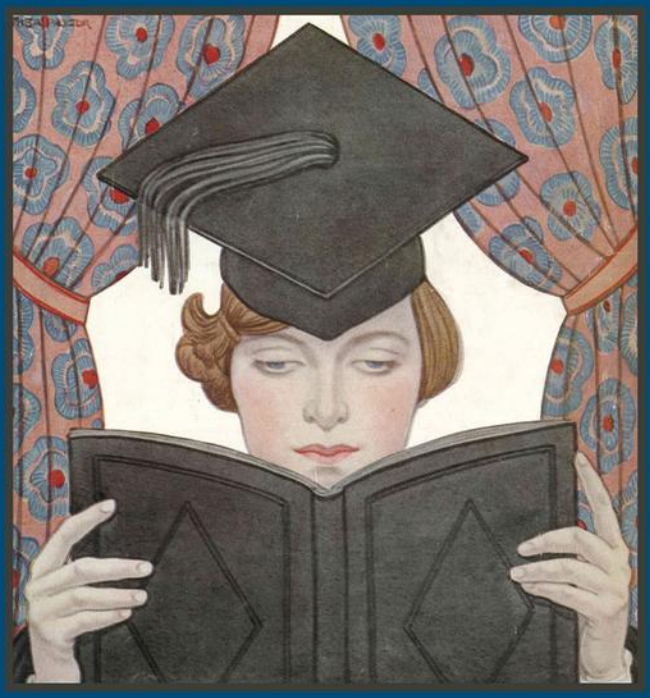
The Enchantment of English



Professing English Literatures in Australian Universities

Leigh Dale

THE ENCHANTMENT OF ENGLISH

PROFESSING ENGLISH LITERATURES IN AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES

Leigh Dale

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

In rereading this book I am acutely conscious of the degree to which it reflects the interests prevalent in the discipline when it was conceived. My interest in history was (I thought) prompted by an efflorescence of scholarship in the mid and late 1980s on the history of teaching literature, in particular Chris Baldick's *The Social Mission of English Criticism* (1983), but also Brian Doyle's *English and Englishness* (1989) and others in the Methuen (later Routledge) New Accents series. John Guillory's *Cultural Capital* (1993) was crucial for the book, as his earlier essay 'Canonical and Non-canonical: A Critique of the Current Debate' had been for the thesis. Pierre Bourdieu remains an influence on my understanding of what might be called the anthropology of academia. These authors, among many others, were reflecting on the conventions of education and their effects on subjectivity, concerns that gelled with my increasing interest in the ways in which institutions shape the terms of research and teaching, often more pleasingly understood as activities that manifest and inculcate a kind of 'freedom'.

I think it is significant that various histories of English study were produced as part of gaining academic credentials: Gauri Viswanathan's *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (1990) was conceived as doctoral thesis, as was Baldick's book, as was *The English Men* and contemporaneous work by Margery Fee and Alan Lawson. It is also significant that these first three projects were done under the direction of supervisors who had called for transformation of the discipline: Edward Said, Terry Eagleton, and Helen Tiffin (respectively). The mood was one for interrogation and change. Such a coincidence now seems to me likely to have reflected the fact that the unconscious seduction for postgraduate students of writing an institutional history was that it would establish the author as someone who had superseded that past. What we failed to see, I think, was that our desire to critique the old brought with it an equal obligation to understand the imperative to be new; to bring to our own time the spirit of critique with which we approached the past. But while attending to history in its common sense form (as the past) is routine within literary studies, the use of historical method – attempting to understand the complexity of the relationship of past to present – is

rare.

My principal regret in terms of sources for the initial study is that I was not familiar with Tim Rowse's *Australian Liberalism and National Character*. This book would have saved me some painful toil. Among Rowse's arguments, the most important is this: the pervasiveness of the belief that 'Morality and science are … the privileged province of a disinterested intellectual minority, those unencumbered by neither a thirst for power nor material self-interest' (30). More specifically, if I had read Rowse, I would have understood a little better the nature and extent of the influence of TH Green and of evangelical thought (see Rowse 44–45). Rowse's points about the influence of philosophy and theology are developed here, in ways that significantly alter my arguments about the beginnings of the discipline. Had I read Rowse, I would also have known more about the *Australian Quarterly*, the site of a crucial debate about Australian language which is only touched on here in the final chapter. The other work I should have used is David Walker's *Dream and Disillusion: A Search for Australian Cultural Identity*, which would have informed the chapter on Australian literature. More broadly, in terms of approach, the key changes are a realisation that the passing of time in and of itself does not cause change; that authority is intrinsically neither rigid nor flexible, thus what is of interest is the shift between these modes. The understanding that a persuasive historical argument might synthesise disparate forces or might open up contradictions between them underpins these two alterations to the conceptual framework.

These changes are further reflected in the reorganisation of content: the number of chapters has increased from six to eight, and sections have been moved between chapters to reflect the priority given to thematic coherence over chronology and geography. All chapters have been altered to some degree, but the introduction and conclusion have been heavily revised; the central arguments of chapters two, three and five have been altered (implicitly contesting some claims made in *The English Men*); and some sections of chapters two, three, five and seven are new.

I had wanted the book to be read by students, to help them to think about the forces that shape an environment which often seems austere and monumental, its functions and forms in some mysterious way protected from contestation and change. In the main, that hasn't happened: the main feedback on the first edition came from colleagues, for which I thank them. Since its publication many writers have taken up the arguments and agendas of *The English Men*, sometimes antagonistically, usually productively. But too many, I feel, have been persuaded by its unfortunate flattening of that history: institutions, individuals, movements in criticism, accounts of which are often one-dimensional. Many of these works can be located using the AustLit bibliography, a tool which in its earliest incarnation helped immeasurably with the initial research. More productively, scholars like Pacita Alexander and Elizabeth Perkins, Louise D'Arcens, Ralph Spaulding and

others have offered ‘dissenting views’, broadening our understanding of the history of the discipline in Australia and, perhaps most importantly, complicating our stories of the individuals who are only glimpsed in this book. Other individuals central to the story not of the book but of its author are my parents, Doris and Ray Dale; my sisters Kathryn Pearson and Robyn Dale; and my partner Sarah Ferber. I thank them for their unqualified support.

NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the support given to this project in its various incarnations: first, to Veronica Brady and John Hay, who encouraged the initial application for a postgraduate scholarship; the Department of English at the University of Queensland, where much of the original research was completed for the thesis; and the Commonwealth Government which provided the scholarship for that degree. In regard to the latter, I would especially like to acknowledge Dick Whittington, then of the Commonwealth Department of Education in Brisbane, for the support which made completion of a PhD possible in an era of changing regulation. The library of the former Royal Colonial Institute offered a rewarding research environment in which the foundations for the thesis were laid. The transformation from book to thesis was made possible by a research grant from the Faculty of Arts at the University of Southern Queensland, the application for which was encouraged by my then colleague Libby Connors. I would like to acknowledge the Association for the Study of Australian Literature (ASAL), particularly Susan Lever, for their work in ensuring the publication of the book. For this edition I would like to thank my colleagues at Sydney University Press, particularly Agata Mrva-Montoya, for their imagination and dedicaiton.

I have received assistance from Pacita Alexander, Bill Ashcroft, Judy Bailey, David Carter, Clem Christesen, Libby Connors, Mark Cryle, Chris Darvall, Louise D'Arcens, Martin Duwell, Margery Fee, Susan Forsyth, Dorothy Garland, Judith Gibson, Helen Gilbert, Dennis Haskell, John Hay, Lesley Heath, Laurie Hergenhan, Peter Hetherington (London), Veronica Kelly, Adrian Kiernander, Alan Lawson, Sarah Lethbridge, Jenna Mead, Philip Mead, David Neil, Sandra Oxley, Tim Robinson, Denise Russell, Simon Ryan, David Simpson, Jan Swinburne, Glen Thomas, Robert Thompson, Iolanda Tonello, Elizabeth Webby, Gillian Whitlock, Kim Wilkins, and Susan Woodburn. Fiona McKean provided research assistance; Antoinette Bauer helped in countless ways, including with unpaid research assistance; Alma Hartshorn, a student of JJ Stable's, gave valuable insights; Spencer Routh was a guru, as was Helen Tiffin, who supervised the thesis; Chris Tiffin read the typescript for ASAL and gave meticulous com-

ment, as did Elizabeth Webby for Sydney University Press. I would particularly like to thank those professors who responded to my requests for information with promptness and grace: Peter Edwards, Ralph Elliott, John Hainsworth, John Hardy, Colin Horne, Ken Goodwin, Derick Marsh, George Harrison Russell, GA Wilkes and Andrew Gurr. Many of whom I was critical in the first version of this book have become acquaintances and have, unfailingly, been gracious and kind. Biographical details for these and other professorial academics discussed here are drawn from the *Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB)*, supplemented by information gathered from university calendars; all other sources are acknowledged by in-text references (usually for published sources) or footnotes (usually for manuscript material). In terms of biography, giving dates for appointments is difficult as it is common for months to elapse between advertisement, appointment, and commencement in a position; the year given is usually of the latter.

Most press items relating to Australian literature were sighted in the Australian Literature files at the *Meanjin* Archive at the Melbourne University. I remain indebted to *Meanjin*'s editor, Clem Christesen; to those who organised the archive; and to Jenny Lee, who drew its importance to my attention early in the research. Thank you to the following for permission to use quotation: Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide, from the Colin Horne Papers; *Meanjin* Archive, University of Melbourne, from the Australian Literature collection and the files of Gustav Cross, Allan Edwards and GKW Johnston; Mitchell Library, Sydney, from the papers of John le Gay Brereton; National Library of Australia, from the papers of H Duncan Hall, AN Jeffares and Colin Roderick; University of Adelaide Archives, from the staff files of AT Strong, press clipping files and Council Minutes; University of Melbourne Archives, from the papers of Enid Derham, Alexandra Daisy Gouldthorpe, Colin J Horne, English Department 1945–76 and Senate Minutes; University of Sydney Archives, from the papers of John le Gay Brereton, ER Holme, Mungo MacCallum, John Woolley and Senate Minutes; University of Queensland Archives, from the staff files of AK Thomson, JJ Stable and FW Robinson; and Barbara Wall, from the papers of Charles Jury.

ACADEMIC TERMINOLOGY

For some readers, academic terms used in this book might be unfamiliar. Early Australian universities had little formal organisation but as student numbers gradually increased, disciplines or areas of study were organised into departments with a head. Departments in subject areas like classics, history, languages, literature and philosophy were usually part of the faculty of arts, presided over by a dean. The leader of an Australian university is called the vice-chancellor. There are five levels of appointment for academics: in order of increasing seniority they are tutor, lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor (sometimes 'reader') and professor, but most early appointments were either at professorial or lecturer level.

While Australian colleges might offer some tutorials, especially to newer students, their main function has been as halls of residence rather than as teaching institutions. Because the university is mentioned frequently in this book, it is necessary to note that Oxford is slightly different: its academics are often called dons, and many have positions as fellows of colleges. Oxford is also unusual in being a federation of colleges as much as it is a single institution; other universities tend to be more centralised. In many universities, it is the custom for a new professor to deliver an inaugural lecture, often one in which they outline their views on the discipline; on retirement, the title professor is relinquished unless the retiree is made professor emeritus, a mark of special distinction. During the nineteenth century it was common for applicants for a chair to have their references, then called testimonials, published as a small pamphlet. These, and debates of the university's governing body, often called council or senate (although some universities have both bodies), are especially important sources in this study, as is private correspondence preceding and following appointments. In the period under discussion – roughly 1850 to 1970 – humanities students in Australia normally completed a three-year course to obtain their Bachelor of Arts, also called a pass degree. A further year of study obtained 'honours', awarded as a first, second (now divided into 'A' and 'B', hence 2A or 2B), or third class. 'First-class honours' represents an outstanding result in the fourth year of study, but in some

universities (like Oxford) it is the final result of three or four years of study. Following the completion of honours a student can enrol in a postgraduate degree, usually a Master of Arts (at Oxford, this was more typically the BLitt) or, after the 1950s, a Doctor of Philosophy, usually abbreviated to PhD (DPhil for Oxford).

1
THE PLACE OF READING

> We court our own captivity
> Than thrones more great and innocent.
> 'Twere Banishment to be set free
> Since we wear fetters whose intent
> Not bondage is, but ornament.
> (Katharine Phillips, Friendship's Mystery: To My Dearest Lucasia)

The collusion of poetry, politics and Englishness in Australian public life perhaps found its fullest expression in Prime Minister Robert Menzies' well-known tribute to the young Queen, Elizabeth, on her first visit to Australia: 'I did but see her passing by, / And yet I love her till I die'. For Menzies, as for so many of his generation, England became an imagined place of extraordinary power, a place shaped by its representation in English literature and the teaching of that literature. On visiting England he wrote in his diary,

> I am today learning to understand, as I never understood before, the secret springs of English poetry and English thought and the getting of that wisdom which infuses the slow English character. The green and tranquil countryside sends forth from her soil the love of peace and of good humour and of contentment.[1]

It is an unexpectedly sentimental view of the relationship between land, nation, character and literary form, each nourishing the other – a synthesis impervious to conflict or change.

Menzies' diaries record an anxiety about being recognised by the custodians of culture and tradition as 'one of us', a fear that some marker, like accent, would

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1 Quoted in Judith Brett's political biography *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People* (139), from which this picture of Menzies is partly drawn.

betray the speaker as a colonial. For those who went to England in search of taste, training or tutelage, the final seal of approval was to be able to 'pass for English', a desire that can be seen in memoirs by writer/academics like Jill Ker Conway and Andrew Riemer. This anxiety about being recognised as a member of the cultural and intellectual elite permeates the discipline of English for decades, shaping pedagogy, examinations and what is valued in personality and training when selecting staff. More importantly, perhaps, tens of thousands of readers made the journey to England in their minds via the medium of literary texts. Perhaps readers experienced and believed in the authority of this imagined place all the more powerfully for never having experienced it in any material form. This book attempts to examine what might be called the imaginative authority of English.

One of the more interesting obstacles to such an enquiry is the problem of challenging what might almost be called faith. Notwithstanding the ubiquity of claims that the English are defined by their pragmatism, their uncomplicated common sense approach to the world (by which claims they seek to be distinguished from Celts and Catholics, among others), there is a sense that the particular appeal and authority of the English landscape, literature and character is based on an almost incongruously ineffable element. And this faith, which recoils from pragmatic inquiry or motive, has generally gone unnoticed in histories of the discipline, despite being central to understandings of the role of the universities and study in the humanities in Britain in the nineteenth century and earlier. In his study *The Platonic Renaissance in England*, Ernst Cassirer says of English scholars that they

> looked upon themselves chiefly as the guardians of a religious and philosophical tradition which they attempted to trace to its sources, and to fortify and defend by a thorough acquaintance with, and a painstaking intepretation of these sources. *Hence retrospect continually triumphs over a free outlook*. (3; my emphasis)

Although Cassirer is speaking here of a different period and discipline, his words nevertheless offer a superb précis – to the extent any précis is ever possible – of the ethos of teaching English as it was generally understood in the period under analysis: to 'fortify and defend' the past.

To begin with Menzies, or more accurately, to begin with Menzies *as a reader* (and an author) of an enchanted and enchanting England is also to point to the importance of the relationship between reading literary texts and the formation of subjectivity. By this I mean that some sense of our self – what story we might tell of our origins, of our beliefs and of the shape of our lives – is formed through reading literary texts, and through the relationships we develop with books. In reading we rehearse, explore, recognise or reject different ways of

being, and in the texts we value or reject, we reject or value aspects of our selves and of others. Or as Thomas Hill Green expressed it, 'The personal experience and the fictitious act and re-act on each other, the personal experience giving reality to the fictitious, the fictitious expansion to the personal'.[2] It is this relationship between reading and subjectivity that gives the practices of teaching and reading literature their particular emotional intensity. For debates about the teaching of English have an intensity which reflects the fact that a widely indulged and celebrated private pleasure (reading) and a major industry (publishing) can also take the form of an academic discipline, charged with teaching and testing the skill of reading. And the discipline everywhere shows the strains of its relationships to these other institutions, the strain of the desire to be modern and to be old; to offer reverence and to offer critique. Emotion is paramount here. In the introduction to the first edition of this book, I noted that renowned Sydney University academic Mungo MacCallum had, after his retirement, decided not to assist with teaching as he had planned, because his lecturing had been subject to ridicule in a student magazine.[3] The use I made of the MacCallum story, emphasising his vulnerability even in the face of a lifetime of excellence in teaching and scholarship, was anecdotal; it should have been (and now is) methodological.

Contrary to assumptions which underpin the modern discipline of English, there are good reasons why universities might be seen as being on the fringes of literature. In the period under study tertiary institutions were not major players in creative writing, nor in publishing or book selling. However they were and remain sites where a most precious attribute is bestowed on literature: canonicity. No matter how contentious the case of individual books or writers, it remains true that canonical texts have a mystique and authority that many writers and readers value. And notwithstanding the rise in universities of reading practices which valorise critique, in opposition to that reverence for the past embodied by Menzies, students continue to assume, not unreasonably, that a book is being studied because it is valuable. In the light of this, one aim here is 'to *emancipate*' students 'from prematurely naturalized … facts' about the role, purposes and structure of the discipline (Latour, 227). For thinking historically – by which I mean trying to understand why the influence of particular people, ideas or books persists or wanes, resists change or rides it – allows us to consider the present as a historical moment in which those forces remain in competition.

