a stronger journey for Elizabeth d’Arcy, however. For example, my grandmother did steal money from my grandfather. She used it not for herself but her sons, away at school in the bush or at University in Melbourne. She did engineer the negotiations between her father and Thossie, as a result of which her father gave Thossie a large sum of money to go as far away from Mackay as possible. She did conspire behind the scenes to influence Thossie’s financial dealings.

All of these historical facts could be expanded - fictionalised - to create a role for Elizabeth d’Arcy which could match the role of her husband. Further, the characters based - now loosely - upon Elizabeth’s housemaid and upon my mother would be empowered by being given a larger share of the narration, and by being given larger and more relevant actions to perform.

What about that other aim of my original project - to discover whether there is, in fact, an Australian epic tradition which in significant ways
differs from the European traditions? This is an extensive subject and would have to wait for another day, another paper, but briefly; it seemed that there may be modest but significant differences in the epic plays written by Australians.

To generalise, it seemed that although the notion of estrangement remained, there was much more attention paid to the complexities of character in Australian epic plays. While still episodic journeys, they were often less overtly political. There may be some influence from the bush tradition of campfire yarns and “tall tales”. They may be less serious and more jocose, less subversive and more anecdotal. My earlier concern with the nature of the creative act remained a big part of the Journal, but no longer seemed central to the intellectual journey which the Journal charts. Later drafts of the play would look a lot different from the first. From a narrative about my grandfather told from my own POV it would now become, over successive drafts, a multi-dimensional story in which the discourse of colonial appropriation would be subverted in favour of a broader-based multivocal narrative encompassing all the voices, all the characters, of the colonial enterprise - its victims as well as its entrepreneurs.

Moreover, in the Journal as well as in the script, a journey had been described. The assumptions made in its early pages had been well and truly overthrown by the time the reader reached the later pages; the subject matter of the Journal, chronicling the journey of the project as well as the journeys of the characters, had grown in depth and widened in scope. The Journal itself had a history: I had therefore not escaped History altogether. A journey which had started with a few gaps being filled in with invention ended with the overthrow of history and the subversion of the protagonist’s narrative. Imagination had taken over
from the history and it was only proper, in a project whose purpose was to examine creativity, that it should.

The work is still evolving. What at first seemed to be a practical problem of filling in gaps, turned out, in practice, to be a problem of theory. In this journey I have walked on two legs: the leg of imagination as an artist, and the leg of research as a scholar. The two have worked together to change my perception of the project’s objective; in the process making this my own epic journey of both artistic and theoretical discovery.

Introduction

The purpose of these Notes, as of all the Annotations in this DCA, is to comment upon, amplify, draw ideas from, reflect upon, and generally add to the creative work - in my case a play - which is the central feature of this Doctorate.

It is my intention to use these Notes to explore traditional theories of the Epic and the character of my play *The Male Line* as an epic play with traditional characteristics, more fully than was possible in the Journal which recorded and reflected upon the process by which the play was created. In doing so, I will not discount the value of subjective insights and perspectives - even, as appropriate, of emotive language. These Annotations, it could be argued, are themselves, at least in part, a creative document, the subject matter of which is creativity, and whose central element is a work of creative art - in the present case, an epic stage play.

The original intention was to follow the simple format of writing a creative work - in this case a play about my paternal grandfather,
Thossie Gorman - and accompany that creative work with a Journal which would chart the process of creativity. As originally conceived, then, this DCA project was about examining the nature of the creative act, as it occurred moment by moment in the creation of a dramatic work.

This remains an important purpose of this DCA project. However, as I continued to work on the play and its accompanying Journal, it began to be apparent that what I was writing could be called an epic play. *The Male Line* certainly seemed to have at least some of the elements usually associated with the epic genre. I realised that this epic character of the play would have to be explained, analysed, investigated; at least to a preliminary degree. It seemed obvious that, the play being an epic, this DCA must concern itself, at least in part, with the nature of epic drama. Moreover, that process began to seem to this researcher to be equally as interesting as an examination of the act of creativity. Indeed, toward the end of the process it began to seem as if the process of investigation of the creative act, and the process of examining the epic nature of my play, might become the same process.

It was my hope that these notes might help clarify the nature of the traditional epic which might, in time, inspire another researcher to conduct a more fully-fledged, critical analysis of the epic in Australia, having as its sole purpose an investigation of the theory of the epic in Australia, and of the nature of epic drama in this country.

Having made that decision it was necessary to decide how to organise any material of a theoretical nature which my research might unearth. As a result of reading, thinking and talking, I gathered together a body
of information. Upon examination, that information broke down naturally into the following sections.

1. Notes toward a definition of the traditional Epic;

2. *The Male Line* as epic play;

3. A consideration of the idea; Is the epic capable of representing, reporting or in some way capturing history - the past itself, as it was or might have been, or might be seen to have been.

1. Concerning Traditional Theories of the Epic

The "traditional" theory of the Epic comes to us from many sources. The books from which I have gleaned ideas about epic drama are listed in the Bibliography; a body of mostly European critical writing about epic poetry, prose and drama. This DCA is not the place to examine the traditional European epic in an amount of detail sufficient to formulate a firm and defensible theory of traditional epic drama - as distinct, perhaps, from, but complementary to, Brechtian epic drama.

What can be attempted in these pages is to raise some of the issues and ideas which are associated with the development of epic theory in Europe, with a view to reflecting upon, and increasing our appreciation of, those epic qualities which may inhere in my play. Where possible, sources of particular ideas which form part of the traditional theory of the epic will be acknowledged. Thus, the theory
examined in this Section will be such as bears and focuses upon the central part of this DCA project, which is the play.

I will examine what I take to be some of the principal characteristics of the epic as it has come down to us, and as it is understood by myself at this point in my research. What I am looking at here is not the Brechtian epic, but a heritage, the classic epic narrative, originally expressed in oral poetry and sometimes expressed as drama.

Before proceeding, however, may I note that almost all of the authors whose views I quote in this Section were writing about traditional poetry or prose. I am applying their ideas to epic drama, and I will not acknowledge this as I do so. The reason for this is that I consider the application of traditional concepts of the epic, as applied to poetry and prose, to the drama to be one of the ways in which this DCA is breaking new ground.

Previously, the term "epic" when applied to drama meant Brechtian epic. In going back before Brecht in search of epics in other literary forms, and applying those "traditional" ideas of epic to drama, I am in a sense bypassing Brecht - although, to be sure, many of Brecht's ideas did correspond to those of the traditional epic and may reasonably, in my view, be assumed to have been derived from a study of the traditional epic canon. Moreover, to the extent that I may be "bypassing" Brecht, this in no way implies any lack of respect for the contribution Brecht made to theatre, and to the development of our understanding of how theatre may be epic, and of the uses of such an epic theatre.

In fact, in only one major respect have I deviated from a Brechtian discourse in formulating theories of the epic for contemporary drama,
and in particular for the *The Male Line* - that is in my insistence that a study of character, in the conventional naturalistic manner, is not incompatible with epic drama. My reason for deviating from Brecht's dominance of epic drama at all is that, to the best of my knowledge, no other writer has yet done so, and this seemed a line of exploration well worth taking. I was, simply, curious to see whether ideas of the Epic which existed before Brecht could still be valid, and could still be applied to drama written today.

I do not see a problem in applying ideas which were formulated for prose and poetry to drama. If they fit - that is, if they work on stage, and only public performance can reveal for sure whether this is so - then there would seem to be no reason why these ideas may not be applied to contemporary drama. There will be a workshopping of *The Male Line* as part of this DCA process, and it is to be hoped that this workshop process will test the theories discussed in this Section.

Since by no means all writers agree on precisely what characterises epic drama, I have come to consider that there is no hard-and-fast definition of the genre. I prefer, therefore, to lay before the reader those characteristics of the epic which I have encountered and which seem to me to define, or at least outline, a form of drama to which the term "epic" might reasonably and justifiably be affixed.