Notwithstanding the claims made above about certainty, it is also true that there is an occasional lack of professional self-confidence evident in the work of academics engaged in literary study. This anxiety, which spans historical periods, critical approaches, and personalities, seems to have two main sources. First, in

2 TH Green, *An Estimate of the Value of Literature*, 26.

3 Letter from Mungo MacCallum to John le Gay Brereton, 25 August 1922, John le Gay Brereton Papers, MSS 281/9/317, Mitchell Library.

the period covered by this history, all disciplines were affected by demands for 'relevance', the assumption being that if education were to be publicly funded it should serve the needs of the state rather than those of the individual. Within the institution and in the public sphere, every academic discipline must struggle, rhetorically, to balance the competing demands of specialism or research – which brings prestige – with a notion of relevance – which brings students, who in turn bring income. The conflict is a structural effect of competing needs: each discipline's need to demonstrate that it is undertaking specialist training, and its need to make that claim in spheres outside academia to potential students, and funding agencies who value 'usefulness'. The second kind of anxiety is more specific to the discipline of English. It reflects the failure to articulate a methodology for literary criticism. Using the paradigms of science, even the most rigid formulae for literary interpretation often leave students unable to replicate the inquiry, let alone the findings of it. In short, literary study has never adequately acknowledged the sheer complexity of its subject, and developed a pedagogy or an account of its practice which acknowledges that complexity. This situation perhaps is a reflection of the simple but complex fact that the best questions, the most interesting questions, to ask of text (or author or genre or period) A, might be irrelevant, obvious, or unproductive when asked of text (author/genre/period) B, since literary texts, whilst they are frequently said to fall into certain kinds of categories, are almost never adequately described by those categories. Thus the best criticism in any era almost invariably seems to deploy a range of techniques or practices or assumptions which are or which seem, in purely methodological terms, quite contradictory. But literature is, as noted, both an industry and a leisure activity; it is almost impossible, therefore, to make credible claims about the subject's 'difficulty' – except to those who are studying it.

In these circumstances, teaching the history of the discipline can be a powerful tool for alerting students to the difficulties and the contingencies which underpin their own learning. For when we *historicise* and specify the nature of the conflict over subject areas it can help us to understand that there is nothing inevitable about either the study, or the failure to study, any particular field. On the other hand, using historical inquiry in this way can go badly wrong if it encourages students simply to believe that the present is a superior place to be, something encouraged by the fact that modern forms of criticism seem more self-reflexive than those they appear to have replaced. Self-confidence is also increased by the fact that basic research tools now make an incalculably vaster array of materials available. Ideally, though, this teaching of history would not 'convert objects, institutions, and practices with which we have lived relationships into relics of other times' (Chakrabarty, 243). Rather, it would encourage us to understand that

> Pasts *are* there in taste, in practices of embodiment, in the cultural training

> the senses have received over generations. They are there in practices I sometimes do not even know I engage in. This is how the archaic comes into the modern, not as a remnant of another time *but as something constitutive of the present*. (Chakrabarty, 251; my emphasis)

It is a beautiful and brilliant formulation, and it informs the methods and aims of this book. Although there is one qualification.

The author of these words, Dipesh Chakrabarty, is a renowned historian. One of his own pasts is, of course, his Australian one, and he speaks of this when he uses the term 'cultural cringe' (28). He does not reference AA Phillips, who coined the phrase, although on the same page, indeed in the previous paragraph, of his book *Provincializing Europe*, Chakrabarty draws attention to the power of *not* naming authors and authorities when naturalising cultural difference.[4] Phillips is an important figure for this history and for any critic of Australian literature, although he still has no entry in the *ADB*. We can bear in mind the fact of him never obtaining a university position, despite a prolific career as a critic, and the casual malice that saw fellow students at Melbourne University think it a good joke to cast Phillips – who in recounting the incident, describes himself as 'a Jewish boy', his grandfather a prominent rabbi – as Shylock in a student performance of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.[5]

One very overt agenda in this book is to examine the ways in which the term 'Australian' has functioned in relation to the study of literature: to identify the texts, periods and discourses – intellectually authoritative ways of speaking – which have brought Australian writing and the criticism of Australian writing to prominence or into disrepute. What is at issue is the sustained dominance of an ethos, an aesthetic and a canon that come under the ambiguous nomenclature of 'English', and a parallel and closely connected dominance of English universities and English-trained academics, for several generations exclusively male. This dominance meant, inversely, the exclusion of women from positions of authority notwithstanding the fact that – or perhaps because – they have usually constituted a majority of students in the discipline. And the dominance of an aesthetic of Englishness structured a sustained disdain for local literatures, writers and critical issues. One can argue that these kinds of patterns have faded; one can argue they are being refreshed, not least by technologies which require heavy investment and therefore focus on the canonical. In relation to both, though, it is essential to know that until the 1970s almost no student who wanted an academic career would seriously have thought of restricting themselves to their national literature;

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4 Phillips' essay first appeared in *Meanjin* in 1950; a longer version appears in Phillips' *The Australian Tradition* (1958).

5 Phillips recounts the episode in his essay in Hume Dow's *Memories of Melbourne University*, see 35–36.

until then, when newly passed legislation made it possible for married women to retain their jobs in public organisations, no woman student, no matter how brilliant, would have realistically imagined becoming an intellectual leader in the field. As the space for humanities shrinks, pressures external to the discipline narrow the curriculum, and commensurately, the range of people thought appropriate to teach it. In these circumstances, the arguments presented here about the ways in which 'disinterested' academic judgements are underpinned by wider social values might become more relevant to the present than I would wish.

Part of the difficulty, though, in making this kind of claim is that reading, considered either as a private or as a scholarly activity, is generally understood as being an exercise that is free of prejudice. An equally strong faith in individuality encourages us to believe that, when reading, we are somehow free to form our own judgements. For slightly different reasons, universities encourage a strong faith in the notion that academic inquiry is *structurally* free of the pressures of personality and politics. Thus the claim (made in this book) that reading as an activity and the teaching of reading as a scholarly practice are shaped by larger patterns of cultural value might seem overly aggressive towards the status quo. But as Ross Chambers (among many) has so brilliantly argued, culture attempts always to disguise itself, to make beliefs and values seem natural whilst identifying others as 'unnatural'. This means that drawing attention to the making of authority, or to the (self) interest of those in authority, is intrinsically unsettling. In terms of classroom practice, this is the student who speaks at the 'wrong' time, who asks the 'wrong' question, who criticises the fashionable writer, or, on one memorable occasion at the University of Queensland, declares to the visiting superstar of theory – if rather tentatively – that 'it's all a bit of a wank, really, isn't it?' These moments are seen as disruptive, reactions which expose the ways in which academic cultures, whilst ostensibly structured to value originality, often resort to the imposing of convention. Perhaps it is not just classrooms but literary texts which play a role in shaping our sense of what is proper; yet literature can also open up the imagination, allowing us to rehearse turns of phrase and habits of mind, senses and sensibilities that allow us to think differently about what is valuable and what is right.

Perhaps because of the sustained and systemic exclusion of women from positions of authority in universities, some of the most persuasive critiques of educational institutions have been written by feminist scholars. Feminist critics of texts and of institutions have discerned the many ways in which images and expectations about the world function against the interests of female readers, students and academics. Studies of reading and teaching practices, criticism, curriculum, staffing, promotion and peer pressure have all pointed to systematic exclusions. This exclusion is enacted daily, and reinforced through the ways of behaving which make identifying merit an all-too-simple process, described by legal scholar Margaret Thornton:

> Senior men see youthful images of themselves as the ideal candidates within the recruitment process … Indeed one male decision-maker, when asked what was in his mind during the university selection process ingenuously replied, 'Well, it's like looking in a mirror' … Patronage is therefore rife in academia … [and] affirmative action has thereby insidiously acquired an unshakeable association with inferiority because it is conceived as a measure designed to 'let in' otherwise undeserving women, blacks and selected minorities. (20, 22)

The only difficulty I see with Thornton's formulation is that it implies that patronage must be wrong. But what of, say, feminist patronage which attempted to redress the imbalances created by such habits, and where might one draw the line between patronage and mentoring? In other words, in the light of such processes, and in light of the notion that almost any academic appointment involves patronage of some kind, what is to be done? For at times it can seem that the institutionalising of procedures to ensure equity have driven discrimination to take more subtle and therefore less contestable forms. One further question raised by Thornton's compelling vignette is this: what becomes of those 'youthful images of themselves', the young men who benefit from such patronage, who are levered into positions for which they might not be prepared or capable of functioning effectively in? Do those in positions of power, able to distribute this kind of patronage, demand conformity, or gratitude, and what toll might this take? My sense is that there is a frequent tendency among senior academics to overrate their protégés, and that loyalty is poor compensation for the lack of qualities which a more obviously meritocratic system might demand. The question, perhaps, is the balance between the local currency and the disciplinary one.

What is perhaps even more difficult to identify and redress systemically is that the dynamics of this process of making authority open up a space in which those most strongly identified with the institution, those who are most routinely assumed to be relying on informed judgement, might actually be making judgements based on not much more than the positive impression created by such conformity. The application of 'merit', in other words, reflects cultural values which give priority to certain forms of masculinity, say, over any qualities or knowledge or achievements specific to a discipline. (If this claim is true, it would make it impossible to conceive of the university as a place cut off from society, as is so often claimed, pejoratively, about it.) For example, on any given selection committee, it is unlikely that there will be any person sufficiently familiar with the field of research offered by every candidate to make a firsthand assessment and comparison of the relative quality of that scholarship; indeed, there might be no-one in the discipline present at all. In such situations, people groping for judgement can be threatened by a candidate who, for example, seems to have a strong personality; who is pioneering a new area of research; who seems likely to

start asking awkward questions about the organisation of curriculum or research priorities in the institution. Often, in other words, the most intellectually interesting candidates are those most likely to be rejected because they 'do not fit in'. Quite how narrow most forms of expertise are is something often disguised, but in fact, even in delivering lectures, an academic can be some distance from the place where they are genuinely able to make firsthand judgements, rather than relying on secondary sources. Some students realise this; many do not.[6]

As I have implied, this resorting to cultural rather than research-based assessments of value can have its most lasting effect at those moments when expertise is most 'on trial', such as the selection of staff. What happens during such processes is that elements of personality and background are subtly brought into play, particularly by more influential members of selection committees who have the capacity to *make* a moment at which a candidate 'just doesn't seem right'. Writing now, as an academic, I can say that although I have seen blatant prejudice in action, this seems to be the exception. As I speculated many years ago, what are seized on are violations of 'good taste', the failure to fine tune gesture, dress, accent and presence to institutional norms. These 'breaches' are gently pointed out by the staff members most threatened by them, who might quickly follow their observation with a disclaimer: perhaps a languid 'never mind', as proof of their tolerance. I saw this in operation at a selection committee meeting at which the most influential member, who, having pointed out to colleagues some finer points of protocol to reinforce their status and experience, lingered just a fraction of a second too long over the word 'queer' when reading out the title of a book by an applicant. Nothing more needed to be said; the homophobia wafted across the table so deliberately yet so delicately that the only violation of protocol would have been to name it.

To argue that the shape of 'scholarly' imperatives and the institutions through which they are cultivated do, in fact, respond to the same kinds of cultural forces which shape non-academic culture raises complex questions about education and the formation of subjectivity. Implicitly, it raises equally complex questions about the links between representation in literary texts and cultural values. It is not enough, in debating formations of literary studies, to look at literary texts and to extrapolate from them arguments about culture, the academy and power as was the pattern for critiques of the academy in the 1960s and after. As John Guillory has demonstrated, debates about literary canons have too often rested on the assumption that there is a simple homology between society and

6 My sense is that male students are more likely to seek to make their authority by contesting their lecturer's view if that lecturer is female; conversely, women students are more likely to seek authority based on affirming their lecturer's opinion, although such encounters are also affected by other dynamics. The point is that such exchanges have lasting effects on students' impressions of their teacher's authority.

literature, that representation in the literature curriculum (as authors or as characters) correlates directly with status in society (Canonical and Non-canonical). If we simply assume, for example, that strong interest in works by Indigenous authors reflects and sustains an equally strong political and socioeconomic position of Indigenous people then we are obviously mistaken – just as we are mistaken to argue that such interest has no significance.

The ordering of value is a complex process in which there are competing imperatives, not least that of preserving the reputation of a particular institution or profession. It is a well-kept secret that some members of any profession are incompetent; what is even less often noted is that students, as well as colleagues in other fields *within* that profession or institution, have no way of knowing this except by impression or rumour. Running counter to the latter is the shared investment in silence, not least because the reputations of professionals are protected by their status *as* professionals, and because the very idea of a professional culture, of 'acting professionally', implies keeping mistakes and disputes 'in house'. I think it is no coincidence that the rise and consolidation of the professions (and tertiary education) were congruent with the rise of the English middle class, and its strong ethic of containing conflict or disgrace behind domestic walls. So, too, academia and similar professions like medicine, which develop subjectivities that abhor public disputation: 'not in front of the children' becomes 'not in front of the students'.[7] The reputations of individuals and of institutions are protected by this belief that there is something intrinsically ethical about maintaining silence about systemic or individual failure. One interesting effect of this prohibition is that the most publicly active defenders of a field or discipline tend not to be academics at all but students and graduates, who are invested in the discipline rather than institutional norms. The difficulty is that the status of these critics *as* outsiders (or, often, apostates) weakens the force of their criticism – a point which would come to be acknowledged by poet and academic Vincent Buckley (Education and Dr Leavis, 153). Structures seem to reflect an absolute reality because the processes of their formation are not open to public view. In the case of teaching literature, for example, this includes debates about which texts might be studied; about the selection and promotion of staff. How might it change or challenge students' sense of literary study if, for example, rather than being presented with a list of texts to study, that list were debated as a means of generating reflection on the processes of canon-making?

Just as cultural values underpin impressions of the authority of particular academics, so too with texts. There is strong evidence to suggest that what is actually taught in the literature classroom is *not* 'the text', as we might assume, but the proper mode of responding to it – a point which makes struggles over 'which

7 The exception, of course, are failures of judgement or probity sufficient to attract media coverage.

book' less important than debates about methodology and pedagogy. It seems that we do not learn the 'content' of a novel or a poem so much as what is regarded as the appropriate way for an educated person to respond to a 'great' or to a 'popular' work. This process involves not simply a training of the mind but moulding the most intimate and apparently personal details of the self such as movement and tone of voice (see for example de Castell). This education about what to value in a literary text, this modelling of how to behave with books and, commensurately, the censuring of other responses or opinions, occurs in small-group teaching, in lectures, in casual discussion with fellow students and academics, and most routinely, in assessment.

Alan Sinfield suggests that during assessment 'what actually happens is that candidates are required to take up a certain system of values' (Give an Account of Shakespeare, 140). But these values are represented as a set of objectively determined competencies. The values, reframed as competencies, are what must be displayed if students are to 'submit' acceptable answers. For example, as Sinfield argues, in the case of the student who successfully answers 'the Shakespeare question' in an English exam, it is likely that

> he or she will be respectful of Shakespeare and high culture and accustomed to being appreciative of the cultural production which is offered through established institutions … And because the purposeful individual is perceived as the autonomous origin and ground of meaning and event, success in these exercises will be accepted as just reason for certain economic and social privileges. (Give an Account of Shakespeare, 142)

For those in search of advancement it is essential to develop a 'perfect sense of limits' (Moi, 1027). Breaking those limits immediately voids the speaker's authority, thus

> women who laugh at male self-importance in university seminars may find themselves constructed not as lucid critics … but as frivolous females incapable of understanding truly serious thought. And to say that a construction prevails is to say that it becomes a real social fact with real effects for … careers. (Moi, 1031)[8]

In *The Logic of Practice*, Pierre Bourdieu suggests that the regularities of institutions seem not merely necessary but natural because those habits of mind

8 H Yuan T'ien's study *The Australian Academic Elite: Their Family Origins and Structure* demonstrates that the high level of expectation about time commitments, for example, affects apparently personal decisions as marriage and parenthood. Such findings almost certainly remain relevant.

which incline us to abide by institutional patterns and expectations are actually produced by those patterns and expectations. As properly acculturated individuals, professionals experience their decisions as 'free choice' because the terms of those choices and related distinctions of manner they produce and enforce are made within limits that institutional beings find appealing. Bourdieu describes the process of acquiring these institutional selves with majestic precision, using his notion of habitus, a self-generating self-sustaining milieu that is *experienced* as a space for free will even as ideas and values are subtly remade and re-formed by institutional norms:

> Because the *habitus* has an infinite capacity for generating products – thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions – whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production, the conditioned and conditional freedom it provides is as remote from creation of unpredictable novelty as it is from simple mechanical reproduction of the original conditioning. (*The Logic of Practice*, 55)

In the light of these claims, the aim of this study is to catch academics in the act, as it were, of being authoritative: of resisting or making their place as professional authorities on the subject of literature. Another aim is to track, where possible, the perspectives of those whose careers and criticism fell beyond those limits or who fell prey to what Bourdieu denounces as 'terrorism': the 'peremptory verdicts which, in the name of taste, condemn to ridicule, indignity, shame, silence … men and women who simply fall short, in the eyes of their judges, of the right way of being and doing' (*Distinction*, 511).