I consider the major characteristics of the epic to be as follows:

1. a play about a tribe or a nation, especially about that tribe or nation's memory. Mircea Eliade, in *Myth and Reality*, states that myths define a tribe;
2. a play whose protagonist in some way represents h/his tribe or nation (I will use "Tribe" to mean both tribe and nation, by which I will simply mean a group of people sharing a culture), and/or who in some way represents the social and cultural values of h/her tribe. E. M. W. Tillyard, in *The English Epic And Its Background*, (Tillyard, 13) states that "the epic ... must have faith in the system of belief, or the way of life that it bears witness to". In other words, the individual protagonist retains h/his validity as such only if h/she identifies with the tribe and if h/his story is seen as being a manifestation of that tribe's story. (But note that Paul Merchant, in his "The Epic", refers to "the epic figure in his massive isolation that gives the great epics their grandeur" (Merchant, 4).

In stating that myths and epics define a tribe, Eliade states that it is often to be used to warn the tribe of what happens if an individual goes against the pattern of behaviour which was established, long ago, by the myths, e.g., the myths of the Judeo-Christian origins. Barthes, in *The Death Of The Author*, states that "myth as the collective representation is ... a traditional tale of origins"; (Barthes, 43);

3. a play which covers a long period of time, and therefore, runs for a long time itself - whether for several nights or merely for several hours. Merchant refers to epics as "expansive, rambling works surpassing the diversions of realism", elsewhere as "unhurried, episodic, apt to digress". Tillyard refers to the epic as having "amplitude, breadth, inclusiveness"; (Tillyard, 6);
4. a play covering a large territory, such as a nation. This seems to follow, inevitably, from the fact that most epics which I have encountered deal with the early travails of a tribe and cover a long span of time - inevitably, it would seem, such a story must also cover a lot of territory;

5. a play which necessarily has a large cast; and, again, this would seem to follow from 3; and 4; above;

6. a play which in some way encapsulates, or holds up for admiration, the heroic values necessary to achieve great objectives. Merchant says, in reference to *Moby Dick*; "above all there is the massive central figure of Ahab, in the traditional epic role of man against monster ...". (Merchant, 5). Merchant is saying here that Ahab, though, as he says, mad, stands on behalf of all human beings against all that is represented by the whale - blind forces, rampant nature, the threat of an unregulated world;

7. a non-naturalistic play in which story counts for more than character; (this view of the epic is held in common by both Brecht and some of the traditional epic writers). Note, however, that some writers on the traditional epic do not hold with this view. For instance, Merchant points out that Dante’s *Divine Comedy* was the first epic written in the first person. By this I take him to mean that it is the first to begin to take into account the individual psychology of the epic protagonist, a trend which, by the time of Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick* was an established convention - though in the
novel, not in the theatre which subsequently came under the influence, in respect of the epic, of Brecht.

Merchant also says that the epic “always allowed the possibility of a detailed analysis of the hero’s soul”, and “we begin to see in Virgil’s Aeneas a greater interest in the psychological” (Merchant 25). And he says, of The Divine Comedy “... the whole route (of the poem’s narrative) is lined with every possible variation of human character”. Merchant also describes Milton’s epic poem Paradise Lost as a great psychological narrative” (Merchant 26). It is, he goes on to say “an epic of the human soul”. Eliade refers to the possibility of the epic delineating character when he refers to the epic as “charting the rise and fall of a flawed hero” (Eliade 190). Charles Rowan Beye, in his book The Iliad, The Odyssey and The Epic Tradition, states that “on other occasions the narration of action rather than any description tends to develop a conception of character” (Beye, 98). Elsewhere in the book he says that in the first book of the Iliad, very few (of the significant figures) are given any real description. Characters in the Iliad are often described says Beye, “only in terms of their function or their prowess”. From these sources we can draw the inference that, though character descriptions did occur in traditional epic, they were often sketchy and character was more likely than not to arise from the way in which a protagonist acted rather than from any psychological description of that protagonist by the writer.

I note, however, that Merchant says “Ovid ... simply changed the rules of the epic to suit the work that he was composing.
When one notes that his first change was to abandon the idea of the hero, it becomes clear how great a change he was prepared to make” (Merchant, 27). If Ovid can change the rules of the epic, and remembering, above, that Dante also changed the rules of the epic by beginning to write in the first person, I believe that I may also change the rules of the traditional epic to suit the purposes of the play I am writing; I have chosen to do so by concentrating more upon character and character development than was common in the traditional, pre-Brechtian epic - or indeed in Brecht;

8. a play which has mythic dimensions and which relies upon allegory. Joseph Campbell, in The Hero With A Thousand Faces says that the Bhagavad Gita, which he already characterised as a mythic story, is also “one of the great war epics of all time” (Campbell, 36). In other words, the epic can have a mythic foundation, and the great myths may have an epic character. Merchant, referring to James Joyce’s Ulysses, states: “the book’s structure is modelled on the Odyssey ...” this suggesting that an epic may have the structure and the content of a mythic story (Merchant, 10). E. M. W. Tillyard, in The English Epic And Its Background says that an epic must be governed by a powerful sense of predetermination (Tillyard, 9). This also, of course, is one of the governing characteristics of classic myth. Again, it is well established that Cervantes’Don Quixote, which is accepted as one of the great epic novels of the Western Tradition, functions as allegory;
a play which follows a Journey. There are a number of authorities for the notion of journey in the epic. For example, Campbell, in "The Hero With 1,000 Faces", refers to the "universal mythological journey" undertaken by the mythic Hero, the first stage of which he calls "The Call to Adventure". Elsewhere, of course, Campbell makes clear that the notion of epic is close to, indeed intertwined with, that of mythic journey;

J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord Of The Rings*, widely recognised as both epic and myth, is referred to by Merchant as nothing less than the story of a massive journey. Bobis notes the journey motifs in some Philippines epics. Eliade says that whereas myth narrates the sacred history of a community, epic narrates the non-sacred history - or journey - of that community;

a play which has universal moral significance. Eliade says that the myth underlying the epic is that of the Flawed Hero who rises, only to fall. A parallel with tragedy is evident here, and in this context it is interesting to note that Tillyard makes the connection between epic and tragedy, first by stating that the epic is a diluted form of a story of which tragedy is a compressed form; and later by referring to "a tragic intensity which co-exists with the group-consciousness of an age". Again, the elevated, noble language cited by Tillyard as characteristic of traditional epic poetry and often prose - a characteristic which is present in a great deal of tragedy, particularly Shakespeare's, links the two forms. However, we might note that Merchant quotes the *Yale
Review as saying: "Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida contains in a single play most of the essential elements of the epic. The final sequence of disjointed scenes refuses to be organised into conventional epic cadences" (Merchant, 40);

11. a play which is episodically structured. Part of the reason, I suggest, for this is that epics are usually of considerable length - a characteristic we see in Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle*. It is of course not easy to maintain a strong climactic structure throughout a play of great length - suspense, if maintained for too great a time, palls and begins to have the opposite effect to that which it was intended to have, even to the point of becoming comic. Epic plays, says Tillyard, have "amplitude, breadth, inclusiveness" (Tillyard, 6). He states elsewhere that the epic is longer (referring here to epic performed poetry) because of the physical conditions of its performance - meaning, as he makes clear, that the recitation of an epic poem in ancient times was often accompanied by interruptions such as the difficulty of being heard, by the need for audiences to eat, and so on (Tillyard, 7). A certain disjointedness may have been part and parcel of the traditional epic poetic performance, and may, I assert, be seen today as part and parcel of the conditions of the performance of an epic play - which is another way of saying that the epic is episodic by virtue of the nature of its live performance. This is of course another aspect of the epic with which Brecht would not have disagreed.
Bobis states that the episodes in an epic can each stand alone, and she cites this as a characteristic of the traditional epic form (Bobis, 52).

12. a play with elevated language. In traditional epic poetry it was thought that the language needed to have certain characteristics which, in some sense, raised the narrative above the level of, say, a long-winded joke told in a pub, or an account of a traffic accident given by a police officer in a courtroom.

Beye, for example, refers to the custom of repetition, where certain words or phrases, often of a heraldic or attention-gaining nature, were repeated by the performer. Elsewhere, however, he stresses that these devices were necessary in the context in which epic poems were usually narrated in ancient, or pre-industrial times - aloud, in the open air, to festive crowds who, having heard the poem before, may not be disposed to listen too closely.