In trying to describe such transactions in the light of anti-colonialism and feminism, I am mindful of Eve Sedgwick's warnings about the overuse of 'inconceivably coarse axes' in critical practices that themselves claim to be opposed to universalism. I take Sedgwick's point that

> in spite of every promise to the contrary – every single piece of theoretically or politically interesting project of post-war thought has finally had the effect of delegitimizing our space for asking or thinking in detail about the multiple, unstable ways in which people may be like or different from each other. (23)

In trying to make some kind of broader sense of the lives of individuals, it is clear that scholarly reputations are made in and by living, by the social relations with students and colleagues which makes authorities of some and fools of others. Death changes that balance in the most drastic way possible, and yet some survive, even grow. Those who have made themselves ever-present in the archive loom large; the lives of others diminish to a newspaper clipping, a funeral notice

or a footnote in an official history.

There is one final point to be made about this shaping of the self. I agree with Bourdieu's claim that those who are attached to institutions give 'disproportionate weight' to early experiences, and this is observable of postgraduate study. The latter period is crucial as rebellion and the desire for affiliation contend with each other, for as a new researcher one must be different enough to be original, yet similar enough to be recognised as potentially 'one of us'. This study bears out Bourdieu's implicit contention that very few academics change the fundamental approach to their discipline or the notions of value acquired during postgraduate study, recycling and reapplying throughout their careers the ideas and arguments absorbed as normative behaviour decades before.[9] It is this peculiar coexistence of methods and values from different times that accentuates something we can call institutional memory, habits of procedure and judgement which persist long after memory of the reasons for their introduction has been lost; this is something of that 'presence of the past' of which Chakrabarty speaks.

SOURCES AND STRUCTURE

Because I am concerned with the making of institutional authority, the focus of this study is the professoriate. Thus it needs to be emphasised that in the period under discussion, professors were dominant figures within and beyond universities. As head of department, the often lone professor had authority over which books were taught and examined (not always the same thing); often carried the bulk of the teaching (especially of senior classes); and might hold his position for decades. Foundation professors in a new university, in particular, were able to establish a curriculum that reflected their own preferences of author, period and genre.[10]

Teaching was generally done through lectures rather than tutorials, or small-group discussions, although smaller class sizes at the honours level seem to have made these groups slightly more relaxed places where student opinions might be proffered and ideas debated. Until the last third of the twentieth century, only a minute fraction of the Australian population could afford to attend university, but the mood militated against discussion and critique. A photograph of John le Gay Brereton, Challis Professor of English Literature, lecturing to undergradu-

9 Michael Pusey, following JM Keynes, contends that few economists past the age of 25 or 30 show openness to new theories: see his *Economic Rationalism in Canberra*, 5.

10 AP Rowe, former vice-chancellor of Adelaide, was critical of a system in which the 'god-professor' was 'all powerful in his Department and beyond criticism': see *If the Gown Fits*, 125.

ates in the Great Hall at Sydney University shows him peering down from the stage at straight-backed audience members, seated in neat rows and strictly segregated by sex (ladies at the front). Many students seem to have transcribed their lectures word for word, and independent thinking does not seem to have been encouraged. As two examples among many, Vera Jennings, a student of English at Melbourne University from 1917 to 1920, who later became an academic in the department there, noted she did not usually use library resources or modern critics. She and her peers worked from set texts and lecture notes.[11] Neither could Alma Hartshorn, a student at Queensland in the 1930s, remember being directed to any critic's work (personal communication). This trend might not have reflected authoritarian pedagogy so much as the fact that libraries were inadequate for independent study. The cycle of distributing, absorbing and testing knowledge was ideally a smooth one, but that is not to say that students could not be riotous, with stories about dissent or disorder frequent.

My sources for this book include the professional literature of the discipline and university staff files. I examined critical articles and books, book reviews, private letters, memoirs, university handbooks, examination papers, even job references, all of which might signal the status of specific creative writers and critics, journals, and universities. In the initial stages I compiled a biography and bibliography for each professor of English who worked in the period under study (initially, to 1970), as well as a database of every text taught. It was noticeable that professors of literature were profiled in various series on 'important men' and often were contributors of reviews, essays or comments to the print media. In other words, they had a strong public presence that left another extensive archive, in metropolitan newspapers. They were engaged by government and other organisations for a wide variety of tasks from censorship to propaganda, and frequently determined and assessed matriculation for their colony or state – a task which would become massive.

Whilst the source material used in the original study has been supplemented, the neat historical and geographical divisions used to structure the dissertation and, in a different way, *The English Men*, have more or less broken down here. This reflects two changes, one related to method, the other to the subject. Methodologically, I had understood the past to be a place that was discrete from the present, making periodising an embarrassingly simple exercise. I now understand the developing, dispersing and deprecating of ideas to be a much messier process, temporally and intellectually speaking. By this I mean that approaches to literature can seem to have been entirely discredited but can reappear a generation later in a sentence, a choice of book, or a student of a renowned or obscure teacher. At the time of writing, the reliance of media criticism on

11 See her essay in Dow's *Memories of Melbourne University*.

ideas about literature strengthened through mid-twentieth-century appropriation of mid-nineteenth-century public commentary is one such example of this shuffling and re-emergence of ideas, which complicates claims – a staple of most similar histories – that critical approaches can be categorised, and that such approaches have origin, influence, or obsolescence. Thus, each of the chapters in the first half of the book posits a different (possible) beginning for English study: in classics, in philosophy, and in imperial governance (respectively). The second half of the book divides roughly into two parts: the first, on the intellectual narrowing and the converse demographic expansion which characterised Australian universities after the Second World War, when Leavisite criticism came into vogue; the second on debates over the introduction of Australian literature as a subject at tertiary level. Here, again, the neat periodising breaks down: key influences in postwar criticism were Matthew Arnold and the Leavises, but Arnold was a Victorian, and the Leavises particularly active in England in the interwar period. The final chapter aims to summarise and draw broader conclusions from the discussion, and to consider some questions for the discipline in light of this history.

2
CLASSICS AND COLONIALISM

Laudant illa sed ista legunt.
Those they praise, but they read the others.
(Martial, Epigrammata IV, 49)

English as a discipline has tended to obscure its controversial and difficult beginnings in favour of a story of inevitable rise. Indeed many might be surprised to learn how relatively recently the subject was introduced in tertiary institutions. But it was only as an act of hubristic forgetting that Arthur Quiller-Couch, who had successfully argued for an independent English course at Cambridge (introduced in 1917), could claim that studies of English literature published in the 1870s and 1880s came 'as through parting clouds of darkness', in which the English could behold their 'ancestry, literary as well as political, radiantly legitimised' (quoted in Doyle 21). As Quiller-Couch well knew, in the last decades of the nineteenth century the radiant legitimating of the study of English literature was a long way off, and in its early decades, English in the elite universities of England was marked by a distinct sense of uncertainty or inferiority. This mood in part reflected its status in relation to more established disciplines, notably classics, the study of Latin and Greek. For those hostile to the idea of studying English literature, it seemed self-evident that texts in one's own language could not offer the kind of intellectual challenge presented by the literature of ancient Greece or Rome. Nor, they argued, were English works of the same value, for they could not offer exemplary models of character and mind. Many of the dons at Oxford shared the view of EA Freeman, one of the most vocal opponents of the new discipline, that English was merely 'chatter about Shelley' (quoted in Baldick, *Social Mission*, 75).[1]

Frank Turner has argued that throughout the nineteenth century in Britain, the veneration of Greek literature and language and, for slightly different reasons,

1 For a discussion of the debate in England see (Baldick, *Social Mission*, 59–85), and Bacon.

Latin and the Roman Empire, were central aspects of political culture and literary education. Latin was the language of European scholarship; Greek was compulsory for entry to Oxford; classics held a dominant place in Oxford and Cambridge until the 1950s at least, although it declined significantly in Australia after the First World War. Perhaps drawing too heavily on Turner's impressive work, conventional histories of the discipline (including *The English Men*) have tended to understand the shift from classics to vernacular study in the first part of the twentieth century as a movement from 'language' to 'literature'. But against this evolutionary model, it seems clear that in the nineteenth century a pedagogy which emphasised the value of the aesthetic qualities and moral lessons of literature was quite overtly in competition with a pedagogical practice which focused on the *structure* of language. Put simply, did one read the writers of antiquity to parse their sentences (and therefore to develop one's capacities for logical analysis), or in order to absorb their lessons about humanity? Thus English and the modern languages (usually French and German) with which it was sometimes grouped were new playing fields on which an ongoing debate competition about what constituted the study of texts continued.

Resistance to the study of English, derided as an activity for dilettantes by those who could not see any value in the study of *literature* (as opposed to language), was played out in debates about introducing the subject to Oxford. English literature had long been studied at universities like Glasgow and Edinburgh, and at Cambridge had been part of the school of mediaeval and modern languages since 1878; it also had a presence at newer English universities like London and Liverpool. But the mood at the two older institutions is signified by the fact that there was not a full chair in the subject at Cambridge until 1911, and that when a chair of English was established at Oxford in 1893, the appointee was a language specialist not a literature scholar. As this appointment suggests, the charge of intellectual lightness was most readily countered by presenting English as language study. In the first instance, this meant Anglo-Saxon; it is no coincidence that that term was popularised, and that study aids for students for this subject began to proliferate, during the late nineteenth century when the battle to establish the academic credentials of English was at its height. Of these study aids perhaps the best known was *Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Primer*, which appeared first in 1882 and which assumed a prominent place in tertiary English curricula in Australia for many decades.[2]

That said, it is difficult to sustain the view that the influence of classics was felt purely in terms of the prestige given to language study. Just as importantly, classical texts helped to set parameters for understanding the term 'culture'. For

2 There had been earlier grammars but *Sweet's* went through eight editions between 1882 and 1905, and nine reprints from 1911 to 1949: see Norman Davis, *Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Primer*.

example, Peter Hulme argues that some classical literary works became models for differentiating civilised from savage in the 'encounter' with the 'new world':

> as the European nations, especially England, took on their imperial roles, the classical world … grew in importance as a repository of the images and analogies by which those nations could represent to themselves their colonial activities. (35)

In his reading of Virgil's *Aeneid*, Hulme suggests that when Aeneas and his party arrive at Dido's 'outpost of civilisation' on the North African coast, it is essential for them to establish their credentials: 'the Trojans, strange and unexpected arrivals from the sea … need to assert, as it were, their own civilized pedigree' (252). For these heroes what is at stake is that they be recognised – that they will be seen, and *therefore be able to see themselves* – not as barbarians, but as civilised men in exile. Hulme's point is that these templates of value were redeployed and refreshed in writing about the encounter between Briton and 'native' throughout the empire. We can also reverse this, and suggest that it was the habits of thinking which energised imperial expansion that led nineteenth-century Britons in elite institutions to find special value and meaning in such tales.

Arguably, a similar drama of recognition to that which Hulme discerns within *The Aeneid* is played out in the reading and teaching of literature, and what is termed 'high culture'. WF Jackson Knight, translator of Virgil for the Penguin Classics edition, gives explicit warning that this is the case, telling readers the

> good story of a sightseer in one of our famous galleries who remarked to the attendant: 'I don't know why people make such a fuss about these pictures. I can't see anything in them.' To which the attendant made the sublime reply: 'Excuse me, Sir, the *pictures* are not on trial.' (24)

It is not 'sublime', of course, but a rather nasty put-down that Jackson Knight applauds here – that social violence that Bourdieu (too dramatically) calls 'terrorism'. And crucially, such judgement of the viewer (or reader) is so integral to the consumption of certain kinds of art that it more or less defines the notion of canonicity. Implicitly, in the cultural encounter with a canonical work, the viewer's or reader's pleasure is derived as much from their capacity to express correct judgement as it is from their experience of the work of art itself. It is somewhat surprising to learn, then, that the Romans from whom nineteenth-century Britons so consistently drew their model of empire as improvement could display the kind of anxiety we might associate with the colonial. As Cicero testily commented, 'We Romans have gone to school in Greece; we read their poets and learn them by heart, and then we think ourselves scholars and men of culture' (quoted in Gwynn, 95).

Hulme's argument suggests that the teaching of classics leaves room for cultural values to inform teaching and testing. Put another way, there is little intrinsic to the teaching of Latin and Greek which precludes a pedagogy which emphasises lessons about morality or aesthetics. This was certainly the view of mid-nineteenth-century reformers of the classics curriculum at Oxford, like Benjamin Jowett. Jowett and his sympathisers believed that the moral lessons of classical texts were more important than details of grammar, and that an inspiring pedagogy should seek to instil a love of these books in the young men who studied literature. Thus teaching and testing might include not just translation and comprehension, but commentary on the meaning and significance of the text. This pedagogy was based on the belief that education could be used to form not only the mind but the character, a view characteristically associated with the study of literature as opposed to language. Such beliefs would be central to later critical movements in English studies, notably Leavisite criticism, but they are also pejoratively associated with an intellectual 'softening' of the discipline. This might in part explain why both Jowett's and Leavis' teaching were associated with an emphatically revivified masculinity, a point I will return to.

This philosophy of literary education, which emphasises teaching over scholarship, and implies training students to serve the public good rather than private interests, is more instrumental than it might at first seem: what is presented as being for the public good is also about training students to make good in their careers. This is perhaps why arguments for the teaching of classics made in England during the nineteenth century meshed so well with the needs of an emerging middle class, and dreams of making good on the imperial stage. Perhaps the most outstanding example of this inspiriting reform occurred at Rugby school under Thomas Arnold during the 1830s. Arnold's goal has been described by a sympathetic commentator as being 'to train the sons of self-made men in the manners and outlook of the ruling class, and to change that class itself by teaching the duties of hard work and leadership'.[3] They were ideas and ideals that were to reach around the empire, branded and paradoxically universalised as 'the English public school'.

The most significant means by which Arnold's reforms were monumentalised was not through policy, nor the impact of his pupils, nor changes to curriculum, but through a work of popular literature: the novel *Tom Brown's School Days* (An Old Boy). Published at a time when the need to believe in English pluck and decency was under desperate pressure (1857), the book is a classic for its depiction of emerging middle-class morality, encapsulated as something that might be called 'tone'.[4] The influence of *Tom Brown* continues to the present

3 Melvin Richter, *The Politics of Conscience: TH Green and His Age*, 46.

4 The Sepoy rebellion in India occurred during this year; other colonial conflicts in southern Africa, New Zealand, and then in Jamaica caused intense and widespread

day, having been refreshed throughout the twentieth century and beyond by mass-market republication, as well as film and television versions (including parody in the *Tompkinson's Schooldays* episode of *Ripping Yarns*). Hughes' novel elevates Thomas Arnold, who appears as a character, to the status of a hero, overseer of a world in which determination and good manners overcome cowardice, bullying, and other perils of the boarding school. Much more self-consciously than we might expect – the narrator breaks in to comment on these matters – the novel sets out and explains Arnold's approach to inculcating goodness in the lads under his charge.[5] The novel ends with a badly unnerved protagonist, transformed from sportsman to reader, returning to the school chapel to mourn Arnold's death.[6] He sits first in the seat he had last occupied as the school's leading pupil, then in the one he occupied during his first nervous days at Rugby, a move emblematic of the humility instilled in him by Arnold. Those aims, of course, were satirised by later generations, leading a laconic AC Bradley to note that 'The mid-Victorian' was 'a figure amply proving the creative energy of Georgian imagination' (3).

What satire overlooks is that improvement *was* urgently needed in some institutions in nineteenth-century England. Oxford had declined in substance and standard as a place of higher learning, as we see in Hughes' sequel to *Tom Brown's School Days, Tom Brown at Oxford*. Tom, hard working but no genius, is disappointed that the university demands less of its students than did fifth form at Rugby, but worse is the inequality between students, and the 'low living' that characterises college life. Disgusted by the perfunctory nature of study, faith and friendship, he comes to see that his college, 'St Ambrose', values wealth above all else. Hughes emphasises and historians confirm that aristocratic and ecclesiastical privilege were everywhere in evidence at Oxford at this time: members of the nobility were distinguished by gold tassels in their caps, while the poorest students, called servitors, worked in return for a place (Richter, 50, 59). One of the latter, shabby and housed in squalor, becomes Tom's mentor; he explains that the ideals instilled by Thomas Arnold have no meaning at the university. And it is fair to say that, until the middle of the nineteenth century at least, the academic reputation of Oxford rested more on consensus about status than on the uniform quality of students or teachers.

Calls for moral and intellectual improvement at the university came from various sources, advocacy of change and opposition to it given force by religious sensibilities. Mid-century reforms to the literature curriculum came amidst wider demands for the institution to pay some attention to merit, demands enforced by a parliamentary inquiry in 1850 and legislative change in 1854. It is perhaps worth

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debate about the cost and purpose of imperial conquest.

5 See the opening to the penultimate chapter, Tom Brown's Last Match, 327.

6 Tom seems almost not to care who wins the last cricket match, but bears away 'two beautifully bound volumes of the Doctor's Sermons', 351.

noting that AP Stanley, who was secretary to the commission investigating Oxford and gave the inquiry its name, was a product of Rugby and the biographer of Thomas Arnold (Hinchliff, 31, 27). Stanley himself had not long before called for reform, in a pamphlet written with Benjamin Jowett, who was the leader of those academic staff pushing for change (Anon, *Suggestions for an Improvement*). During the 1850s, in particular, a culture of sinecure was challenged and, in some colleges, changed, from a time when fewer than one in twenty-five fellowships were awarded by examination (AC Bradley, 3). This modernising spirit, sometimes strongly pragmatic, sometimes idealistic, often both, was central to the way in which Victorian Britons understood their place in society and Britain's place in the world: as embodying principled and 'modern' ideals. Significantly for Australia, John Woolley, professor of classics and the first principal of Sydney University, was in touch with Stanley throughout the conduct of the commission, and drew heavily on Stanley's report for the reorganisation of governance he carried out at Sydney soon after his arrival (see next chapter) (Gardner). But tradition and resistance to change were *also* a central part of English identity, and so while the legislation aimed to challenge Oxford's exclusivity it was decided that the colleges – the heart of the institution – should be permitted to negotiate the terms of their reform. Change would only occur at a pace and in a form that each college found acceptable.

Those who advocated change at Oxford were generally theological liberals who saw themselves as ready to embrace the challenges presented by new discoveries in science and in the humanities. They were influenced, in particular, by the philosophy, theology and literature of Germany. It is not coincidental that Stanley and Jowett had spent time in Germany together in the late 1840s, nor that Jowett was to become a leading polemicist in debates about theology. The key movement for Humanities was 'higher criticism', an approach to study of the Bible which meant understanding it as a historical document rather than as a sacred text, the forms and meanings of which were given. In the mid century, it seems that many of the most principled and lively students at Oxford began to debate intellectual problems in informed groups. Thus Tom Brown's general unhappiness is partially relieved by the start of his third year, when he joins a society of liberals committed to discuss 'the highest and deepest questions of morals and politics and metaphysics' (Hughes, 299). The kinds of social and intellectual transformations depicted in *Tom Brown's School Days* would deeply influence pedagogies in English studies for at least a century, and played an important role in legitimating literary studies. It is a point not often appreciated that literary texts themselves are vital tools by which the value of literary *study* is demonstrated.

Changes were made at Oxford, though they were not universally welcomed, nor were they always effective. Classics remained the privileged discipline, but the sheer difficulty of the languages meant that original texts were not well known except by a small group of specialists among the scholars, and their most

outstanding students. For the majority of even that elite,

> a few hundred pages of Cicero and Demosthenes, a few hundred lines of Virgil and Homer, with extracts from the historians and the elegiac poets, and perhaps a tragedy by Euripides or a comedy by Terence, came to represent the sum total of the Graeco-Roman legacy. (quoted in Bolgar, 365)

In *Civilisation*, Lord Clark comments that 'One mustn't overrate the culture of what used to be called "top people" before the wars. They had charming manners, but they were as ignorant as swans'.[7] In the late nineteenth century, one outstanding student refused even to attend the lectures on Greek being delivered by Jowett because he felt they were so riddled with errors as to be a waste of his time.

TG TUCKER AT MELBOURNE

Because of the domination, by classics, of both prestige and practice in British and European universities, it was more or less inevitable that the first generations of those appointed to teach English literature would be trained in that discipline rather than their own, which is to say, that they were graduates of older rather than newer universities. One of the most dominant figures in academic and literary culture in the late colonial period and after federation was TG Tucker, long-time professor of classics at Melbourne.

Thomas George Tucker was born in Burnham, Buckinghamshire, in 1859. After sharing the Chancellor's medal and coming first among those with first-class honours in classics from Cambridge in 1882, Tucker was appointed to a chair at Auckland when he was just 23. He became professor of classical and comparative philology at Melbourne in 1885, but was briefly an honorary lecturer in English (1902–03) and published on topics related to English literature and criticism. He translated numerous works from Greek, particularly those of Æschylus, wrote primers, grammars and dictionaries of Latin and English, histories of life in ancient Greece and Rome, and a monumental introduction to philology, the comparative history of languages. At the beginning of the 1890s, one reviewer commented that 'one cannot be a day in Melbourne among educated people without hearing Professor Tucker spoken of with admiration, and his opinions quoted as law on all literary subjects'.[8] One wonders whether there is a hint of satire here, of Melbourne, or of Tucker.

Tucker's scholarly work focused on language rather than literary study,

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7 Quoted in R Young, *Colonial Desire*, 50.

8 Books Worth Reading. *Illustrated Sydney News*, 7 June 1890: 21.

which is to say translation and grammar rather than interpretation and commentary, but he reached a broader reading public with regular essays in the Saturday issues of *The Argus* in the 1890s, was general editor of the journal *Australasian Critic*, and a collaborator for the *Australian Encyclopedia*. His essay *Australia as a Home* was published by the Commonwealth Immigration Office to encourage British settlement; under the heading 'The People of Australia' he provided reassuring information:

> It is true that, in its earliest days, there were small scattered tribes of natives or 'Blacks'. But these have almost entirely died out, or have vanished into the remote interior, where they are neither numerous nor troublesome … They simply do not count … Australia has been too distant from Europe to become, like America, the home of refuge for destitute Russians, Poles, or Italians. (12)

Even given the publishing venue, this intolerance is surprising. However, modern scholars have contended that philology, the study of language, with its historical grounding in comparative ethnography, is founded on the beliefs about race and hierarchy evident here. Robert Young, for example, closely following the arguments of Martin Bernal, puts the case that historians of language and culture sought to describe their objects of study in ways that gave intellectual legitimacy to racism. As the nineteenth century 'progressed', not only the study of language but 'ethnology, the science of races … described physical and linguistic differences between different races [and] investigated their intellectual and cultural differences so as to provide the political principles of social and national life' (Young, 67).[9]

Given his views on Indigenous peoples, and given Young's and Bernal's arguments about philology as a discipline, we would expect to find Tucker's monumental *Introduction to the Natural History of Language* premised on a set of assumptions about the intrinsic superiority of the classical languages and the British race. This is not the case. Cultural prejudice underpins Tucker's claim that 'to the student of language the facts of Aboriginal Australian or Eskimo are as important as those of Greek or French' (3), but Tucker's point is that the student of language is neither equipped for nor interested in making judgements about the relative value of culture. In a work written for popular readers – Tucker might have been optimistic about his audience in presenting 465 pages – he is clearly anxious to demonstrate that all languages are intellectually challenging. In the sentence quoted he uses a parallel with botanists, for whom, he declares, 'the facts of docks are as important as the facts of roses'; in two chapters on 'Race and Lan-

9 See also Bernal, *Black Athena*, esp. 281–336.

guage' he is again at pains to put the case that the growth or decline of languages is related 'to political and social relations' rather than an intrinsic complexity or value (as we might expect him to do) (228). This leads Tucker to a position where he is critical of the reliance, in ethnology, on the use of evidence from language study to make judgements about people from different cultures. In his view, languages 'display the most complicated resemblances and divergences in respect of both sounds and morphology [structure of words] and in no way admit of such classification as to make them correspond with any arrangement of race' (234). Nevertheless, these views do not lead Tucker to a position where he is prepared to do away with racial classifications – indeed, he uses such categories, with precisely that lack of attention to detail he is so critical of in linguistic studies, to prove his claim that the classification of language owes nothing to the physical appearance of speakers. In some respects, then, the language study operates according to rigorous rules of evidence, whilst *at the same time* the premises for the 'scholarly' discussion of linguistics are underpinned by culturally based ideas about 'race'.

Tucker occupied an influential position as a reader for the publisher Angus and Robertson after his retirement, a demonstration of the fact that whereas one's ideas can come to seem outmoded by colleagues or students, influence in public life often increases in the later stages of a career and during retirement. University of Sydney librarian HM Green, in particular, was incensed by Tucker's editorial interventions in his *Outline of Australian Literature*, alleging that Tucker was biased about and ignorant of the book's subject. The quarrel led Angus and Robertson to refuse to publish Green's book, even though the final typing had been completed by their staff (Barker, 149). But in spite of Tucker's apparently conservative tastes in literature and obvious self-confidence, it was almost certainly he who was Nettie Palmer's 'Professor X', whom she described as an outstanding classics teacher, who confessed to her years later that his favourite modern author was Agatha Christie (63, 64)!

THE JURY CHAIR AT ADELAIDE

Of all Australian universities, it is Adelaide in which the influence of classical study persisted longest and in the most interesting ways, specifically in terms of its influence on English studies. In stark contrast to other colonies, South Australia founded its university on a firm financial footing, receiving a bequest of nearly £100 000 from Thomas Elder. A separate bequest from William Watson Hughes funded several foundation chairs, but this was to generate controversy as Hughes took the enthusiastic step of naming their occupants, perhaps reflecting the Scottish practice of appointing professors by election.[10] Adelaide was the third of the Australian universities to be founded, in the early 1870s, and would

have been one of the first in the world to open its doors to women had Queen Victoria not refused the original application for Letters Patent, on the grounds that the university planned to accept women students.

No such objection was made to the study of English literature, and so Adelaide was the first university in Australia to offer a foundation chair with a title that included English: the Hughes Professor of English Literature and Language and Mental and Moral Philosophy. The title might be taken as a signal of the close connection between philosophy and literature as they were then understood, or perhaps the habits of Scottish education (where English had long been studied) – or perhaps just the views of Hughes. The first holder of the position was Presbyterian Minister John Davidson, who had attended university in Scotland but not taken a degree. Questions were asked in the colonial legislature about the employment of a professor who was 'not a University man … not a man of any great culture … not even a third-rate man' (*Debates* [1874], 2063a). While some defended the appointees another remarked that 'whilst he did not sympathise with the attacks that had been made on the Professors, and whilst he admitted that they were learned and scholarly men, yet they were not men of high European reputation in the chairs of learning that they were nominated to fill' (*Debates* [1874], 2159). During Davidson's tenure, numbers of students remained low; it was realised that education for matriculation would have to be addressed, a besetting problem across the Australian colonies which had moved relatively quickly to establish universities but did not have a schooling system sufficiently robust to produce potential students.

After Davidson's death in the middle of 1881 the chair was offered to EE Morris, then the headmaster of Melbourne Grammar, but it was ultimately taken up by a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin. Edward Vaughan Boulger was a classics graduate of particular distinction, though had been ranked third on the list of applicants. He had been professor of Greek at Queen's College Cork from 1875 to 1883, and had taught at the Queen's Institute in Dublin for several years, being proficient in English, Greek, Latin, French, German and Sanscrit. Testimonials for Boulger's applications for chairs at Adelaide and Sydney from JP Mahaffy and fellow students reiterate the view that Boulger is the outstanding scholar of the writer's acquaintance.[11] This is significant because Trinity College had a fine reputation for classics from the late 1860s, just before Boulger was a student there (McDowell and Webb, 67; Dillon, 243).[12]

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10 These nominations were made independently of the committee that was to have dealt with staff selection, among other things: see Woodburn, 6.

11 John Dillon suggests that Mahaffy was the most flamboyant but not the most scholarly of the classicists, 244–46.

12 Even a history of its Catholic rival in the city, University College, calls Trinity 'a bulwark of Classical learning' in this period: see Fathers of the Society of Jesus,

Early in 1894 Boulger took over teaching in classics after the death of David Kelly, an Irish colleague who had encouraged him to apply for Adelaide initially. He continued to do the work of the English professor for half salary, but subsequently complained of overwork. Apart from this, Boulger was engaged in a long-running dispute over his terms of employment, the main objection being that he was subject to dismissal upon six months' notice. This dispute spread to the senate and the council of the university, then to the press, where it received considerable attention and where the more popular view seems to have been that it was not appropriate to make tenure contingent on good behaviour. But Boulger eventually resigned in December 1894 after having been 'accused of being unable to attend to his duties' in the annual examination (Duncan and Leonard, 22). While he himself attributed this to overwork, the vice-chancellor alleged that Boulger was using alcohol or narcotics. (I have not been able to find any records that explain what happened to the students. Did they take their exams – and if they did, did they receive their results?) Boulger's death in Adelaide in 1910 is recorded in the *Chronicle*, but the fact that it is not mentioned in university sources suggests that he had lost touch with the institution (Obituary). As with Davidson, this lack of documentation makes it difficult to gain a sense of Boulger's contribution to academic life. Certainly he was a committed idealist, a point evident in the only extant piece of his criticism (Boulger).

Boulger's replacement was a Scottish philosopher, William Mitchell, whom one modern critic identifies as an idealist with whom we can associate Edward Caird and WP Ker (see next chapter).[13] Although a colleague later claimed that Mitchell did his preparation for his teaching of English by reading an Anglo-Saxon primer on the boat, the new philosopher was effectively in control of senior appointments in the discipline of English at Adelaide for the next half century at least. Although his own chair was divided to create a separate position in English and history, Mitchell remained as the professor of philosophy from 1899 to 1926. In 1916 he took over the duties of vice-chancellor, in which role he continued until 1942. His marriage to the daughter of one of Adelaide's benefactors perhaps strengthened his position within the university and the community, and he himself made a number of generous bequests, among which was the endowing of a chair of biochemistry. Unfortunately the first appointee to the new chair of Modern History and English Language and Literature made as troubled an exit from Adelaide as had his Irish predecessor. Robert Langton Douglas, a historian and curator of art, held the position only from 1900 to 1902. Like Boulger he was forced to resign rather than being dismissed, but *his* disgrace came after his divorce notice was listed in *The Times* on 6 June 1901 (on which, see Kwan). This

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13 See David Boucher's *The Scottish Idealists: Selected Philosophical Writings*, with essays by Caird, Ker and Mitchell.

does not seem to have dampened Douglas' spirits:

> He was a successful lady's man, and while in Genoa he had had an affair; he also fell in love with Grace Hutchinson, the daughter of a naval officer to whom he remained devoted for many years and by whom he had three children. Like many a man before and since his love of one woman was not to the exclusion of a love for another, and on the way back from Australia he fell for Gwendolyn Henchman. (Sutton, 11)

The fact that Douglas had also been attracted by socialism probably did not help his cause, but the case also demonstrates that in certain circumstances academic staff could be held accountable for lapses in behaviour that were tolerated in others. In that sense, one wonders whether it was Douglas' divorce or its publication, Boulger's use of opium and/or alcohol or the public claim that he did, that ultimately forced each to leave their university position.

Adelaide, the first university in Australia to establish and maintain English as a subject, was able to create an independent chair in 1921. On 18 April of that year Mrs Elizabeth Jury offered £12 000 to endow a chair in English literature in honour of her husband; shortly after, following an interview between Mitchell and Charles Rischbieth Jury (son of the benefactor), it was resolved to offer Jury the chair for a period of five years. The offer was refused but Jury taught in the English department for a year in 1933, and took up a third and insistent offer of the chair after the Second World War. (This was not the only case at Adelaide of parents endowing a chair that would be filled by one of their children.) Barbara Wall's 1966 essay 'Charles Rischbieth Jury: Poet of Adelaide' is the only substantial study of Jury's life and work; it describes both the initial offer and the refusal of the chair in some detail, and the following portrait of Jury draws heavily from this source.

A significant figure in South Australia's cultural and intellectual life, Charles Jury was born in 1893. He attended St Peter's College, where he became 'a School Prefect, secretary of the Rowing Club Committee, a member of the Second Crew, and on the Library, Magazine, and Literary and Debating Committees' (Wall, 85). In 1913 Jury sailed to England, enrolling in classics at Oxford, but was there for just one year before enlisting in the British Expeditionary Force. He was invalided out of the army after being wounded at Ypres, where his brother was killed; many other university friends died on the Western Front. After completing his studies, Jury spent the next decade travelling between Europe and Australia, his parents having provided him with an income to enable a life devoted to writing. He had published his first book, *Spring is Coming and Other Poems*, when he was twelve, and a small number of other works appeared during his lifetime. In 1993 *A Dweller on Delos: Selected Poems and Prose* was published, edited by Wall and DC Muecke.

Jury published little criticism, apart from an essay on TS Eliot's *The Waste-land*, but his notes for lectures show detailed, judicious and generous scholarship. He did not find the university environment a pleasant one and at the end of his first year teaching at Adelaide, 1933, he wrote to his friend Warren Derry that

> my work at the University is finished, and I am glad to be rid of it. Some of it was interesting in a certain way; but I don't feel myself to be a success as an academic, chiefly because I am not equipped for it. And the finish up of the year was embittered by a piece of juggling over the chair of English … I hope I shall never want to go back there. I think it is a nasty place.[14]

The nastiness referred to here is the refusal of Mitchell to consider a young Australian, RC Bald, who was a lecturer at the university, for the chair of English. Wall notes that Jury was disappointed by the decision, for he greatly admired Bald's scholarship. But worse was to come for Jury, after he took up the chair again at the end of the Second World War.

When he returned to teaching in 1946 Jury did so in the belief that he was giving a junior Australian colleague, who had postponed his study in order to enlist (as Jury himself had done more than two decades earlier), time to gain qualifications at Oxford which would make him likely to succeed in an eventual application for the chair. In Wall's words,

> He was influenced too by his admiration for the mind of the young man concerned and in a small way by his wish to prove to himself and to others that he could fill the position satisfactorily … Towards the end of his time at the University his pleasure and gratification in the job were somewhat vitiated by his realization that the person for whom he had given up his freedom … was not to be appointed to the Chair, and that he was considered by the new Vice-Chancellor to have entered into an arrangement both improper and unrealistic. (Wall, 105)

The person concerned took a second-class degree from Oxford, not the first that had been expected, and so it was argued by the new vice-chancellor that the agreement could not be upheld. (Wall's account hints at other factors being in play.) A controversy developed which involved Jury, the vice-chancellor, members of the council, and a senior member of the legal profession. Jury again left the university bitter about his experiences of administrators, especially their lack of commitment to ex-servicemen, views in evidence in his play *The Sun in Servitude*, set in 'Saddlebourne University'. But the play includes among its characters

14 Letter no. 37, 25 November 1933, Jury Papers, PRG 20/36/1-65, State Library, South Australia.

a figure important for this history: the very first holder of a chair of Australian literature, professor Dave Oswy.