Again, Beye refers to the "extended simile ... as a hallmark of contemporary dramatic epic, has been less evident (Beye, 60). Tillyard refers to "high qualities and high seriousness" as being defined characteristics of the epic (Tillyard, 3). Elsewhere he refers to the need for "distinguished words" in epic writing (Tillyard, 5).

These linguistic qualities have not survived into modern dramatic epic writing, although it could be said that in some sense the actions (which according to Beye, are always the focus of the epic) are serious, high-minded and distinguished
- if by that we mean that epic heroes are conventionally high-minded and serious to the point, almost at times, of being comic dupes.

Other forms of the traditional epic, such as the song and performance modes described by Bobis, will often use serious and distinguished language which would seem out of place in a contemporary play such as *The Male Line*.

13. A pre-occupation with the past. Bobis, when discussing the structure of the epic, states that the traditional epic commences with an Invocation of the past. Eliade asserts that, whereas the myth is that which could not have existed, epic is history, i.e., that which did exist, to which I would only add that the history found in the epic is often patched-up, overblown, or plain unreliable (Eliade, 2). Merchant sees the epic as taking us back to a "period of extraordinary significance" - this is certainly true of *Male Line* (Merchant, 9). He says, later, that the quality which distinguishes the *Aeneid* from other epics is its sense of the past (Merchant, 25). Eliade says that the epic "goes back", often but not always to the Origins; sometimes to a more recent past (Eliade, 193). Elsewhere, Eliade refers to "dramatic events which took place in a more or less fabulous past" (Eliade, 194).

14. The epic is concerned with an isolated, flawed hero. If we take the term "hero" in the way that Gilbert does, (Gilbert, op cit) we may agree with this statement as regards *Male Line*. Thossie, like Ulysses or Quixote, is deeply flawed, though in different ways from these traditional heroes. Moreover, the
term "hero" does not mean that the person carrying this title is morally superior, merely that h/she is the protagonist of an epic narrative. Merchant refers to the protagonist of an epic as being a “central figure ... in massive isolation” (ibid). Eliade also refers to epics as charting “the rise and fall of a flawed hero” (ibid). Wallace Stegner, in his collection of essays entitled Where The Bluebird Sings To The Lemonade Springs says: “(optimism and hope) led to degradation of the environment” (Stegner, 48). He might also, I suggest, have said that it leads also to the degradation of the soul of the colonial entrepreneur, and of all who are affected by his journey of hope, which turns inevitably into a journey of pain.

15. The epic includes hitherto marginalised characters. Mary Louise Pratt, in Imperial Eyes Travel Writing and Transculturation, refers to “autoethnographic expression, an instance in which a colonised subject(s) undertake(s) to represent h/himself in ways that engage the coloniser’s own terms” (Pratt, 110). I take this to mean that the marginalised subjects of the colonising patriarch choose to combat or at least engage their marginalisation by or through the subterfuge of engaging in the coloniser's colonial enterprise, as a means of demarginalising themselves, at least to some extent. By raising the status of some marginalised characters in Male Line, I have broken new ground in the use of epic form.

It would not be necessary, in the view of this writer, for a particular play to satisfy all of these requirements before it
could be considered an epic play. Those characteristics which, from my readings, seem to me to be essential to the epic are; numbers 2, 6, 8, 9, 10 and 11.

My purpose here is to consider theory as it relates to my play, I will return to the above characteristics later, and will add to them at that time. For now, however, I would like to amplify, and in some cases modify, some of these characteristics a little before proceeding.

The archetypal epic play is, in my view, the story of a tribe or nation; its origins, its values, where it considers itself to have come from and where it considers itself to be headed. In this respect it is distinguished from much contemporary drama, which concerns the struggles of the individual; h/her origins, values and future.

However, in the view of this writer, the development of character in a protagonist and in other dramatic characters is not necessarily inconsistent with the epic as traditionally conceived (i.e., pre Brechtian epic theory). This, in the view of this writer, is where the traditional theory of the epic differs from the theory developed by Bertolt Brecht - for which I refer the reader to the many books written about Brechtian theory, some of which are listed in the Bibliography.

This is one area where this DCA Project breaks new ground and, as is appropriate with a Doctorate in which a creative work is the central feature, this new ground is broken in the play, and reflected upon in these pages, and not the other way
around. In *The Male Line* the character of Thossie is developed, more than might be the case in a play based upon Brechtian notions of the epic, where characters are not explored in depth but are, rather, symbols or avatars representing social classes or interest groups.

Epic, whether traditional or Brechtian, tends not to dwell in psychology. In the twentieth century psychology, for better or for worse, has been concerned mostly with the individual - the influence of Freud alone would have ensured this. In order to focus the struggle of the tribe or nation, however, it has been necessary for epic drama to use archetypal protagonists - stereotypes, often - who, in their persons, concentrate and manifest the values of that tribe or nation. Their individual psychology has been ignored or suppressed so that they may better represent their tribe. The protagonist struggles, like an avatar, on behalf of h/his tribe or nation - to found it, to help it survive through a great moral or military crisis, or to renew it.

I am reminded of epic drama when I see a newspaper, which in order to make a social issue such as poverty among single-parent families accessible to its readers, focuses its article on one "typical" single parent and h/her family; to particularise the issue. So it is, perhaps, with epic drama; a protagonist particularises, in his or her person and in his or her struggle, the great issues of the play, which might otherwise seem too remote, too abstract, for the ordinary playgoer to grasp on an emotional, even visceral level. Such a play will, inevitably, and by its very nature, demand several more elements. It
will demand a large set, a large cast, and a long time in which to play. This might be so because even though one individual, the hero, has been chosen as the focus for vast social/national issues, the sheer scope of these issues could by itself necessitate a large cast, a large set and a long duration.

The epic play will tend to have heroic qualities if only because the sheer scope and size of the issues being dramatised will place huge obstacles in the path of the protagonist - obstacles which only a heroic protagonist, with considerable help from others, will be able to overcome so that the message of the epic play will be realised. By "heroic" here I might mean something like; larger than life, having exaggerated qualities of stoicism, indifference to personal danger, and possessed of great determination. The term "heroic" as here used does not have any gender connotations. A hero might be male or female, and heroism might be defined as much in terms of endurance and the ability to survive as in terms of physical strength or courage.

The epic play, according to all my sources, is essentially moral in character. It has a message, it seeks to persuade, convert; it is, in many ways, a sermon. Perhaps this is why Brecht was so easily able to turn it to didactic purposes. A "good" epic play, that is, one which displays in a balanced and comprehensive way all the main attributes considered to be integral to this type of theatre, will have, I would suggest, universal moral significance; a message which will be true for all people, at all times, in all places.
Of course, in the current intellectual climate, the expression "universal moral significance" might be considered suspect. Some might say that not all tribes, not all individuals share a common morality. In the opinion of this writer, the expression "universal moral significance" means only that the authors of the epic poems or plays under consideration believe that the values expressed in those poems or plays are, and should be, universal - and that they intend them to be, or to become, universal. This is all that is meant by "universal" and in the opinion of this writer it is all that is meant by the writers whose works I have studied.

If an epic play, for example, states that it is morally necessary for a village to resist a King who wants to take all its young men for one of his avaricious wars, or that it is sometimes necessary to go to war in the service of a revolution which will in time benefit the community, then these are messages - whether or not we agree with them - which are intended to be true - if they are true at all - for all people in all places at all times. For this writer, "intended" is the significant word in the previous sentence.

Epic drama, moreover, often deals with heroism of a tribe or nation against oppressors, and heroism, so the traditional theory of the epic seems to say, is heroic to the extent that it is in the service of universal moral truths. Some might say that Thossie, in The Male Line, is an evil man, and cannot therefore be an epic protagonist. This will be dealt with in the section examining The Male Line as traditional epic play: using arguments derived from contemporary writers on the
epic, I will attempt, in that Section, to show both that an evil man can be a protagonist of a traditional epic - and some have been - and also that the play remains epic, whether or not Thossie is a "good" man, if it attempts to rescue hitherto marginalised characters from the grip of the patriarchal tyrant.

As I understand classic epic theory, therefore, an evil person cannot be heroic. Only a "good" person can be heroic, and the definition of "good" must always be; in the service of universally accepted moral values, not merely in the service of moral values accepted by one tribe or nation, such as the Nazi state. It is this moral dimension of the epic which, I strongly suspect, turns many young people, rendered cynical after the failures of so many ideologies, so many hopes in the twentieth century, against the epic. To many contemporary writers, perhaps, the epic is too naive, even simplistic, in its assumptions as to what constitutes good and evil, and as to the possibility of one overcoming the other.

To satisfactorily enable one person, even among a large cast, to manifest and display the values of the tribe it is often necessary to use symbolism and allegory. The protagonist, to begin with, symbolises heroic goodness, social virtue, the good which, as in a Hindu epic, must overcome evil.

Quite often, too, the protagonist - indeed, not infrequently the whole tribe - may go on a Journey. In Fiddler On The Roof, which has many of the qualities and characteristics of an epic play, Tevye's tribe must, in the end, embark on a
journey, depicted in the play as the journey of the dispossessed Jew. The whole play, in a sense, and given what we now know about the Russian pogroms around the turn of the century, leads up to that journey, even though the journey itself - necessarily, on a stage, lacking the dimensions of the cinema - only occupies a few minutes right at the end.

The traditional epic, because it is so crowded with story, and because its story is often so huge, has embodied the dominance of story over character. In this, all writers on epic theory seem to agree. However, as stated above, this writer believes that the development of character, such as for example the examination of the ways in which a character may be divided within or against h/himself or, in the case of The Male Line, the contradictions in a character - the paradox at the heart of that character - is not incompatible with an epic play, but on the contrary, gives it greater strength and depth by involving the audience more fully in its story and its struggles.

The epic is considered to be episodic in structure, which means that causality - one event causing the next to create a plot - is of lesser importance. Scenes do not necessarily follow, in a causal sense, one from another - they succeed each other, merely; and by succeeding, show aggregating perspectives of the protagonist and of the events, which in turn allows an audience to draw its own conclusions about the social changes being depicted in the epic play. In The Male Line the twin protagonists Thossie and Elizabeth marry, they go on a Journey, they join the Irish Catholic tribe
in Perth, and they proceed toward their destiny accordingly. Although there is a kind of apparent causality about these succeeding events, in the sense that had they not met, for example, they could not have travelled to Perth together, the mere sequence of these events does not of itself imply causality. In a play based upon climactic structure it is always possible for the narrative to move in any one of several different directions - but the events which occur force them, or cause them, to move in only one of those directions. In an episodic play like mine there is a sense that they could proceed otherwise than they did. Their marriage, for example, did not force them to leave Mackay, it preceded it, and there is then a sense that they must go on a journey - and Perth being so far away, it is a logical choice. The marriage, of itself, however, does not cause their journey to Perth, or indeed any journey, to take place. The journey is subsequent to, but not caused by, their marriage.

Epic drama often involves the use of a Narrator, one who tells the story and thus provides a linear spine. Moreover, by standing on stage and speaking directly to an audience, a Narrator can help the audience see the story objectively - a technique used by Brecht and commonly called "estrangement". Of course it is also possible to use characters from within the epic play as narrators - they "turn out of the action" to face the audience and deliver a commentary on the action or to fill in gaps, as in the case of those epic plays which span great chunks of time or space, so that the
audience needs to be guided from one space or time to the next in the episodic sequence.

Epic, it has been suggested, can thrive best where a nation wishes to remember its past. In this respect the case of Derek Walcott and the West Indies deserves a mention. Walcott, in *Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory*, refers to his task as being; to help create a past for the West Indian people which they can remember with pride, and which can thus both subvert and replace the colonial enterprise of slavery (Walcott, 14).

Tragedy may often be a necessary element in the epic. No tribe can come into being and develop a historic sense of itself without pain. No tribe or nation has ever been established without mistakes, loss, destruction – as mentioned above, the city-founding enterprise can, like the epic enterprise, create a new society only by destroying the old. Again, the epic often has about it a sense of inevitability, of Fate, which is also found in tragedy.

It should not be forgotten, either, that epic, as described by those writers I have read, entails spectacle. Bearing in mind that a long slow play may risk losing the attention of its audience, spectacle is the obvious way to retain that attention and to make the events of the epic seem to move more swiftly toward their resolution. Giganticism, alone, however, would not make epic a play which in other respects was not.
Epics frequently look back and the past is always cloudy; which can be the source of the imprecise approach to history which may sometimes characterise epic drama - and is often used to criticise it. In *The Male Line* history is sometimes confused with an imagined past - this is deliberate, and necessitated by the gaps in the historical record of Thossie; however, this confusion points to the relative unimportance of history as mere fact in the epic drama.

Having now briefly canvassed some of the main characteristics which are usually thought to inhere in the epic, I would like to consider more thoroughly the opinions of a few other writers whose thoughts may contribute further to an understanding, in general terms, of the traditional theory of the epic.

2. Other Writers

"An epic is a long narrative poem that first appeared in classical times but later was imitated in European literature. Such works featured the adventures of a noble hero who represented the important virtues of his culture and underwent heroic adventures and battles of great importance to his people. The plot was generally taken from legend or tradition; the conflicts had universal moral significance; the style was dignified; and the entire work had great scope and spectacle". (Konigsberg, Ira, *Complete Film Dictionary*, Bloomsbury, UK, 1993).

In film, the term "epic" generally applies to a work of great scope, spectacle, and action that features plot more than character, and
heroic action more than heroic virtue. The hero, like h/his literary prototypes, is a great figure, a noble warrior, and an intense lover; like them he is larger than life ... films that fit this description all deal with distant cultures and times. Examples of the epic genre in film are D. W. Griffiths' *The Birth of A Nation* (1915) and David Lean's *Lawrence Of Arabia* (1962).

Some writers believe that a three-part structure is typical of traditional epic drama. The plot is first exposed in its essentials in Act 1; the plot is developed and conflict grows in intensity in Act 2, with complications and obstacles building tension; and the climax occurs some way into Act 3, followed by a swift resolution and closure. (In this context I note that some of Shakespeare's plays were strongly epic in character, though they relied upon a five-part structure: (*Henry V*, for example). For these writers turning points or plot points mark the divisions between acts, and consist of new information which turns the story in a different direction.

Joseph Campbell, however, in "The Hero With 1,000 Faces", (ibid) brings new elements into consideration. After Act 1, in which a person is ripped out of h/her ordinary world and made to be a hero (*Star Wars, The Hobbit*), a Helper comes into the picture and assists the hero to enter, and then survive in, a strange "other-world", a world-out-of-the-world, which is the forum in which the hero's actions, to save his tribe or nation, must take place. Having successfully negotiated a series of Tests, the hero then returns triumphant to the ordinary world, having saved it. (Name their book) Lynda Heys and Sharon Kruger, American
film theorists, follow much the same path; their differences merely of structural detail, not essence.

The epic, for all these theorists, has a sense of necessity about it, a sense of Fate. Mythology, which Joseph Campbell deals with, is a world where certain acts must be performed, in a certain way, in a certain order. Perhaps the hero must not look back, for instance, otherwise he will lose that which he most seeks - and the epic is often about one who seeks, a characteristic which, to be sure, it shares with some other genres, such as the Romantic ballad or tale - thought the epic, to be sure, is on a grander scale.

Frank McConnell, in his book *Storytelling and Mythmaking: Images from Film and Literature*, New York, OUP, 1979, is a well-known and well-regarded theorist on the epic. He states that the epic storyteller gives us a hero to incarnate the code of the myth (which explains how things have come to where they are), and to impose it upon the City which he founds (McConnell, 3). This is his major contribution, from the point of view of these Notes; to suggest that the hero of the epic founds the city, and that the epic is a decoding of the myth of that foundation, to be told and retold down the ages to generations in that city. In the epic world, says McConnell, the city is always at the point of beginning; which is why the hero is always in some way a king, the man who begins the observances which later become habitual. It is a founding-tale.