Although chronologically not congruent with the period in which classics enjoyed almost complete dominance in Australian universities, Jury's life and work place him among his nineteenth-century predecessors who valued ancient Greek and Roman literatures and cultures over any other, as well as showing that continuing trace of influences and ideas noted in the introduction. Both Wall and Muecke conclude that, notwithstanding the importance of Shakespeare and of Romanticism, the major influence on Jury's own writing was the literature of classical Greece. Muecke, in his introduction to *The Sun in Servitude*, contends that Jury 'believed not only that Greece had created beauty at a higher imaginative and artistic level than any other European civilisation, but also that what Greece had achieved was still valid for us' (x). Thus, that literature remained a kind of compass for Jury's life and creative work in the manner of an earlier generation of writer scholars such as Walter Pater, John Addington Symonds, and perhaps even Oscar Wilde. It was a literature which could authorise the presence of men who identified as homosexual at the very centre of some of the most powerful institutions in English culture. On the other hand, Jury's typescript lectures and published criticism also indicate familiarity with modern commentators and with modernist literature, something unusual for Australian academics at the time. This might reflect his greater time for reading and travel, which in turn enabled direct contact with contemporary western European and British literary culture; he became a conduit for the ferment of modernism in Adelaide (see Miles).

As Linda Dowling has persuasively argued, changes at Oxford in the mid-nineteenth century meant that it became possible for scholars and students to find in their university studies inspiring exemplars of homosexual behaviour. Classical texts could offer students and writers like Jury a series of authoritative stories through which to understand and to rehearse narratives which resonated with their own experiences and values as homosexuals, as students of literature, and as active participants in England's wars. A classical education enabled a particular class of male reader to have direct access to the texts that presented stories of generals, philosophers and emperors who loved other men. These texts were usually bowdlerised in translation or perhaps misunderstood by less adept or imaginative readers, but

> the sexual practices of the Greeks and Romans were well known both to specialists and, to a certain extent, to students … Classical 'homosexuality' was especially evident to educated men who were themselves attracted to their own sex, and to writers, artists and composers who used Greek antecedents as a justification for what others regarded as perversion. (Aldrich, 13–14)

Even those scholars who did not approve of homosexuality were obliged to acknowledge it had existed. As Mahaffy suggested, some social dilemmas 'were solved in strange violation of our notions of morals and good taste; and when such a people as the Greeks stand opposed to us, even in vital principles, we cannot reject their verdict without weighing their reasons' (quoted in Turner, 10–11).

Dowling argues that Jowett's pedagogy and pedagogically driven academic culture heightened this mood. A specific, we might guess coterie-driven, Oxford Hellenism intensified the already intense relationship between tutor and student that was foundational to teaching at Oxford. Thus Dowling argues for the significance of the practices developed by Jowett, Regius Professor of Greek and tutor of two of the more famous representatives of what is often euphemised as 'Aestheticism', Pater, later also a tutor at Balliol, and Symonds. At the same time, the intensely homosocial environment of Oxford and perhaps that institution's strong sense of its own historical significance seems to have encouraged passionate intellectual friendships between men. Pater and Symonds, for example, joined with Algernon Swinburne and others in a select group of students, called 'Old Mortality', to discuss literary, philosophical and theological questions, very much in the manner described in Thomas Hughes' novel.

Dowling suggests that the homosocial behaviours legitimised by Oxford Hellenism were normative particularly in the thirty years after the major reforms in the 1850s but before the abolition of the celibacy requirement which took effect in 1884. Although male homosexuality was demonised and debilitated during the trials of Oscar Wilde in 1895, it remained an important aspect of life in the universities long after. H Montgomery Hyde contends, in *The Other Love*, that by the 1920s and 1930s it had become 'among [Oxbridge] undergraduates and dons with pretensions to culture and a taste for the arts, at once a fashion, a doctrine and a way of life' (quoted in Sinfield, *Literature*, 65; see also 79). Jury's period of study occurred before and after the First World War, but the uses he seems to have made of classical writing suggest there are similarities between him and these earlier, and later, generations. Although neither the texts nor the communities necessarily translated easily to Adelaide, one senses that Jury was the centre of or mentor to an energetic circle of young artists and writers. However when he took the bolder step of representing male homosexual desire in his play *Icarius*, the work was received in a hostile way by at least one influential Australian reviewer (see Hope). On the other hand *Icarius* did have defenders, including Jury's former colleague at Adelaide, Herbert Piper. Piper, an ex-serviceman with an Oxford degree who had only recently taken up a chair at the University of New England in Armidale, had the courage to criticise publicly AD Hope's homophobia (see Piper, 'Hope Interred').

The deference towards classical study and to Oxford remained strong at Adelaide: in the period of the chair's operation until the early twenty-first century (it

seems now to have lapsed), every holder was a graduate of the English university. After Jury himself left, the chair was awarded to AN Jeffares, a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, where he had taken four degrees (including a PhD in English), plus an MA and PhD in English from Oxford. Although he was in Australia for a relatively short period (1952 to 1956), moving from Adelaide to Leeds, Jeffares had an ongoing influence in the country. At Leeds his name was associated with that institution's reputation for Commonwealth (now more usually 'postcolonial') literature, although at the same time he remained (hyper)active in literary studies more generally. In his inaugural lecture at the northern English university, he began by claiming that he was 'a classics man brought up in the classical traditions of Trinity College Dublin' and his lecture began with a discussion of Homer.[15]

More complicatedly, Jeffares was part of a network that linked Australia to Ireland and to Leeds: Gustav Cross, who like Jeffares was a graduate of Trinity, lectured at Adelaide in the mid-fifties and was visiting professor in Commonwealth literature at Leeds with Jeffares in 1963. There he taught a postgraduate course in Australian literature before returning to Australia, taking up a chair at the newly founded university at Newcastle. Jeffares continued to act as a referee for candidates for chairs in Australia. A measure of the pervasiveness of his influence is that of seven applicants for the Challis chair at Sydney in 1962, three had Jeffares listed as referee; no other person is listed more than once. Notwithstanding these links with Ireland and Leeds, it was the Oxford connection that remained paramount at Adelaide. When a second chair was created in 1964 it was awarded to Oxford graduate John Colmer, who subsequently held the Jury Chair from 1979 until his retirement in 1986. Colmer followed the pattern of developing an interest in Australian literature, after having focused early in his career on the work of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. He published widely on Australian autobiography and on Patrick White, and entered debates on reviewing and newspaper commentary. Another influential graduate of Oxford was Colin J Horne, also a graduate of Melbourne, who lectured for extended periods in Belfast and Leicester before moving to Adelaide. Like his colleagues Cross and Jeffares, he had research interests in Irish literature and Australian literature, and reviewed widely in the latter area. In an important and still pertinent essay, he drew attention to the lack of interest in Australian literature in England, a fact that was reflected by poor library holdings ('Book Reviewing').

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On the face of it we might identify TG Tucker as the most purely 'scholarly' of

15 'Language, Literature and Science', Inaugural Lecture, t.s., Folder 132, Box 44, in a (huge) collection of AN Jeffares Papers, MS 4876, National Library of Australia.

the early teachers of English, confirmed by the fact that he took a LittD from Cambridge by thesis and received an honorary doctorate from Trinity College, Dublin. And there is a weight of evidence that Tucker's tastes, as he expressed them in public, were almost relentlessly elitist. But in private, it seems, he permitted himself to feel that literature might be enjoyed, the puzzles of parsing replaced by those of plot. In his work on the history of language, we can see a meticulous scholar sliding to the edge of his own specialism in ways which left him dependent on precisely those ethnologies whose crudity of method he deplored. Within his career, then, it is difficult to separate literary and language study or, perhaps more accurately, to assess the influence of a 'scientific' method supposedly removed from cultural value, and those cultural values themselves. The implication of the cases discussed in this chapter, then, is that the study of classics at institutions like Rugby (where, under Arnold, it remained central to the curriculum) and at Oxford (through major revisions to the curriculum in 1850) did not necessarily reflect the dominance of 'language' over 'literary' study. Indeed, that dominance might even reflect the opposite.

The ideals of education advanced by Arnold and, in a different way, Jowett, in a sense subordinated intellectual development to the cultivation of character; although study of the classics was a useful tool in this mission, it was less significant than the influence of the teacher. Jowett, the best known (if not the most respected) classicist of his age, gave less attention to rigour than we might expect, a point pursued in the next chapter. Tucker's career in Australia is in some respects equally complicated, showing a mix of public and academic writing, and perhaps less trace of the influence of idealism than we might expect. For Charles Rischbieth Jury, on the other hand, classical literatures offered a powerful set of stories for his own life. He was able to immerse himself in both the classics and the ferments of modernism, and respond to both through his critical and creative writing, working more or less beyond the university's bounds. As these examples show, the various effects of educational reform and of the study of classical literature leave a complex and sometimes contradictory legacy in the tertiary study of literature and in the lives of those who were influential teachers.

3
FAITH AND PHILOSOPHY

Benjamin Jowett seemed to represent an exciting and dangerous force in English intellectual life in the middle of the century, but it was his younger colleague at Balliol, Thomas Hill Green (usually TH Green), whose work was to have a decisive influence on the first teachers of English in Australia. Again, though, this influence seems to have been felt in complicated and sometimes contradictory ways. When he arrived at Oxford in 1855, Green felt that

> The inside of the colleges are strangely incongruous with the outside. The finest colleges are the most corrupt, the functionaries from the heads to the servants being wholly given to quiet dishonesty, and the undergraduates to sensual idleness. (quoted in Richter, 51)

The similarity between these impressions and those of Tom Brown is perhaps not coincidental, for Green spent five years at Rugby before attending Oxford, and was an undergraduate in the years the Tom Brown novels were published. He was, therefore, younger than Jowett, although initially aligned with him in debates about the university and theology.

Jowett himself had at first been thwarted in his ambition to become master of Oxford's Balliol College, charged with heresy because of his writings on St Paul and scriptural interpretation.[1] He later became what people like to call the 'towering figure of his age', as master of Balliol from 1870 to 1893. But in this later period he became synonymous with *resistance* to reform, as he tried to block moves to diminish the power of the colleges relative to the university. From the many accounts of Jowett the sense emerges of an ambitious man, a consummate politician involved in heady controversy early in his life, later committed utterly

1 Particularly through *Essays and Reviews* (1860), which went into a sixth edition by 1861, and *The Epistles of St Paul to the Thessalonians, Galatians, Romans: With Critical Notes and Dissertations* (1855), also republished in 1861. Relatedly, there was extensive debate over Jowett's tenure of the Regius Chair of Greek.

to preserving and enhancing the reputation of his students and his college.[2] By the time of his death, Jowett almost literally embodied the coalition between imperial ambition and tertiary education that is the subject of the next chapter. But the system entwining pedagogy and patronage that Jowett seems to have invested his life in building had, for Green, serious problems. To Green at least, it produced lives and learning that appeared grimly cyclical: cramming for examinations as a student, cramming for examinations to become a fellow (of a college), thence tutoring students preparing for exams in the hope of becoming a fellow; depth and genuine understanding were replaced by rote learning.

In explicit opposition to a system which promoted learning for material reward – cramming for firsts, fellowships and favours – Green advocated establishing positions which would allow time for research, and the teaching of advanced students, building a university hierarchy based on in-depth disciplinary knowledge. This 'research-based' model of a university is associated with Humboldt and early nineteenth-century Germany. To this end of promoting specialisation Green began to deliver lectures in philosophy which, although not part of the formal courses of study, nevertheless drew a keen student audience. But Jowett was one among various 'reformers' who valued vigour over rigour: specialisation was all very well, but what use was specialist academic knowledge for students seeking to make a career in public life? For Green's pains he was quietly withdrawn from undergraduate teaching by his master and mentor Jowett, although at least some students seem to have embraced his ideas and been inspired by his example of valuing knowledge for its own sake. Above all, Green seems to have impressed 'the best and brightest' of his Oxford students with the seriousness and the constancy of his struggle to think through problems at the intersection of faith and philosophy. His ideas, and his struggle, were to influence the lives and thinking of some of the key early figures in the discipline of English in Britain and in Australia.

TH GREEN AND IDEALISM

Melvin Richter, author of a sympathetic study of Green's life and work, suggests that what had sparked this sense of mission was reading and study of German philosophers of theology, an interest Green developed and extended during time spent in Germany in 1860. This claim perhaps overestimates Green's originality, for during the middle of the nineteenth century in Britain the thought of German philosophers was a staple of intellectual debate, and demonstrating familiarity with it the signature of one's liberal position.[3] It is notable that this influence does

2 The best account is perhaps Peter Hinchliff's.

not seem to have come from Oxford but from travel and perhaps from fellow undergraduates who had studied elsewhere, notably Scotland. As a student and later as a fellow at Balliol, Green's associates included two intellectually self-confident, older students, Edward Caird and John Nichol, both of whom had been students at Glasgow, and who had been interested in German writers before their arrival at the English university.

Nichol, winner of a 'Snell exhibition', a scholarship which each year brought one Glasgow graduate to Balliol, founded 'Old Mortality' in late 1856.[4] When Caird arrived in Oxford on the same scholarship several years later, he was elected to the group; the intellectual and personal connections developed through 'Old Mortality' remained in evidence through the lives of its members. Although Pater, Symonds and Swinburne were to become more famous (even notorious) as writers and critics, it was Green and to a lesser extent Caird who seem to have been the intellectually dominant figures, at least at this stage – Caird was a year older than Green (Jones and Muirfield, 30).[5] Both were absorbed in idealism, although Caird seems to have played the optimist to Green's pessimist. And significantly for this history, both Caird and Nichol were to return to Glasgow, Nichol first, to the chair of English. Several years later he withdrew his application for the chair of mental and moral philosophy, after being told that he was unlikely to be successful in obtaining the position but that Caird might be (Jones and Muirfield, 48).

Richter suggests that in reading Kant, Fichte and Hegel in the early 1860s, Green 'began to experience something as close to a conversion as his temperament would permit', believing as he did that this 'modern philosophy had arrived at a method which preserved everything he found of permanent value in Christian experience, but did so on the basis of reason alone' (87). Just as importantly, perhaps, at a point in his academic career when he had seemed doomed to decades of giving the same lectures on church history and Aristotle to an uninterested undergraduate audience, these encounters with idealism gave Green a 'new zest' for

3 Contrastingly, it was said by a critic of John Henry Newman, who led the Oxford Movement (conservative, high church Anglicans, also called Tractarians), that because Newman was unable to read German in his youth, 'all the grand development of human reason, from Aristotle down to Hegel, was a sealed book to him.' Mark Pattison, *Memoirs of an Oxford Don*, quoted in Redmons, 33.

4 Monsman's 'Old Mortality at Oxford' gives the date as 1857 but his *Oxford University's Old Mortality Society* gives November 1856. For more on Nichol see Knight's *Memoir of John Nichol*; for Nichol's views on English – significant for this history because Nichol was Mungo MacCallum's teacher in that subject – see his *Inaugural Lecture*.

5 Although Monsman notes that it was Swinburne who attended every meeting whilst an undergraduate, and who gave the most papers.

conceiving problems in philosophy, politics, religion and art.

If these ideas implied a set of radical reforms to the university and a new sense of his own work, Green's approach more broadly represents an attempt to engage with what is routinely understood as a social and intellectual crisis of faith in Victorian Britain. Green and those of similar view felt it was necessary to replace faith in revealed religion with the tenets of idealist metaphysics which would provide 'an unassailable foundation for belief' (Richter, 27). The hero was not he [sic] who presumed the authority of God, or separated his faith from the intellectual work of inquiry, but who, in the words of a popular novel which featured a fictionalised version of Green as its protagonist, 'fights [his] stormy way to truth'[6] by adhering to a creed 'without dogma or miracles' (Richter, 28). In his personal example, Green – an elected councillor in the town of Oxford, and a teacher of philosophy at the university – created a new model of an intellectual who did not detach themselves from the material world, but who added the obligations of citizen to those of scholar. He attempted to conceive of the struggle for intellectual and moral authority as a battle to be won with the self, rather than an institutional position to be assumed and protected.

It has generally been suggested that Green's influence was at its height in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth, but this might be because key works were published after his death in 1882, edited by AC Bradley, and RL Nettleship. At that time, the development of their own careers allowed former students to publish essays which engaged with his work, and their memoirs spread the story of his influence.[7] But the impression created by these works is that Green was an intellectual inspiration to his peers while still a student. Caird, in a volume published in his own honour, asserted that 'in Green I found one whose brotherly sympathy and inspiring example has stimulated me, more than any other single influence, in the prosecution of my philosophical work' (Jones and Muirfield, 370). It is a lesson in the shape of reputation making: without dedicated editors to collect and arrange for the publication of his work, Green would barely be visible; with publication and associated commentary, he becomes a major figure in the history of literary criticism.

The wide appeal and influence of Green's thought in Australia is discernible in newspaper criticism and reviews published in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. It is also present in the critical writings of older members of the academy in the early decades of the twentieth, particularly those who were committed to social reform in the manner understood and advocated by Green. (Social improvement could be quite hard going in the colonies, though, as one young man suggested in a letter to his former tutor at Oxford: 'This sort of soil is difficult

6 Mrs Humphry Ward's *Robert Elsemere*, quoted in Richter, 27.

7 See for example Edward Caird, Professor Green's Last Work and Nettleship's Memoir in *Works of Thomas Hill Green*.

to cultivate the Imperial ideal upon … Unless we lucky Englishmen can teach [the South Africans] a little *savoir faire* they'll end in the condition that the most Colonial of all Colonies is in – Australia'.[8])

Suzy Anger argues that debates about scriptural interpretation had a generally under-recognised influence on twentieth-century literary criticism, and claims that higher criticism unsettled debates about 'principles of the interpretation of secular literature' in the late Victorian period (131). In her view, 'criticism struggled to define both its rationale and its procedures', such that

> an extensive and specifically literary hermeneutics emerges … [in Britain] only after it had absorbed German Romantic hermeneutics' attempts to formulate general theories of linguistic understanding and only after the reconception of the Bible as a literary text had been accomplished. Only then did literary texts widely attract the methodologically self-conscious theorizing that had long been reserved for sacred or legal texts. (Anger, 132)

We could argue, however, that Green and his associates in Old Mortality were attempting to think through the premises of criticism a little earlier, indeed in the late 1850s and 1860s. Green's essay *An Estimate of the Value and Influence of Works of Fiction in Modern Times*, read in the Sheldonian Theatre at Oxford in 1862 when he had not long been a fellow of Balliol, offers a rare published example of this kind of debate that we can imagine occurring in the foment of a reforming Oxford.