However, he says, epic, like all other phenomena, has become democratized. It is no longer about kings but about ordinary people (unlike Campbell, who says the epic finds ordinary people, makes them kings in a strange other-world, and then makes them
ordinary again). However, McConnell has another interesting variation to offer. He says, inter alia, that for instance, the Achain heroes of the Iliad are heroes not despite, but because of the grasping, unholy passions which impel them to conquer Troy and found Greek civilisation. McConnell therefore, sees a central role for passions; and believes that passion absolves the hero even though the passion is violent and base in every way. So an epic hero can be vile yet still epic. This is especially important to me in relation to *The Male Line*. McConnell is saying, in other words, that the delineation of character has a part to play in the creation of epic drama.

What does this mean in relation to the assertion, for example, that an evil man such as a Nazi camp guard cannot be an epic protagonist? What it means, I suggest, is that an epic hero can be evil and vile if he, nonetheless, acts for the good of his tribe in pursuit of universal moral truths. Since Nazism was never accepted as a universal moral truth, it is therefore, necessary for an epic hero to "do good" in the upshot, in the pursuit of ultimately good values, even though h/her methods, or personal character, may be vile and selfish. Did Thossie, in *The Male Line*, do good even though his personal character was considered to be unpleasant and patriarchal? I think it can be argued that he did, in the particular sense, established in the text of the play, that he represented his tribe, the Irish Catholic community, and helped them, by his efforts in creating wealth, to grasp their share of the wealth of Western Australia - wealth, it should perhaps be remembered, of which they had been deprived by the dominant Protestant tribe of that time. Moreover, he did also help Irish
Catholic individuals who were financially distressed. The historical Thossie also financed business and mining ventures, and gave advice to members of the Irish Catholic community. Above all of this, however, the fictional Thossie was a powerful man of his time and place, a man whom the Irish Catholic community, represented in the play by Martin and O'Brien, wanted to have in their number, as demonstrated in the scenes where Martin and O'Brien are urging Thossie to avoid debt, to avoid the company of criminals, and so on.

It is also of interest to note that *The Iliad* is named after those who were defeated - Ilian was the name for Troy. So, not only can the epic hero or protagonist be violent, passionate and terrible, but the story about him can also be a story about those whom he crushes; again, this is of especial interest from the point of view of *The Male Line*.

The true cost of the epic's foundation, as McConnell states, is the destruction of what went before (McConnell, 5). So the epic tells us about the great transition moments in history, when one civilisation replaces another. That is why stories about the October Revolution in Russia, or about the founding of Israel in 1948, or about the destruction and rebirth share the stage. This, it seems to me, is the essence of what McConnell is saying, and his thoughts may be applicable to my play, the focus of this Doctorate. By this I mean that Thossie, and more particularly the Irish Catholic community in Western Australia, were founding their wealth and their power during the period covered by *The Male Line*.. This is, therefore, a founding-tale.
I now turn to another writer, Helen Gilbert, whose paper "Monumental Moments: Michael Gow's 1841, Stephen Sewell's Hate, Louis Nowra's Capricornia and Australia's Bicentennial", in Australasian Drama Studies, Number 24, of April 1994, was briefly discussed in the Preamble to Section B of the Annotations.

For Helen Gilbert, too, the epic need no longer have as its protagonist the heroic figure - usually male - of the classic epic. She goes on to say "the epic works as allegory, enabling the playwright to empower the audience by evoking past journeys which, by seeming to mirror the familiar journey of our own time, allow the audience to draw conclusions, as in Michael Gow's 1841, about opportunities lost to make Australia a more humanitarian society, thus by implication placing the responsibility on to the audience to ensure that the outcome of our journey does not end the same way."

She continues; "the allegory in the epic need not be a system for the suppression of marginalised groups and voices. It can be a site for a new and changed discourse in which allegory as subjugating mode of appropriation is replaced by the opportunity for contestation and counter-discourse. In the course of this new allegories, which subvert the received shibboleths of the European colonial enterprise, can be opened up, thus revitalising the epic and its allegorical function in non-subordinating ways" (Gilbert, 12.)

In Helen Gilbert's ideas there may lie a clue as to the way in which a theory of the epic in Australia, a country without kings and arguably without heroes, might be formulated. The classic
definition, she suggests, can be modified, without changing the basic nature of the epic, in such a way as to make more central those figures and voices formerly marginal; formerly seen only as obstacles to be overcome by the colonial juggernaut; formerly mentioned only with pity.

As stated above the epic is about change; times of great social upheaval, the founding of empires, tribal estates, dynasties. It is about major, massive, epoch-making change. So it is that, by changing merely its focus, and not its nature, the epic can serve a whole new generation in a post-colonial world, telling the stories of women, aboriginal people, and non Anglo-Celts.

So, these writers tell us that the traditional heroic epic can be modified so as to make the oppressed heroic; that a passionate, if awful protagonist can still be a legitimate epic hero; and that the epic is about a journey, which means change. To this I will only add that Helen Gilbert goes on, in another part of her article, to point out that it is also possible to create what might be called a vertical epic - which expands a journey in space just as narrative epics do in time.


Thomas (Thossie) Gorman, my paternal grandfather, was a giant figure in his day and community. He bribed politicians routinely and exercised considerable power in the politics of WA - how much, of course, will never be known, but it is in the nature of mythic figures that their power is exaggerated, and his was.
Epic protagonists are often mythic and Thossie could on that basis make an excellent epic protagonist. He was widely hated in the business and sporting communities of Perth, both for his ruthless business dealings and for his welshing on debts at Tattersalls Club. He had mistresses whom he kept in flats. He made fortunes in mining and in catering, and lost them at gambling. He tried monkey gland therapy, then fashionable, to maintain his virility into old age. His house was fired on by gangsters. He was a lifelong member of the Communist Party. A man of contradictions and extremes. Although the character named Thossie is no longer the historical Thossie, the dramatic Thossie continues to epitomise the historical Thossie.

This is a character of mythic proportions: a patriarch who can fittingly be the protagonist of an epic play, while at the same time suffering subversion of his patriarchal values from and within that play. How will the play be epic? In considering this question I will use sections numbered from 1 to 15, these sections corresponding exactly to the 15 elements which were listed, at the beginning of this Section, as major characteristics of the epic.

1. A play about a tribe or nation

Although this appears, dramatically, as a play about the rise and fall of one man, a West Australian business entrepreneur, it is also a play about the tribe or nation - the Irish Catholic community - to which he belonged and which, perforce, he represented. His rise would not have been possible without the collusion, in business matters, of other
members of the tribe - such as the Commissioner For Railways - who were in positions of power during the period between the two World Wars, a period when the ALP, Irish dominated, had considerable power. More recent events involving entrepreneurs in the 1980s have shown how the Irish community in Western Australia has struggled, within and without the law, to improve its position. This play, then, can be seen as a play about the struggle of a tribe to raise itself above the station assigned to it by a ruling elite, the play achieving this, as is usual, by showing in detail the story of one representative member of that tribe. The story of Thossie was by no means unusual - many Irish Catholics struggled to build small businesses into big ones, and corrupt methods were often the only ones available to them, oppressed as they were by an elite which had taken to itself all forms of wealth. The Catholics owned little of the land, none of the banks, none of the media, little of the manufacturing, and were under-represented in the public service and the professions. All this was to change, rapidly, from the 1950s on, and today we see a very different picture. Certainly, however, to struggling Irish Catholics, Thossie could have been seen as a role model in their fight against prejudice and exclusion. To the charge that Thossie did not "represent" his tribe because he was not their King, like Oedipus, nor was he mandated by some sort of selection process such as democratic election, I would answer that Don Quixote did not represent any particular ethnic tribe - yet he represents something universal in human behaviour; his is
a representation which has not been mandated but which was created in the intention of Cervantes, the author.

2. **The protagonist represents h/her tribe**

This seems to follow from (1); and because the play follows a character who embodies the values of his culture which - whatever we may think of them now - were widely held values in that time and place. His autodidacticism, by means of which he read very widely and educated himself in the Classics, his struggle to make money, and his desire to exercise political power might all be supposed to stem from his own inner demons, deriving from his background. We can only guess at his childhood. I am unable to resist feeling sympathy for the man, despite the vileness which he shares with the founders of Troy. He was certainly driven by strong passions.