Green seeks to argue that the novel, as a form, is debilitated by its reliance on depicting life as it is – by what we could call its affinity with positivism (although he does not use that term). But, noting that they reach a mass readership, Green expresses the hope that novels will ultimately be refined, and present the ideal humanity that marks the great literary forms, tragedy and epic. In the opening pages of his essay Green sets out the terms for his discussion of literary form, contrasting idealism with the then dominant positivism, which he sees as methodologically and theologically inadequate because it separates questions of faith from those of scholarship (4). His particular objection is that positivism, like realism in literature (specifically, in the novel), takes refuge in belief in an ineffability 'which cause[s] our sensations, and through sensations, our knowledge' (5). In opposition to what is ultimately presented as a dependence on mysticism for the explanation of feeling which underpins the aesthetic experience, Green advances a philosophy which foregrounds the dependence of truth on perception, and which therefore demands of critics some analysis of the premises of their in-

8 Letter from Phillip Kerr to HAL Fisher, 1905, quoted in Symonds, 65.

terpretations. Critical reflection brings, to 'art, philosophy and religion', a 'latter and higher view [which] involves the absolute fusion of thought and things' and which brings truth, goodness and beauty into harmony (5). Green does value the ideal type, but claims that this ideal needs to be *substantive*. Apprehending that ideal is the goal of scholarship.

What is extraordinary, at least for this history, is Green's claim that this ideal (literary and human) form can be sought in *contemporary*, not just classical, literature – English, not Greek (or Latin) prose. Canvassing a wide range of early modern and modern English texts, Green concludes that the ending of George Eliot's novel *The Mill on the Floss* 'reaches almost the tragic pitch', although ultimately fails because 'Instead of idealizing life' Eliot 'sentimentalizes it' (24, 23). In terms of address, Green's lecture, particularly in this part, reads like a dialogue with the author, as an encouragement to her to adopt his premises about art in order to reflect on her own.[9] As such, it hints at an active or constructive relationship between literature and criticism, and a view of the critic as properly intervening in rather than simply observing literary culture. Green makes this explicit in the last pages, in which the argument takes quite a different turn. In contrast to his criticisms made earlier in the essay, Green now praises novels for what he sees as their capacity to expand the sympathies of readers. He goes so far as to claim that the novel is an agent of dissent, helping to inoculate readers against 'that ossification into prejudices … to which all feel a tendency':

> Though he cannot reveal to us the inner side of life, [the novelist] at least gives a more adequate conception of its surface … Though he cannot show the prisoners their way of escape from their earthly confinement, yet by breaking down the partitions in between the cells he enables them to combine their strength for a better arrangment of the prison-house. (27–28)

This extraordinary metaphor offers Green's view of the strengths and limits of the modern novel: it can do valuable work in extending sympathies, but has not yet reached a form which can serve as a moral exemplar. Green's radicalism is certainly on show, here, a radicalism often admired though rarely emulated by his students and colleagues. And whereas the influence of philosophy on modern criticism has driven it away from engagement in political questions (in the sense of understanding those questions as abstract rather than material ones), Green's approach is to imply the value of engaging with the living writer, as a way of gaining traction for criticism in the social world.

To a certain extent, none of Green's arguments makes sense unless we consider their framing within his liberal Anglicanism: like other fellows at Oxford

9 Green refers to Eliot as 'he' throughout the discussion.

he preached in St Mary's church, the university's most prestigious forum (from which Jowett was barred for many years), though he was one of few fellows who was not a clergyman. The essay is a bold attempt to reconcile theology and philosophy, still the more compelling point for students of literature is that the mechanism for this reconciliation should be the modern English novel. This makes the polemic an intervention not only in theological debates, but in arguments about the value and form of national culture and its effects on a rapidly growing class of readers. The essay is a manifesto for critical idealism's relationship to the study of English literature because of its startling thesis that modern, secular texts might one day help to model and therefore shape an ideal humanity, and its equally passionate claim that literary criticism could play a role in that process. It would be wrong to infer from this account that Green draws distinctions between philosophy, theology and literary criticism. On the contrary, it is the bringing together of these fields that Green aimed at, making it difficult even to speak of a criticism that is separate from philosophy or theology.

The same view characterises a much later essay by William Paton Ker, contributed to a volume published in Green's memory. Ker takes up the problem of a philosophy of art explicitly in relation to the teaching of literature, and begins by noting that 'the view of art as an education is the natural one for enlightenment to adopt'. However,

> There is and must be an enmity of philosophy towards art, because it is in opposition to the past, which art represents, that philosophy arises … The first step towards reconciliation of this enmity is to show that the matter criticised is not really hostile, but exists for the sake of the critic. It is this step which is taken by any theory which regards art as an education – *as existing for the sake of something higher, namely, enlightenment, accurate and self-conscious insight*. (163, my emphasis)

Unlike Jackson Knight's attendant in the art gallery, Ker argues that art *in itself* is insufficient education: both the creation and the consumption of great art demand analysis. As with Green's essay, the work here is to formulate the ethical and intellectual tasks of criticism through reflection on the moral and theological premises of aesthetic response.

Although they take different positions in relation to art and the historical – Green considers the present and looks to the future of art, Ker relocates artistic works to the past – the two idealists share a focus on English literature that has ramifications for those seeking to make claims about the foundations of the discipline. We can see that Ker is quite specifically attempting to make a place for teaching English when he uses Chaucer to claim that in writing of the people of England in the vernacular, 'he did refuse to be bound by laws of art which were not true for him … In this refusal is the end of his apprenticeship' (167). In re-

ferring to a writer widely regarded as the 'founder' of English literature, revered rather than derided for his use of the vernacular, Ker dances with the problem of 'rigour' and seeks a rationale for studying what seemed at the time, to some of his colleagues, mundane or self-evident. In proclaiming the significance of the moment at which writers remove themselves from convention, Ker is arguing for a philosophy or criticism which is *specific* to literature, but which likewise withdraws from convention. This echoes but alters Green, who seeks an exemplar as well as insisting that the critic and the writer are *in* society. But Ker's position is complicated by his counter claim that Chaucer had to *remove* himself from his fellows to write about them, notwithstanding his endorsement of the value of particularity (172; 172): 'Part of [a great writer's] individuality is their relation to particular times and seasons in the actual history of the world' (179). In Ker's view, the task for a philosophy of art will be to explain literature in relation to human thought of specific times and places, and thus in the end his criticism will seek to historicise, rather than to identify the ideal. The essay is a valuable source in showing how those teachers of literature who were influenced by Green might understand the relationship between literature and criticism. But we should also note some important differences: because Ker locates great art in the past, he does not envisage the dynamic relationship between literature and literary criticism that Green does.

The existence of essays such as those by Green and Ker challenges the notion that literary study 'grew out of' classics, or language study, or even class war or colonialism. Instead, we can see an (agonistic) relationship between criticism of sacred and of secular texts, as well as a volatile intellectual relationship between philosophy and literary study. For although he regarded himself as a philosopher, Green was at the centre of the intellectual circles in which debates about literature in Victorian Oxford could take their most interesting forms. Whether we mention the most outspoken advocate for the study of English at Oxford, John Churton Collins, critics and writers like AC Bradley or AC Swinburne, Walter Pater or John Addington Symonds, philosophers like Edward Caird or John Ruskin, we are naming associates of Green who are known to have engaged with his thought. It is also important to reiterate the significance of Green's attention to the contemporary, for those debates were influenced by the fact that, as Anger claims, the most consciously 'literary' Victorian writers, notably Robert Browning, George Eliot and George Meredith, were especially concerned with problems of meaning and interpretation. Green's choice of Eliot's novels as exemplary is especially significant, for although her work was less likely to find full favour with teachers in terms of books studied at Australian universities, she was central to debates about philosophy, critical method, morality and society in her own time.[10]

10 Eliot translated from German one of the most important popular works of Higher Criticism, David Friedrich Strauss' controversial work *The Life of Jesus, Critically*

'THE SAME UNDER DIFFERENT SKIES'

> It is a frequent, perhaps a just boast, that we alone of Modern Peoples inherit the Greek genius for colonizing. (Woolley, *Schools of Art*, 1)

Although the transportation of convicts to New South Wales ceased formally in 1848, another shipment of prisoners was due to arrive in 1849. That fact, combined with the European 'revolutions of 1848', which were anxiously alluded to in speeches at the inauguration, helped to contribute to a sense of crisis evident during the founding of Sydney, as forces advocating change and those demanding continuity collided in Britain and in Europe, as well as locally. The desire to establish the university strictly along the lines of Oxford and Cambridge, with no concession to new or colonial universities, was perhaps most clearly manifested in the architecture of the new institution.[11] Stained glass windows had portraits of English monarchs, and there were portraits of writers including the almost mythical Caedmon, Chaucer, Spenser, Sidney, Milton, Pope, Dryden and Shakespeare, much as at the libraries and colleges of Oxford. These sentiments remained strong at Sydney: when the original Fisher Library building, now the professorial board room, was constructed (1915–21), the corbels were carved with the portraits of European scholars. This reflected, in the words of the official history, 'the conscious desire to embody and receive the best in the ancient culture and scholastic tradition of Europe' (*University of Sydney*, 12). But photographs of the university in the nineteenth century show an imposing building starkly isolated in bare paddocks, an apt metaphor for the institution's position in New South Wales society. The Great Hall, opened on 18 July 1859 and based on Westminster Hall, came to be known as 'Blacket's Folly' after architect Edmund Blacket.[12] For many years, student numbers were in single figures.

It might seem natural to have looked to Oxford as a model, but we might also recall the state of Oxford during this period, notably the heated debates about proper governance and academic standards. Rather than building 'secondariness' to Oxbridge into Sydney, there were other precedents that might have been followed. A number of universities had been established in North America before the enabling legislation for Sydney was passed, and debates about the founding of universities in Bombay, Madras and Calcutta occurred at around the same time.[13]

Examined (London: 1846).

11 On architecture and imperialism, see Metcalf.

12 The first Wilson Hall at Melbourne (lost to fire) reflected the influence of the older Oxford colleges, while at Sydney the large stained glass window on the southern side includes portraits of the founders of the various colleges at Cambridge, the window at the northern end the founders of colleges of Oxford. See Dallen, 18.

13 The debates were not dissimilar in some respects to those about Sydney. See Singh,

WJ Gardner observes that in his first speech to the Legislative Council about the proposal, WC Wentworth – who had attended Cambridge – did look to colonial precedents, and to London (49). But these models, and the points raised by Wentworth, soon slipped out of sight. So completely did the rest of the world disappear that by the time John Woolley delivered the principal's address at the opening ceremony in 1852, he could declare that Sydney was the first university to be founded in what he called 'English-speaking Christendom'. Woolley moved quickly to do away with the governing structure copied from London, and replaced it with one derived from the reformed Oxford (Gardner, 46–47).

A graduate of Oxford with a first in classics, Woolley had been headmaster of King Edward's Grammar at Norwich when appointed to Sydney, taking a position that offered something like half the salary. He is described as a scholar who combined 'liberalism in religion, brilliance in classical scholarship, some reputation in logic, and a record of introducing "modern" subjects into his schools'; he 'brought with him a reasonably coherent philosophy of religion and education, based on a liberal Christianity of the Arnold mould and on the idealism of Plato' (Gardner, 46). The 'Arnold' here is Thomas, not Matthew, for Woolley was an idealist in the older sense.[14] In his own words, he yielded his 'heartiest assent to that genial philosophy that teaches that the Beautiful, the Good, and the True are equally emanations from Him who is the fountain of all perfection and the object of all love' (Woolley, *Idylls*, 1). It is noticeable that Woolley invokes an ahistorical notion of universal knowledge and his own faith in a transcendent divine. Did coming to Sydney, a small unruly town with no tradition of education that he could recognise, weaken or strengthen such faith? Certainly his address at the inauguration ceremony at Sydney likened the mission of the scholar to that of the Christian crusader in the wilderness; he concluded his speech with this exhortation to students:

> Onward, therefore, in the spirit and power which once nerved the hand and kindled in the eye of the young aspirant for knightly renown! Onward with your untarnished but yet undecorated shield, in the proud and high resolve, that whatever has been achieved by your predecessors in the field of glory, that, by God's blessing, Sydney University shall achieve. (quoted in Barff, 40–41)

We can forgive such rhetoric given an occasion that might have seemed to de-

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1532.

14 The claim that the older idealism, supposedly exemplified by Thomas Arnold, separated faith from daily life, breaks down under scrutiny: even the rather clumsy last paragraph of *Tom Brown's School Days* insists that faith must inform every activity.

mand it; the point is that Woolley managed to combine a concern for the kind of reforms to administrative practice taking effect at Oxford with intellectual habits of mind that conceded little to critical reason of the kind that would be demanded by Green.

A sense of distinctive institutional mission such as we see here did shape the selection of courses of study and of staff at each of the Australian universities, all of which offered an Arts degree albeit in different forms. An undergraduate degree in classics was thought sufficient to equip what might be a single professor to teach across a humanities curriculum that might add modern languages, philosophy, history, or political economy to the 'core' of Latin and Greek. No Australian university commenced operation in the nineteenth century with English as an independent discipline, but academics as diverse as John Davidson, EV Boulger and William Mitchell at Adelaide, Mungo MacCallum at Sydney, HA Strong, EE Morris and TG Tucker at Melbourne, and WH Williams at Tasmania taught in the area at some time in their career. Still none were appointed only to that role, and (arguably) only MacCallum, Morris and Williams could claim to be specialists in English. Of these three it is MacCallum, foundation professor of Modern Language and Literature at Sydney from 1887 to 1920, who is the dominant figure in the discipline of English for its first four decades. His pre-eminence was based in part on his reputation as a scholar, and in part on his longevity and influence at Sydney as he mentored students into academic positions. MacCallum himself claimed Edward Caird as his formative intellectual and moral influence.

Caird was professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow when MacCallum studied there, but in 1893 he succeeded Jowett as master of Balliol. He had attended Glasgow and Aberdeen universities at various times during the 1850s, his studies interrupted by ill health, so that he was significantly older than his fellow undergraduates by the time he went to Oxford (Jones and Muirfield, 14, 15). Caird noted that his 'pointer' to the value and significance of German thought and literature came from his fellow Scot Thomas Carlyle, whose work he was familiar with long before he attended university in England: 'Carlyle was the first in this country who discovered the full significance of the great revival of German literature, and the enormous reinforcement which its poetic and philosophic idealism had brought to the failing faith of man'.[15] Caird wrote several books on Immanuel Kant and also published essays on TH Green, and theology. For Mungo MacCallum, Green and Caird were, in his words, continuing sources of 'light and courage' (Jottings, 102). In late old age, he wrote that studying with Caird was 'the grand event in the lives of all Glasgow undergraduates in the Faculty of Arts', claiming that he was 'perhaps the first exponent of the critical idealism of Germany in a Scottish university, and the novelty and scope of this new view of

15 Caird, The Genius of Carlyle from his *Essays on Literature and Philosophy* (Glasgow: Maclehose, 1892), vol. 1, 231, quoted in Jones and Muirfield, 23.

things … made an indelible impression on all who heard him' (Jottings, 52).

Each of these scholars claims a mentor as originator: as MacCallum claims Caird, Caird claims Carlyle, Richter claims Green. The truth of such claims is less important than their frequency, a frequency which signals the importance of claiming originality in academic culture. To be 'the first' is to set the terms for the field or discipline, a pre-eminence maintained across generations by the convention of citation. On the other hand, academic cultures also revere 'tradition', as we saw in the discussion of the founding of Sydney. This struggle between the valuing of tradition and the valuing of originality is often reframed as a struggle between preservation and change, conservatism and radicalism, and preparedness to make a claim to originality is a useful signal of the writer's attitude to these things. On the other hand, it is possible to alter one's position, whether from radicalism to conservatism (as we saw with Jowett) or from conservatism to iconoclasm (as we will see with Vincent Buckley).