3. **A long time period**

*The Male Line* spans a lifetime, covering a period which was vital in the growth of Western Australia.

4. **A large territory**

The play spans a third of a continent - certainly the scale of the epic is there.

5. **Large cast**

The cast of *The Male Line* is perhaps twelve, perhaps more or less depending upon doubling. This, in today's theatre, is a large cast. When staged the play would have to make use
of spare, symbolic sets of the type usually associated with epic drama.

6. **Heroic values**

Given the definitions of “heroic” discussed above, the actions of the protagonist and others are certainly of heroic stature, though perhaps not heroic in the more usual sense of morally exemplary. His story is a story of courage because, whatever the rights or wrongs of what he did, he displayed courage at key moments in his life - physical courage in his youth, and moral courage when facing prison late in life.

7. **Non naturalistic play, story more important than character**

Here is one point at which I differ somewhat from both the traditional and Brechtian approaches to the epic. My play is more naturalistic than the traditional epic as defined above in that it concerns and involves character. Thossie is shown as a man with a powerful resentment of what in Ireland is called the Ascendancy, and this aspect of his character drives a great many of his actions. This pattern of motivation leading to action is at odds with most of the writers on traditional epic. By attempting to combine major elements of the epic with an examination of character, albeit character-in-action and through action rather than character-by-analysis, I have broken with traditional and Brechtian notions of the epic, and I assert that I have, therefore, broken new ground in showing that these two approaches are not incompatible.
A contemporary epic theatre, freed from the traditional need to hold the attention of a restive crowd by elevated language, and freed from Brecht's dictum that the epic must be didactic and objective, is able to embrace the notion of character without losing its essentially epic feel or purpose.

8. **Mythic dimensions and the use of allegory**

I submit that *The Male Line* is an allegory, in exactly the same way that *The Fairy Queen* is an allegory in the dictionary sense of "symbolic narrative", where Thossie is a symbol of greed and the lust for power, brought down by arrogance.

9. **A Journey**

Thossie follow, and leads his family, on a journey from poverty and obscurity into wealth and power, and then into disgrace. This is an allegorical journey, matched in part by his physical journey from Queensland to Perth.

10. **Universal moral significance**

His story has universal moral significance because it deals with the issue of pragmatism, the issue of corruption, the issue of the moral dimensions of power and the quest for power.
11. **Episodic structure**

The play is episodic in structure, of necessity, because of the long time period which is covered, and for all the reasons discussed above. Each of the scenes in *The Male Line* could stand alone, and the causal element is attenuated.

12. **Elevated language of great seriousness**

For reasons already covered, this characteristic of tradition has been lost along the way. Although the play is of a serious nature, it is not acceptable practice today to use language other than naturalistic language for a play of this kind.

13. **Preoccupation with the past**

This play is set in the past and its roots are even further in the past, in the great struggles between the English and the Irish waged since the 12th century.

14. **A flawed hero**

Thossie is undoubtedly that. His flaw is arrogance - in his case the assumption that he would always be able to bribe any public figure to do his will. His story has elements of tragedy comparable to the story of Lear, whose fatal flaw was trust. He is massively isolated, alone and, in the end, shunned - on object lesson on the results of profoundly anti-social behaviour. By the end of his career he was no longer in any sense a representative of his tribe, which had long since abandoned him. In the case of the historical Thossie,
the old family home which had once been the location of so many social events involving guests who were powerful and respected became silent, its entertainment areas locked and never used - except by myself, as a child, playing make-believe among the antiques.

15. **Includes hitherto marginalised characters**

In this area, as in number 7 above, I believe I am breaking new ground in my understanding of the epic. Whereas many traditional epics focus overwhelmingly on the protagonist, I have taken steps in the direction of aggrandising those people who were marginalised by his colonial enterprise. I have argued, above, that liberties may be taken in the re-interpretation of the notion of "epic" without destroying the epic as a genre, or the power of its narrative.

A brief mention might usefully be made here of the use of a Narrator. The Narrator is a not infrequent device in epic theatre, necessitated no doubt by its episodic nature and the need to keep a rambling story together - as well as the need, from time to time, in a form usually not associated with the analysis of character, to let the audience into the thoughts of one or more of the characters. I have left the Narrator out of the numbered sequence, however, because I do not believe narration to be an essential characteristic of the epic, but merely a device which may be used for the above reasons to improve the communicative power of the play.

While discussing the Narrator I will take the opportunity to dismiss the idea that, in *The Male Line*, the Narrator is the
Protagonist. It is true that the Narrator undergoes change in his view of Thossie. However, it is always Thossie whose actions and choices move the play from one episode to the next. This, and not psychological change, is the essence of the Protagonist in an epic play, dependent as it is upon action, and where character is displayed mostly through action, as discussed above. There is no doubt in my mind that Thossie is the Protagonist, and the Narrator merely a pair of eyes acting on behalf of the audience, to help them understand the actions of Thossie and the results of those actions.

I would suggest, therefore, that *The Male Line* broadly conforms to the requirements of epic drama. Of more importance, though, is the "feel" of the play. Does it have an "epic feel"? This must always be a subjective question, but to my mind it does.

I have striven to tell a story simply and plainly without "taking sides" in the sense of inviting an audience to hate or disapprove of Thossie. I do not invite an audience to feel estranged from his actions or to judge them. I have attempted simply to tell the story, placing the facts, to the extent that they are known, before an audience and allowing the audience to make up its own mind on the moral dimensions of the story. We are all capable of foolish or even evil actions and it is not my intention to make a scapegoat of Thossie - that would be too easy. I see the artist's function as a search for truth, however, elusive or problematic truth may be - though it is a wise artist who is not disappointed if the truth is more searched for than discovered.
I would describe my attitude here as an attempt to give Thossie a "fair go". His power long since evaporated, now is the time for compassion for a man who, whatever his malign effects upon others, is very much to be pitied as he was obviously driven by demons he could not satisfy.

Fierce, aggressive, intense, he was in some ways unlike what we expect of a "typical" Australian.

In telling Thossie's story - or, since the fourth draft in which I began to make the protagonist more universal and less particular, the story of a typical pioneer financial entrepreneur - I have resisted the temptation to aggrandise the marginalised characters too much. It would have been possible for me to give much greater roles to Elizabeth, Dawn and Meg Lee, even to the extent that they began to eclipse the protagonist altogether. That would have meant, however, that the educational message of the play - that patriarchal self-aggrandisement at the expense of others leads to tragedy - would have been blurred.

Finally, in considering this question, as the writing of The Male Line has continued, draft upon draft, it has become concerned less and less with the historical Thossie and his family - even to the meagre extent to which the history of Thossie is known - and become more and more of a play about an imaginary patriarchal protagonist and his imaginary family. This has been done to make the play more representative of the meta-narrative of Western Australian society of that time and less personal, less dependent upon the peculiar and particular facts concerning this writer's own family. It is now, more than ever, a play about a type
- albeit still containing exploration of character and motive - and less a family history. Moreover, the entire subplot concerning Thossie's son has been inverted so that it is now Thossie who initiates the bribery incident which brings about his downfall - which is more satisfying from both a logical and a dramatic standpoint - and not the son. In this way the play now focuses more upon Thossie and his character defects, so that while he still represents a tribe, undertakes an episodic journey toward power and wealth, and while his story still turns upon universal moral issues such as probity in public life, and while his story is about change - in this case the creation of a modern state in Western Australia, he is also a divided and paradoxical character - thus combining both the characteristics of twentieth century psychological drama and of the older, traditional epic.

4. Can The Epic Be Historical?

Since commencing the writing of this project, the Demidenko literary scandal has broken. One of the better articles written on this scandal is the one by Robert Manne in the September 1995 issue of Quadrant. Manne correctly divines that the essential issue is not the slush-press business about name changes and authorship, but the question of the representation of history.