To one of the compilers of Caird's biography, MacCallum wrote of his struggle to define the nature and quality of his mentor's influence, suggesting that it was 'pervasive like air' rather than being tied to specific moments. Fascinatingly, MacCallum was driven to quote Goethe's *Faust* to describe his feelings when hearing Caird's lectures, which emphasised the divine in the quotidian, and the relationship between part and whole:

> Wie alles sich zum Ganzen webt,
> Und in dem andern wirkt und lebt!
> Wie Himmelskräfte auf und nieder steigen
> Und sich die goldnen Eimer reichen!
> Mit segenduftenden Schwingen
> Vom Himmel durch die Erde dringen
> Harmonisch all' das All durchklingen.
>
> Into the whole how all things blend,
> Each in the other working, living!
> How heavenly powers ascend, descend,
> Each unto each the golden vessels giving!
> On pinions fragrant blessings bringing,
> From Heaven through Earth all onward winging,
> Through all the All harmonious ringing![16]

Goethe was a favoured writer, and MacCallum's use of a literary text to explain his own deep feelings about a teacher whose influence guided his pro-

16 MacCallum puts only the German original; this translation is from George Madison Priest at www.einam.com/faust/index.html (accessed 14 May 2009). Available 2017: http://bit.ly/2hVn5nn.

fessional life shows the distinctively 'literary' basis of his subjectivity. Also it illustrates that interconnectedness of critical and creative writing in the formation of ideas about literary value and the vocation of teaching that Green appeared to be formulating in his prizewinning essay. To Ernest Jones, MacCallum remarked rather wistfully that

> since those days 'the vision splendid' has often faded for me, but never entirely, and in these last years it becomes clearer again … It is curious to me to notice how I have sometimes chosen the more magnanimous course or resisted the temptation to scamp my work by the thought of what he would have done in the circumstances … (Jones and Muirfield, 91, 91–92)

The lasting effect of that example is described by another former student: 'He was the champion of the "critical" school; yet, somehow, he never seemed to criticise! … If there was one thing he made us ashamed of it was of any petty or conceited critical spirit' (quoted in Jones and Muirfield, 73). Late in his career, MacCallum suggested to a former colleague that, 'though it needed many modifications I don't think the critical Idealism of my young days superseded' (quoted in Wilson, 10).

In 1887 MacCallum, then teaching at University College Wales, was selected from an exceptionally large field of 45 applicants for the newly created chair at Sydney. The selection committee, which sat in England, included Charles Nicholson, Max Müller, Henry Morley, Matthew Arnold, and Leslie Stephen.[17] In an interview recorded in 1934, MacCallum suggested that there were two main reasons for his decision to accept the offer to come to Australia. The first was reading JA Froude's *Oceania*, which, 'whatever its defects, certainly did good service in awakening the British public to the present importance as well as the brilliant promise of the Australian Colonies'. The second was the despatch of the New South Wales forces to the war in the Sudan, which reassured MacCallum that 'coming to this far-off land would not mean anything like exile … In my case it has abundantly verified our University motto, *Sidere mens eadem mutato*', or 'the same under different skies' (Some University Luminaries, 40–41).[18] There is

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17 Stephen was editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*, in which MacCallum had published several essays.

Here enshrined are the relics of / Professor / Mungo William MacCallum / K.C.M.G. M.A. LL.D. D.Litt / Born 1854, died 1942. / Who using his length of days in / faith hope and charity / served the cause of humane learning / enriched the life of this commonwealth / and as scholar teacher and administrator / uniting greatness with humility / won an abiding name among the makers of / the University of Sydney.[20]

20 Edmund Blacket and Albert Bythesea Weigall also have plaques; MacCallum was not, in fact, a member of the church.

competing evidence about these apparently patriotic motives, supplied by MacCallum himself. In his draft of a speech delivered in the Great Hall on 22 October 1920, possibly marking his retirement from the chair, MacCallum commented that on hearing he would be offered a position at a university on the other side of the world he 'went out into the bleak November evening to walk for several hours up and down the streets of Westminster … feeling as miserable as I have ever done'.[19] His account captures what Judith Wright would later identify, in *Preoccupations in Australian Poetry*, as the 'double aspect' of Australian poetry, and indeed colonial society: the dream of newness and freedom, in tension with a deeply felt sense of exile and alienation. But he might also have been playing for laughs to an audience reassured that such forebodings would prove groundless.

As head of Modern Language and Literature MacCallum was responsible for most of the teaching when he first arrived in Sydney, but responsibilities for French and German were eventually delegated to GG Nicholson and Christopher Brennan respectively. MacCallum also held a number of senior university posts after leaving English, including the vice-chancellorship from 1924 to 1927, and the chancellorship from 1934 to 1936. Despite the student satire, MacCallum did not cease giving lectures until he was in his early eighties. He died in 1942, and is remembered in a special *MacCallum Memorial Number* of *Southerly*, edited by his former student and colleague ER Holme. MacCallum is also memorialised by a plaque in Sydney's Anglican cathedral:

> Here enshrined are the relics of / Professor / Mungo William MacCallum / K.C.M.G. M.A. LL.D. D.Litt / Born 1854, died 1942. / Who using his length of days in / faith hope and charity / served the cause of humane learning / enriched the life of this commonwealth / and as scholar teacher and administrator / uniting greatness with humility / won an abiding name among the makers of / the University of Sydney.[20]

A much longer draft of this inscription, possibly by Holme, refers specifically to the service to empire rendered by MacCallum in his teaching and scholarship, which adhered to an idealised 'humane' culture.

MacCallum's position as professor of Modern Language and Literature in some sense was in tension with his own training in critical idealism, at least that version of it (espoused by Ker) which sought to find a rationale for study of literature that paid attention to context and interpretation (see MacCallum's *WP Ker:*

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19 Draft of a Speech, Great Hall 22 October 1920, Box 2, Holme Papers, University of Sydney Archives. Although it is held in the Holme Papers, there are numerous indications the writer of this piece was MacCallum.

20 Edmund Blacket and Albert Bythesea Weigall also have plaques; MacCallum was not, in fact, a member of the church.

A Great English Scholar). We can see this split or collision in his views: while his published scholarship shows attention to modern contexts and cultures, his actions as an administrator suggest and perhaps his most private feeling was that classics remained the senior discipline. Arguing for the retention of Latin and Greek as prerequisites for matriculation, MacCallum declared that

> A graduate in the liberal Arts should surely have some appreciation of the spirit of that Classical Civilization from which our own is so largely and so immediately derived; … Further, as it seems to us, the Classics are characterised by so much sanity of thought conveyed with such adequacy of expression, that the intimate study which they exact is the best safeguard against the besetting modern sins of perversity, eccentricity, extravagance, looseness and incorrectness of opinion and utterance. (*Compulsory Latin*, 7–8)

The 'intimacy' that MacCallum praises and the aversion to 'modern sins' that he condemns are inculcated not by the texts themselves – which is to say, they are not intrinsic – but by classics as a literal, physical and intellectual discipline. By implication, this study is most fruitful when conducted by a teacher who exemplifies a life of virtue.

MacCallum's lifelong espousal of an idealist program of literary education, one that aimed to produce a student who fulfils his [sic] destiny by service to Empire, runs through texts as apparently divergent in their purpose as an argument about the curriculum of New South Wales high schools, and his memorial plaque in Sydney Cathedral. We can see no 'progression' here, towards valuing English literature, if we contrast MacCallum's views with those of Green expressed seventy years earlier – crucially, while it is likely that his philosophy teacher Caird knew Green's essay, it is much less likely MacCallum, a specialist in English literature, did.[21] Indeed, one might ask whether his position at the edge of the world of scholarship as he would have mapped it actually strengthened MacCallum's sense of the need to preserve rather than critique what he understood as the aims and methods of his discipline. More generally, it would seem that a position at the centre or on the periphery, geographically or institutionally, cannot of itself intrinsically strengthen or weaken an individual's adherence to certain forms of

21 The essay was printed as a small pamphlet, which might have been circulated to the audience to whom it was read or to Caird's colleagues and students, but it was probably not available to libraries or scholars outside Oxford until the publication of the third volume of *Works* in 1889 edited by Nettleship. Copies of the original edition are held at the National Library of Scotland and Aberdeen University (COPAC), but the work is not publicly available in Australia (Libraries Australia), unless as part of the Nettleship edition.

scholarship. Being at 'the centre' might offer the self-confidence to present new and challenging ideas; equally, it might strengthen the rewards made available by conformity. A position on the periphery might be experienced as freedom, or, alternately, as a kind of subordination or lack that makes conformity to a real or imagined centre all the more necessary.

Proposing such a model allows us to put some 'flex' into Bourdieu's account of institutional transmission of ideas: without detail, and ideally a mix of public, private, institutional and scholarly records, we cannot know where and when individual academics might break with or 'enforce' the protocols of their institution or discipline, a point developed in the following section of this chapter. Put another way, one of the reasons it is possible to develop a more nuanced account of MacCallum's position(s) is that he has left us with a rich range of published and archival sources. Thus we see evidence of contradictory positions, for in addition to offering sustained institutional support for classics, MacCallum also turned his scholarly attention to contemporary English literature.

In 1892 he wrote an enthusiastic appreciation of the poetry and prose of George Meredith, a substantial piece originally delivered as a lecture. Like Green, he engaged first with the problem that readers do not expect to encounter serious issues in a novel, and against such views seeks to argue, in a manner in keeping with Ker's views discussed above, that 'there is no reason why the novel should not be a serious work of art' (35). MacCallum compares Meredith to George Eliot in favour of the former, suggesting that the male novelist has the gift of revealing the essence of character in action, whereas in Eliot's novels the prose halts, to 'dissect', 'while the narrative is motionless too' (24, 25). But Meredith's characters refuse to find a popular audience, a point on which MacCallum quotes Meredith himself, adding the emphasis: 'My people conquer nothing, win none; *they are actual, yet uncommon*' – it is '*the conscience residing in thoughtfulness* they would appeal to' (25). These are claims that allow us to see MacCallum's particular version of idealism in action, in the prioritising of conscience over ideal form; they also demonstrate the intertwining of aesthetics and method, in valuing a text on the basis of its complexity. The commentary makes Meredith's novels into idealist, optimistic ones that present work for the critic. In MacCallum's view, this is a writer who 'is trustful and joyous, not through temperament but conviction' (45).

It is this capacity to reconcile reason with faith, criticism with affirmation, optimism with realism, which Caird's biographers insist was his best quality as a teacher, inspiring his students into a quiet certitude. That it emerges, here, in MacCallum's preferences for a certain kind of book, and that it so obviously shapes his interpretation of that text, shows the complexity and subtlety of the very idea of 'influence'. It is not that he offers a Hegelian reading; far from it. But when he contends that 'In a certain sense [Meredith's] fundamental ideas are even commonplace, as the fundamental ideas of Shakespeare and Hegel are common-

place; that is, they are in agreement with the instincts of right-minded simple folk' he is reconciling idealist criticism with English literature, and demonstrating the ways in which the ideas encountered in his own undergraduate study have come to infuse and inform his reading and his life (44). The assertion about Hegel and Shakespeare comes after a relatively long defence of Meredith's focus on noble characters and scenes. From this piece of criticism and other evidence, one senses that while MacCallum's training might have inclined him to a kind of broadness of mind, which he says is valuable, unlike Green, his instinctive sympathies were with the great. He praises Meredith for novels which, like Shakespeare's plays, reserve 'the foreground … for the notables' (33), and his final advice for critics of Meredith is this: 'He must be read slowly if we are to understand him in detail, he must be read rapidly to see the connection of the whole; therefore … the only advice is to read him often' (55). This is, in beautiful essence, the hermeneutical method, which aims to reconcile part and whole.

A generous and constructive scholar like MacCallum could be strongly committed to ideals of charity and tolerance whilst at the same time expressing unforgiving prejudice. One of the issues raised early in his tenure at Sydney was the admission of female students, perhaps more for reasons of economy than equity, as the university was struggling to recruit sufficient numbers to justify its existence. Queensland academic FW Robinson later recalled MacCallum's 'welcome':

> 'Ladies and Gentlemen … I want to tell you that this is the *last* time … that I shall address you in this way'. (Pause, with change of direction of gaze to the front benches). 'Ladies … There are Bachelors of Arts … but there are no *Spinsters* of Arts' … (gaze now diverted to the clock on the right wall) … 'Well, Gentlemen' … (*The Great Hall*, 19–20)

MacCallum's contempt and Robinson's relish do neither credit, but the sentiment pervaded academic culture. Sixty years later HM Green could admit that Sydney was still 'definitely anti-feminist' (i.e. hostile to women), and unlikely to take up his recommendation of Nettie Palmer for a Commonwealth Literary Fund (CLF) lectureship (quoted in Heath, 4).

ER Holme was probably correct to suggest that his mentor's decision to accept the job in Sydney was ultimately detrimental to his international reputation as a scholar, as MacCallum himself knew on that 'bleak November evening' in London.[22] Some reviewers of MacCallum's criticism were to respond to his work by placing cruel emphasis on his isolation. In 1894 he published a study of Tennyson, a bold venture notwithstanding Tennyson's status as Poet Laureate. The

22 ER Holme, Letter to Wilson, 6 December 1942, Box 2, ER Holme Papers, University of Sydney Archives.

more hostile writers hint at MacCallum's 'colonial' status, the most negative doing so explicitly: the reviewer in the *National Observer* comments that

> even if he had not confessed it, we should have known that Mr. MacCallum had aired his ill-digested knowledge in the eyes of a provincial 'university' before he sent it out into the world disguised as criticism … the compilation is written in a diction that an average schoolboy would be ashamed to own.[23]

The positive reviews did MacCallum the 'favour' of not mentioning that he worked in Australia – the double cut of distance.

Responses to MacCallum's next and major work of criticism, *Shakespeare's Roman Plays and Their Background* (1910), were much more positive, but might also reflect the fact that MacCallum was most comfortable when drawing together the classical and the English.[24] For a modern reader accustomed to presuming the lack of sophistication of colonial and provincial culture in this period, one of the most noticeable aspects of these reviews is the variety of publications in which they appeared: the study of *Coriolanus, Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* was reviewed more than 50 times, not only in journals and major metropolitan newspapers, but in regional newspapers in Australia and in Great Britain. The book offers a close examination of the relationship between the three plays and their sources in Plutarch's *Lives*, mediated through Jacques Amyot's French translation of the original Greek, and Sir Thomas North's further translation into English. It is not surprising that the *Glasgow Herald* should sing the praises of a local son for this kind of scholarship, but acclamation was more widespread than that.[25]

Only six negative or non-committal reviews were published, one of the worst being a derisory paragraph in *The Times of India* headed 'An Australian on Shakespeare' (a title no doubt intended to prompt sniggers).[26] A different kind of

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23 More than 20 reviews are preserved in a booklet in Box 3 of the MacCallum Papers, University of Sydney Archives. The review is dated 10 February 1894, and has appended to it a note that the editor 'also knows that Mungo stood against Andrew Lay as a candidate for Glasgow'. There is no record of MacCallum or Lay ever having stood in parliamentary elections for either the city or the university seats of Glasgow; Elizabeth Webby has suggested that the wording might imply they were candidates for a Chair at Glasgow.

24 The reviews are preserved in a scrapbook in Box A, MacCallum Papers, University of Sydney Archives.

25 Review of MacCallum, *Shakespeare's Roman Plays, Glasgow Herald*, 21 May 1910, Box A, MacCallum Papers.

26 The negative reviews appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Australasian*

criticism was made by the anonymous reviewer in the *Australasian World*, who was not without praise. But the reviewer wondered

> if Professor Tucker of Melbourne and Professor MacCallum, of Sydney, instead of being merely scholars and grammarians were also possessors of the creative impulse, how different the present race of university graduates in Australia would be.
>
> It would seem as if the whole system of study in the Australian Universities were deliberately devised to stunt every native quality and original impulse … The cult of Shakespeare has resulted in a superstition that has made most Shakespeare-worshippers, including professors of literature, quite unable to understand or appreciate our greatest poet and writer for the stage.[27]

MacCallum might have agreed with the premise of this argument about the responsibility to the local, but would have argued that local culture and local students were best served by teachers who reinforced connections with England and its version of 'the classical heritage'.

In contrast the reviewer in the *Pall Mall Gazette* received MacCallum's work as a fitting tribute. It concluded that 'the whole book comes as an interesting reminder from across the seas of the power of the golden tie of English Literature as one of the links of Empire, and by no means the least of them' – thereby reiterating the book's own sentiments.[28] The longest of the published reviews pursued this imperial theme, raising the question of the example that Athens and Rome had provided for Shakespeare and England itself. The *Western Mail* claimed that Shakespeare had created a Caesar who would 'fulfil and embody that spirit of imperialism which is working to erect a vaster and grander Rome', amplifying the imperial theme of Plutarch's *Lives*.[29] The writer paid MacCallum the compliment of suggesting that he had in common with Shakespeare that 'largeness, breadth and abundance of life force' that accepted diversity and difference, and 'refrained from making hasty condemnations of human frailty'.

But MacCallum might have been gratified most by the letter he received from AC Bradley, perhaps the most renowned Shakespeare scholar of his time. Wisely, MacCallum had sent Bradley a copy of his new book; it remains a prac-

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World, the *Cambridge Review*, the *Gowns Man* (Cambridge), the *Oxford and Cambridge Review*, and the *Times of India* (6 October). The main criticism was the length of a book (650 pages) on just three plays.

27 *Australasian World*, 26 May 1910. Box A, MacCallum Papers.

28 *Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 April 1910, Box A, MacCallum Papers.

29 'With Shakespeare among the Romans', *Western Mail*, 14 May 1910. Box A, MacCallum Papers.

tice to send work to leading scholars for their notice, and hopefully for their approval. Such an exchange is more likely to occur when there are personal and institutional connections, as was the case here: MacCallum and Bradley were associates or followers of Green and Caird and each, in different ways, moved between the centre and periphery of the discipline, and both were connected with Glasgow.[30] Like MacCallum's, Bradley's career shows the complexity of influence. When he argues that the aim of education is the cultivation of 'an eye that sees, an ear that hears and a heart that understands', Bradley formulates a kind of criticism which has the old Platonic idealism at its heart.[31] Still by 1900, as his election to the chair of poetry at Oxford loomed, he was writing to his close friend Gilbert Murray that 'In my heart I don't want it; I want the money and pleasure of being at Oxford again. But I feel as if I had no message about literature and as if all the talk about it were mere idle voluptuousness' (quoted in Cooke, 37–38). As with MacCallum's private comments, there is a sense of the fragility of a method based on faith, precisely that vulnerability which Green aimed to combat.