His own version of events in the Ukraine during the 1930s is quite different from Demidenko's and, unlike hers, his is backed up with documentation. Moreover, as he makes clear, he differs also from many other Ukrainian historians. The history of the Ukraine is well documented. Either certain massacres took place or they did not, and it is not known, beyond a reasonable doubt,
whether they did. The only thing that might be in question is the reason why they took place - revenge for earlier massacres, revenge for oppression and so on. If historians, discussing recent, well-documented events, can disagree so sharply, how is an epic writer to deal with fact in the past?

Manne’s article also dealt with the issue of fiction versus history and the whole question of whether a work of fiction, set in the past, has a responsibility to accurately report events in that past, especially when the facts are not seriously at issue. My own conclusion is that, where a novelist or playwright wishes to report facts from a passionate or partisan viewpoint, or where h/she wishes to invent facts to fill in historical gaps, then this must in some way be announced.

In the case of a play, it might be announced in the Program notes. In the case of a novel, perhaps in the text itself. Alternatively, a general disclaimer may be inserted in the Introduction stating that the writer assumes no responsibility as a historian and reserves the right to present events as h/she wishes, not as they may, by common consent among otherwise differing historians, have actually occurred in the past.

Post-modern revisionism may have a place in a historical debate, but it has, I suggest, no place in a discussion of historical fiction, dramatic or otherwise. The dramatist, by definition, dramatises or expands events, and may create or delete events at will, without in any way vitiating the quality or moral integrity of the work. I could subtitle my play “Reinventing My Grandfather”. This would make it clear that I am not setting out merely to write a
family history - even though family histories are so often based upon anecdotal, rather than viable documentary evidence.

It is legitimate in my opinion for the dramatist to invent myths. The dramatist has an obligation to entertain. Myth and history are probably incompatible but may be mutually supportive if they stand alongside each other, each one of them throwing a particular kind of light on characters or situations. The creative and the historical sensibilities may enlighten each other in this way.

Myth, I suggest, makes better drama than history. History, like daily life, is often tedious, repetitive and dull. An audience, trapped in seats in a darkened room, may not tolerate this for long. The facts must be selected for emphasis, the conflict sharpened, the characters made larger than life, the tedious excised. The tension which exists between the creative and the academic - a tension which has informed this entire doctoral exercise - can only be resolved if art and academe are regarded as complementary but different, not as competing.

In *The Male Line*, certain key scenes were invented. I decided initially that Elizabeth probably had little part to play in her father offering Thossie 10,000 pounds to leave Queensland. Later I decided, in line with my desire to bring marginalised characters to the fore by empowering them, that she had been the mastermind of that scene. I, therefore, rewrote it, keeping both versions so that the reader of this DCA can see the stages in the development of my thinking about the Epic, and about this epic. This is an arbitrary change because I have not the faintest idea what actually
happened apart from the bare, uncontested fact that he did in fact give my grandfather that amount of money, and for that purpose. Knowing only that, I can invent what lies behind that fact at will, according to my political inclination. To change that scene, giving more power to Elizabeth, was a political, and neither an artistic nor a historical decision. I can justify that decision, and I do, but only on political grounds; that I wish to interpret the Epic - and to re-invigorate it for the 21st century - by using it, as Gilbert suggested, to aggrandise the marginalised by subverting the patriarch.

I could have taken into account artistic, as well as political considerations when deciding how best to rewrite scenes such as the Elizabeth scene mentioned in the previous paragraph. To my mind, however, it seemed that, because this story is a powerful one, populated by strong characters and incidents which are inherently dramatic because full of conflict and passion, that it would have been possible to make almost any interpretation of the series of scenes where Thossie, Elizabeth and her father fight over the romance and the money dramatically powerful. Those scenes deal with such themes as a father’s sense of betrayal by his daughter, a projected sexual liaison across class boundaries, and exile - any one of which would contain more than enough drama to drive a cluster of scenes in the hands of any of the world’s great playwrights. Therefore, I felt that I could aggrandise the hitherto marginalised Elizabeth without in any way vitiating the dramatic power of that scene, basing my decision upon political, rather than dramatic considerations.
Similarly, the scene where Thossie and Elizabeth first meet, beside the railway track. The facts are not at issue, but why and how did they meet? My imagination can run wild - or can it? If I wished to follow Gilbert I felt I should perhaps make Elizabeth the mastermind of this scene. It must be she who, despairing of ever marrying any of the stuck-up and boring squatters’ sons of the district, and being already 30, too old in their eyes anyway - not to mention being a school-m’arm - decides to strike out boldly and start a relationship with a man of high energy but low status, in the hope of bypassing the short-circuit in her social situation. Who knows, her father may have said to her; find a man and I’ll give him 10,000 pounds. We will never know. Accordingly, I wrote a new scene in which she makes it clear that this is in fact her motive for stopping and talking to Thossie.

My decision to change the scene - and keep the old one for comparison and to show the development in my thinking - is based upon a political consideration; to re-invigorate the epic form by allowing it to tell the stories of the marginalised, too.

5. Conclusion

It is to be hoped that these notes on theory may be of use to a future researcher wishing to mount an argument about the possible developments in epic drama in Australia, or about the traditional epic as applied to the drama. I believe that, as epic drama develops in Australia, there will be a need for a thorough-going analysis of the nature of epic in an Australian context.
CONCLUSION TO ANNOTATIONS

In these Annotations a method of construction has been used, similar to that used in *The Male Line*, which could be called assemblage.

By this is meant that data has been aggregated, not in a linear fashion with a view to mounting an argument, but in what might be termed an episodic method with a view to assembling a body of evidence whose purpose is to cast light on the process, and the form, of the play.

In these Annotations an attempt has been made to break new ground in three principal ways. This has been attempted, firstly, by foregrounding hitherto marginalised figures in the story which constitutes the postcolonial imperial enterprise of the protagonist Thossie d'Arcy.

Secondly, new ground has been broken in the form of an investigation, in the Annotations as in the play, of the psychological character of Thossie, more so than might normally be attempted in a traditional epic story, which might be expected to present characters as symbolic.

The third way in which new ground has been broken is by an investigation of traditional theories of the epic based upon prose and poetry rather than drama, and the application of these theories to a contemporary Australian epic play.

It is hoped that these Annotations, by reflecting practice, have thrown light on both the epic form in general, and the creative process of one artist in particular. It is also hoped that these
Annotations, by reflecting the creative method used in the assembly of *The Male Line*, and by describing a curve or journey, may also be seen as a creative work in their own right.
ENDNOTES.

1 There are a number of theories on the traditional epic upon which I have drawn. These include Bowra, C.M., *From Virgil To Milton*, where he states (Bowra, 1-12): The epic poem is by common consent a narrative poem of some length dealing with events which have a certain grandeur and importance and come from a life of action. In *Paradise Lost As Myth*, Isobel Gamble states: retrospection and anticipation are the keys to both epic and mythological patterns (Gamble, 67). Page Dubois, in *History, Rhetorical Descriptions and The Epic*, states that the epic poet "displays events as models of the course of the world", in "a narrative representing significant events in the past of a community" (Dubois, 1-10). Hilda Brown, in *Leitmotif, And Drama*, includes the chorus as an epic device (Brown, 16, 73). In an article in the Sunday Times in 1968, Mary McCarthy describes the epic as "a work of art surpassing the dimension of realism". I take these to be inclusive, though not exhaustive, nor even universally necessary, elements of the epic.

2 Dorothy Hewett, in her play *This Old Man Comes Rolling Home*, specifically writes about the gender war as it affected Communist politics in the inner city of Sydney during the 1940s. Dymphna Cusack's 1942 play, *Morning Sacrifice*, deals among other issues with sexism in the workplace. Jean Curthoys' major examination of feminist revisionism, *Feminist Amnesia*, examines the question of "absence" in 20th century Australian feminist texts (Curthoys, 23-4, 26).

3 Hilda Brown, in *Leitmotif And Drama*, states that the "ad spectactorum" device, used by Shakespeare, whereby actors delivered their lines partly to their fellow actors, across stage, and partly over the front of stage to the audience, was an epic device (Brown, 73).

4 Constantin Stanislavsky's great contribution to the theater was to focus attention on the means by which an actor found the inner truth of a role, and worked from that truth to find the gestures, body language and facial expression necessary for the role, rather than focussing upon the gestures as a way of imitating the behavior of the character being played. See *My Life In Art*, (Stanislavsky, 423-31).

5 In *Rockchoppers*, Campion states: Our world was typically Irish-Australian. It was a world populated by fellow-Catholics, mostly relatives, whose horizons were defined by the Church. In Australia, Irish Catholics were the first ethnics. They exhibited the defensiveness usual in any ethnic community (Campion, 3). O'Farrell, in *The Irish In Australia*, states; The public conviction that there must be Irish plots,
created a degree of solidarity by way of reaction to such allegations: the Irish banded together to defend themselves against the charge that they tend to band together. (O'Farrell 8, 9).

6 In *Wild Men Of Sydney* Cyril Pearl charts the rise from obscurity to power, as what is today called a "media baron", of John Norton, founder of the Truth newspaper. According to Pearl Norton was little more than a common thug who rose to power using methods learnt in his rough trade. In *Power Without Glory* Frank Hardy traces the career of John West, a street thug who founds a large criminal empire based upon gambling in the slums of Melbourne, principally Collingwood, Both Norton and Wren, according to these authors, achieved a degree of respectability in later years.

7 Sean Burke, in his *The Death And Return Of The Author*, says: Barthes expressed strong reservations about the institution of authorship, and in particular the practice of auterist criticism, i.e., criticism exclusively fixed upon the author, declaring that a science of discourse could only be established if literary criticism took language rather than authors as the starting-point of its enquiry (Burke, 39).

8 The journey of Ulysses, in the view of this author, is concerned with the notion of absence (Merchant, 11-14). It is because of the absence of Ulysses, I would suggest, following Merchant, that his son Telemachus grows to maturity by taking on the duties of the father, which include acting as head of the family, resisting suitors to his mother Penelope, and paying Ulysses' debts, until such time as the father can return home. Thossie, too, I believe, spends his life on a journey, from poverty to wealth and power. It is this journey, I would suggest, that emotionally impoverishes his wife and son through the emotional absence of the father, much as did Ulysses' journey. The difference is, perhaps, that Ulysses had no choice but to continue on his journey, whereas Thossie, arguably, did.

9 Raymond Williams, in *Modern Tragedy*, (Williams, 55-56), expresses the idea that tragic action is a cyclic death and rebirth, related to the seasons and centring upon a sacrificial death which through lament and discovery becomes a rebirth: the death of the old is the triumph of the new.

10 It is interesting to note that Sandra Gilbert, as quoted in Peter Barry's *Beginning Theory*, (Barry, 131), uses the term "social castration", a term which, according to Barry, signifies women's lack of social power, this lack being represented, by means of the word "castration", as a male possession, though not in any sense a male attribute. This term applies aptly to the role of the character Elizabeth in my play.

11 See note 9, above.
12 Susan Rowley, in her PhD thesis Gender and Nation Foundation (Rowley, 111) refers in particular to two female artists who, arguably, depicted females acting in ways that appear to transcend their traditional limits of house and garden. Jane Sutherland's "Untitled (Girl In Paddock)", c. 1890 shows a girl looking into a paddock over a fence and, evidently, dreaming of distant horizons, according to Rowley. The idea of a journey for the girl is suggested by a path, her bundle and billy, and by the positioning of the girl outside the fence. In "Obstruction, Box Hill", 1887. the same artist depicts a girl, carrying a kind of briefcase or travelling bag, approaching a line of trees and a fence with a cow beyond. Clara Southern's "The Old Bee Farm", c.1900, shows a mature woman, alone, working the bee hives, her cottage in the background. Rowley suggests (page 35), that the author Barbara Baynton, in her Bush Studies, a collection of short stories, subverts the male idealisation of bush culture. Baynton's work, Rowley asserts, can be read as a reproduction of a middle-class woman's relationship to patriarchal modernity.

13 Alexandra Kollontai, in her Women Workers Struggle For Their Rights, (Kollontai, Introduction, i, ), states that: some working women .. were involved in the Social Democratic Party already, and women workers were coming into the revolutionary struggle through industrial action. In 1896 women textile workers downed tools with the men, and women cigar-makers destroyed machinery and resisted the police. And: As soon as they were in power, the Bolsheviks introduced very important changes in the position of women, not only at work but in every area of life. (Kollontai, Introd., v).

14 In his The Epic, Paul Merchant states that the epic is a work of art "surpassing the dimensions of realism", (Merchant, 1).

15 In her PhD thesis, Gender And Nation Formation in 19th Century Australian Bush Mythology, (Rowley, 49-51), Susan Rowley writes of "spirit girls", and says that in Symbolist representations of the bush, women emerge as "spirits of the bush". She argues that the painting "Spirit Of The Drought", 1895, by Sydney Long, and the painting 1888 painting "Mirage" by Charles Condor, depict bushfire and drought as naked femme fatales.

16 See Note 5, above.

17 See note 9, above.

18 See Note 8, above.

19 See Note 12, above.

20 Dorothy Hewett, in her play Muckinupin, is possibly the best Australian example of the use of the Chorus in contemporary Australian drama.
21 For the purposes of this section I have used a concept of montage deriving from the cinema, and mostly associated with the Russian director Eisenstein in *Battleship Potemkin*, though originally invented by D.W. Griffiths for his *Birth Of A Nation*. This concept is best described, in my view, by Ira Konigsberg in *A Complete Film Dictionary*, (Konigsberg 216-7): he acknowledges what he calls "narrative montage", the simple act of assembling a succession of brief scenes or images, and "expressive montage", which he describes as "a creative act of constructing a work of art from building blocks with consideration of the film’s immediate and total effect". An effect analogous to narrative montage is used in *The Oddyssey* by the way in which its author vuts back and forth between the journey of Ulysses and the situation of Penelope and Telemachus in Athens.

22 Brechtian theater has been characterised mostly by the concept known variously, in English, as "alienation" or "estrangement", by which Brecht seems to have meant that the audience should stand back, as it were, from the action of the drama. He appears to be arguing - though there are contradictions in some of his theoretical writings (Esslin, 56) - that it is the supreme skill of a dramatist to prevent audience members identifying with characters and being purged by pity and terror as described in Aristotle’s *Poetics*. Rather, he seems to want audiences to sit as judges, evaluating the evidence manifested in the play and forming a desire to act, in society, to redress the injustices the play presents, rather as a teacher presents facts to a class. My desire not to forefront this Brechtian concept of the epic - essentially, in my view, a political concept - stems partly from my aversion to the subordination of drama to politics, and partly from my belief, which I have argued in the Annotations, that traditional epic does not eschew either the development of character, or the identification of audience members with characters. I wished to consider how these pre-Brechtian concepts of the epic might apply to late 20th century epic drama, and to my own play *The Male Line* in particular. Martin Esslin’s long essay *Bertolt Brecht*, and *Brecht In Perspective* by Graham Bartram and Anthony Wayne, are excellent sources for understanding Brecht’s theory of the epic.

23 William Morris’s lament on the destruction of english arts and crafts by the gathering industrialisation of the nineteenth century is well outlined in his works listed in the Bibliograph, particularly his *Collected Works*.

24 See Notes 8 and 22 above.

25 In Chapter 2, "Myths And Theorists", of his book *Myth*, K.K. Ruthven (Ruthven 5-38), examines some of the major theoretical explanations of myth including Eheurism, Freud, Jung and Structuralism. In Chapter 3, "Myths And Writers", (Ruthven 44-66), he examines the views of myth put forward by a number of writers
including Spenser, Milton, Ovid and D.H. Lawrence. In Chapter 4, "Myths And Critics", (Ruthven 72-81), he examines what some notable critics have said about myth. He is at pains to point out, throughout the book, that there is no one agreed theory as to what myths are, how they arise, and what function they might serve. He is scathing in his rejection of the social argument of the theories, such as those of Joseph Cambell in *Hero With A Thousand Faces*, which purport to link myths from different cultures, locales and periods. Ruthven states that myth commonly, though not invariably, arises from misremembered, half remembered or embellished stories from the past of a community, especially its foundation.

26 See Note 25 above.

27 See Note 9, above.

28 See Note 1, above.

29 See Note 8, above.


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