MACCALLUM'S MENTEES

When MacCallum retired as professor of modern languages at Sydney in 1920, his chair was divided into four positions of equivalent status – something made possible in part by the University giving priority to English language, French and German, and mainly by the death of an Irish immigrant who left half of his sheep farming fortune to the universities of Sydney and Queensland (see 'McCaughey Bequest'). MacCallum commented at the time that the amount of teaching done was so great that it had made 'original work of the standard that justifies publication next to impossible', and had even 'prevented the teaching from being all that it might be'.[32] He went on to note that while Manchester had 500 students taught by 13 lecturers in modern languages, five of whom were in English, at Sydney in 1920 nearly 550 students were being taught by 2 2/3 staff members (although it is not clear whether course structure and teaching mode make this a valid comparison). But from the academics' point of view it was considerable progress when separate chairs were created in English Language and in English Literature, along

30 Bradley, a student at Balliol, thence a tutor, was influenced by Green (Cooke 21–24), whose work he later edited. After leaving Balliol in 1882 Bradley held chairs at Liverpool, where his colleagues would include Melbourne academic HA Strong, and Glasgow, where he succeeded John Nichol, before returning to Oxford (Cooke, 31–35).

31 AC Bradley, *The Teaching of English Literature*, quoted in Cooke, *AC Bradley*, 37; Cooke notes this address is held in Bradley's Papers at the Balliol College Library.

32 Draft of a Speech, Holme Papers, University of Sydney Archives.

with chairs in French and German.

This splitting of the English chairs into 'literature' and 'language' reflected both the association with modern language and the strengths of prospective local candidates, although this arrangement continues nearly a century later at Sydney. The arbitrariness of the division is emphasised by the way in which the appointments played out, with MacCallum's keen interest in who would be his successor(s) being decisive in the outcome. ER Holme obtained the McCaughey Chair of Early English Literature and Language, and John le Gay Brereton took up the Challis Chair of English Literature. These appointments are significant because Holme and Brereton were the first Australian-born and Australian-educated appointees to chairs of English in Australia; Brereton's replacement, AJA Waldock, was also born and educated in Australia, and all were students of MacCallum. In considering why it was possible for the preference for English graduates to be overturned at a self-consciously venerable institution, the key factor seems to have been patronage, interacting with the distinctive self-confidence that characterises Sydney in comparison with other Australian institutions.

ER Holme was born in Melbourne but moved to Sydney with his family when his father was appointed Rector at All Souls Church in Leichhardt in 1882. He attended the King's School in Parramatta and then Sydney University, graduating in 1891 with a first in Latin and English, after which he became a teacher. Holme's main publications were two studies of education overseas, an edited collection of English poetry (with MacCallum) and, with Emile Saillens, a book on French pronunciation, a slender output set against that of many contemporaries.[33] Holme was appointed to a lectureship at Sydney in 1894 and then became assistant professor, a position he held from 1908 to 1920. Heavily committed to Australia's involvement in the First World War, Holme's formal duties included censoring foreign mail. He was awarded an OBE, the Order of Leopold II of Belgium, the Order of the Three Stars of Latvia, and an honorary LittD from Sydney. In his article on Holme for the *ADB*, AG Price records that as 'a strongly conservative force … he disapproved of radical tendencies in the 1930s, while remaining a stern upholder of the university's autonomy. An ardent patriot, he was a driving force behind the development of the university's war memorials'. (In this he differed from MacCallum, who felt that the university could not afford them.) In his family history, MacCallum notes that, of all his former students who became members of the university community, it was Holme who 'has been intimate with me for the longest time and has always proved the most faithful, devoted and energetic of friends' (Jottings, 155), phrasing which delicately suggests or gives away a certain assiduity on Holme's part. The tone contrasts with the tender af-

33 He also continued the collection of Australian words and phrases begun by MacCallum, incorporated into the 1934 edition of *Webster's English Dictionary*; see RGH[owarth], 154.

fection MacCallum expresses for the more overtly bohemian Brereton.

The part MacCallum played in Holme's appointment to the chair is made clear in letters written in the period leading up to the creation of the positions. The first of these, from May 1919, advised Holme that the chancellor was putting to the university's senate a proposal for the appointment of three staff, including Holme, to positions in English, German and French.[34] Several months later MacCallum wrote again to Holme, then still overseas, urging him to return home before the start of the next academic year. MacCallum commented then, and again in a later letter, that his health was failing, but that he was continuing in order to ensure that the position in English would still be open on Holme's return. He also discussed with Holme the makeup of the selection committee, noting – with a frankness uncharacteristic of sources about appointments – that 'If only Piddington is kept out, the back of the opposition will be broken'.[35] As this comment implies, there was competition for the chair, and the result was by no means assured. By the middle of 1920 the question was still not decided and MacCallum wrote again to Holme, now back in Australia, speculating on the views of members of the selection committee and describing his own intervention:

> Bradfield, Abbott and Blackburn must all have voted against the offer to Taylor. [Professor WH] Warren [chair of the academic board] told me last year that he had got Bradfield to support you … Moreover, I think I impressed [Francis] Anderson [the dean of arts], by telling him of my intention to resign from the Senate were you not appointed.[36]

Holme's appointment was announced in the press about one month later; he held the position until he retired in 1940.

During nearly two decades in the McCaughey (or 'language') chair, Holme emphasised Old English, although he also gave lectures on Victorian literature. The mentoring continued at Sydney, through Holme in particular. Harold Oliver, a graduate of Sydney who taught for over two decades in the department before spending a further twenty years as professor and head of English at New South Wales, suggested that

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34 Letter from MacCallum to Holme, 7 May 1919, Box 2, ER Holme Papers, University of Sydney Archives.

35 Letter from MacCallum to Holme, 28 October 1919, Box 2, ER Holme Papers, University of Sydney Archives. Piddington was a radical and lawyer, friend of Christopher Brennan, who late in his career acted for communist and pacifist Egon Kisch whom the government had attempted to prevent landing in Australia. The judge in that case, HV Evatt, was also a former student of MacCallum's.

36 Letter from MacCallum to Holme, 10 June 1920, Box 2, ER Holme Papers.

> Holme was one of the great University men of his period … He could certainly be an inspiring lecturer … and nobody understood better the difficult art of 'easing' a young man into the lecturing profession. (Oliver, 155)

The debt that Holme felt he owed his own mentor is measured in the sheer volume of correspondence he entered into in compiling the *Memorial* issue of *Southerly*. In a letter written soon after MacCallum's death, Holme expressed his belief that a biography would be written because MacCallum

> was certainly the outstanding figure in the academic history of Australia. [Classics scholar Charles] Badham won an easier reputation in a smaller community and through the most highly reverenced subject of his time. MacCallum won his through a new subject popularly believed unimportant and open to everyone who could use a pen to profess with distinction.[37]

Given his preparedness to acknowledge such views, it is not surprising to find Holme advocating, in a document outlining curriculum for 1924, increased attention to the 'hard language study', 'of the kind once obtained through the study of Latin and Greek'.[38]

Some sense of Holme's tastes in literature can be gained from Oliver's comment that many students 'were imbued by Professor Holme with a lifelong feeling for *Beowulf*, for Chaucer, for Dryden and certain eighteenth-century writers on whom he contributed to the Literature courses in the University' (155). But his austere views and reputation were perhaps not always accurate reflections of his feelings. A note from MacCallum to Holme, from late 1914, consoles Holme on 'private troubles, nervous and spiritual, in addition to the great public calamity', the latter a reference to the war about which MacCallum presumes he is distressed.[39] MacCallum himself was not free from depression brought about by cuts to university funding, and heavy teaching loads. And a confidential report by Holme, sent after the end of the War in his capacity as supervisor of the entry of Australian students into British and French universities, whilst congratulating British institutions for their 'splendid efforts' in accommodating demobilised servicemen from the dominions and the United States, spoke of difficulties. He noted that, bearing in mind their limited capacity, the British universities had been 'extremely generous', although they were obviously reluctant to accept 'colonial' credentials. Holme noted that he and his colleagues were

37 Letter from Holme to Dr McLeod, 4 July 1944, ER Holme Papers.

38 ER Holme, Departmental curriculum for 1924, Departmental Files, 1923–24, University of Sydney Archives.

39 17 December 1914, Box 1, ER Holme Papers.

> left with the mortifying knowledge that except in the case of a great Scottish University, it was not our matriculations but our war-service that usually qualified us for entrance to a United Kingdom University; not our previous University record, but our war-service that enabled us to push on to graduation. (Administrative Committee, 4–5)

Holme described a 'long array of Vice-Chancellors and other University leaders who spoke against his proposals' to give ex-servicemen credit for study they had already completed in Australia. All regarded him as 'the exponent of dangerous ideas which should be overwhelmed by the highest authority' (Administrative Committee 2); he noted in peeved tones that 'if this continues, it surely must be a hindrance to Imperial Unity' (5).

The irony that Holme, a dedicated servant of empire, was regarded as a dangerous radical by colleagues in England demonstrates the extent to which individuals could shift, or rather, be seen as shifting, their position in any given circumstance. In public, though, Holme had only praise for those universities he claimed had given his Committee 'all the help that it asked of them' *(The American University*, 23). He declared that they had shown 'much interest in the methods whereby a larger intercourse between themselves and the Australian Universities might be brought about in after years', flatly contradicting the claims he had made in private correspondence *(The American University*, 23). A significant aspect of Oxford's reluctance to take on students who had graduated from colonial universities was the fear that 'to become a great Imperial University would open the door to vocational education' (Symonds 19). In other words, it was believed that admitting colonials would lower the institution's tone, because such students would not be engaged in scholarship for its own sake but would seek to gain professional qualifications. Similar reservations had been expressed about the Rhodes scholarship scheme when it was introduced twenty years earlier (Symonds, 22). It was not until these colonial scholars began to distinguish themselves in Oxford's most important sporting contests – in cricket, rugby, and rowing – that attitudes began to change; acceptance increased when some of the most outstanding remained in Oxford, becoming distinguished contributors to academic life.[40]

The most extensive published statement of Holme's ideas about the connections between Australia, education and Britishness can be found in his paper and participation in discussion at the third congress of the universities of Empire, held at Cambridge in 1926. Like John Woolley, Holme located Sydney 'in the British University tradition', and gave thanks, postwar and quite disingenuously, that

40 Notably Gilbert Murray, who became Regius Professor of Greek after having been Professor of Greek at Glasgow at the age of 23, and Howard Florey, the first Rhodes Scholar to win a Nobel Prize (Symonds 274–76).

'there [had] been practically no foreign influence such as the American University felt so long from Germany' (14–15). His paper summarises and exemplifies the ways in which the *idea* of a university, as it was understood by an academic educated entirely in the colonies, could be pervaded by ideals of Britishness. It also expresses the excruciating anxieties of the self-identified colonial:

> [In the founding of Sydney University] a good model of statesmanlike foresight was created as nearly as possible in the image and after the likeness of a British traditional university … *All is British, this and everything else that makes a University in Australia* … I am not even one of those from the Dominions who, coming to Cambridge are just coming home, and can be at ease in their Zion. I belong to the outer court – the court of the colonials, altogether. In these gloriously historic surroundings, in which I have no part, my thanks cannot be adequate – for lack of knowledge … I can only say that my country is a proud and loyal partaker of your inheritance. It draws many of its teachers and much of its inspiration from Cambridge … And the recognition of its efforts at these centres of our life-force as a Commonwealth of Nations is a precious encouragement. (22; my emphasis)

While his feelings are clearly exaggerated for the benefit of the British members of his audience – this cringing oration is the academic equivalent of Menzies' 'I did but see her passing by' – Holme's declarations reflect the crisis that could be experienced by the colonial authority on 'returning' to the cultural and intellectual 'centre' of their world, a place they had hitherto seen only in imagination. This crisis is generated in part by the ruthless enforcement of hierarchies by English academics, and in part by the vulnerability of Australian academics to English opinion, a fear encapsulated in Holme's concern that Oxford and Cambridge might refuse 'to act as a mother of Universities overseas' (Comment, 154). But we cannot know whether Holme oscillated between the irritation he expressed in private and the humility he expressed in public, or whether one of these emotions was closer to his 'true' feeling.

Holme had long been a member of the modern language department prior to his appointment to the chair. In contrast, John le Gay Brereton had only taught in university extension, having obtained a position at the university library in 1902 through MacCallum's intervention.[41] While working in the library he published *Elizabethan Drama: Notes and Studies*, a collection of textual commentaries that 'proclaimed him a scholar of unusual ability' in the eyes of Percival Serle, author of the entry on Brereton in the *ADB*. Brereton is probably best known now for his poetry, although Terry Sturm has claimed that he had an international repu-

41 Letter from MacCallum to Brereton, 11 February 1902, John le Gay Brereton Papers, MSS 281/9/251, Mitchell Library.

tation for his studies of Marlowe and Shakespeare (Sturmn 397). His own essays in *Knocking Round*, the letters to him from the renowned eccentric Christopher Brennan, and the memoir by his nephew RD FitzGerald all suggest that he was, as FitzGerald termed it in his title, 'A Vagabond at Heart'.

Brereton differed from Holme and MacCallum in that he was apparently less militaristic, although his book of poems, *The Burning Marl*, was dedicated to 'all who have fought nobly'.[42] Perhaps surprisingly, given Holme's ostensible enthusiasm for the war, Brereton seems to have felt comfortable about expressing his reservations about militarism in another colleague to Holme. After lunching with Holme and AB Taylor from Tasmania – perhaps the Taylor who had applied for the chair? – Brereton wrote the next day in terms that imply a close relationship between the Sydney colleagues (or were perhaps a gentle hint?):

> My share of the entertainment of Taylor (and myself) is here. Do just take it and shut up. Taylor's not very impressive is he. I thought him no more like a real professor than myself. When he began to talk militaristically I couldn't help reflecting that a defective sense of humour is one of the main conditions that permit war.[43]

Brereton reiterated the point in a letter to Duncan Hall, but there noted that Taylor's preferred topic was ginger ale, on which he talked 'incessantly'.[44]

Brereton was more sympathetic towards Australian literature than either Holme or MacCallum, and Lesley Heath realistically speculates that the first two theses on the subject, written in 1922, were completed under his direction. But several items in Brereton's papers suggest that his views on women and women writers, notwithstanding his friendship with Zora Cross and his reputation for encouraging women students, resembled those of most colleagues. A draft of a lecture evinces a determination to include a mellifluously misogynist appraisal of his female contemporaries:

> Of course, the modern, abreast-of-the-times, advanced person hasn't ~~time~~ [or] any inclination to try a wholesome course of Dickens, while he is ruining his literary digestion with Gallic analyses of offal, ~~or morbid hysterics squeaked through the press by emancipated women run wild~~ or new works of fiction which devote themselves to the investigation and demon-

42 There is an ambiguity in that 'all', although an expression of sympathy for German soldiers would have been unexpected in university environs at this time.

43 Letter from Brereton to Holme, 30 December 1927, Brereton Papers, MSS 217/7/415, Mitchell Library.

44 Letter from Brereton to H Duncan Hall, 31 December 1927, H Duncan Hall Papers, MS 7229, National Library of Australia.

> stration of every kind of disease. The wholesome laughter of Dickens is overwhelmed by the morbid hysterics squeaked thro' the press by emancipated women run wild.[45]

The same willingness to judge appears in Brereton's student notes, taken from the lectures on English literature given by Piddington during MacCallum's first absence from Australia on study leave in 1893. He included the annotations that 'The "grammatical" constructions employed by the lecturer have in very many cases been altered that they may approximate correctness', and 'For the sake of brevity, unnecessary interjections will be omitted from these notes forthwith', the sentence just transcribed having contained five 'er's.[46] But Piddington was not the only person with idiosyncrasies.

TA Coghlan, acting agent-general for New South Wales, and in that capacity chair of the London selection committee for the Challis professorship of English literature, wrote to Brereton giving highly confidential news of the committee's deliberations, informing him that

> The committee came to the conclusion, from the style of your work generally, that you were a vegetarian no doubt this would have killed your chances had I not insinuated in a covert way that you were not to be condemned on that account as Australian vegetables were not flatulently indigestible but on the contrary were wholesome brain-forming foods.[47]

In a later letter Coghlan let Brereton know that he was the London committee's recommended appointee and expressed his hope that the decision would be confirmed in Sydney. He noted that Brereton's lack of a background in classics had counted against him in the deliberations.

> In the minutes of the meeting at which the selection was made it is mentioned that Professor Ker hesitated giving preference to you over Allen as he was of opinion [sic] that from the papers submitted it was probable that Allen's knowledge of the Classics was more extensive than yours and in a professorship of English Literature classical knowledge is a most important consideration. While I was compelled to assent to recording Professor Ker's opinion I insisted on putting in the minutes also 'the committee however was unanimous in considering that on the evidence before it Mr

45 Notebook, Box 1, John le Gay Brereton Papers, University of Sydney Archives.

46 Notebook, Lent Term, English: Shakespeare's Comedies, Box 3, John le Gay Brereton Papers, University of Sydney Archives.

47 Letter from T Coghlan to John le Gay Brereton, 4 November 1920, Brereton Papers, MSS 281/4, Mitchell Library.

> Brereton had a wider range of ability and a more extensive knowledge of English Literature'.[48]

This account could suggest that – notwithstanding their friendship – MacCallum did not intervene directly with his fellow Glaswegian WP Ker in the matter of selection, although it also suggests that Coghlan *did* intervene, and precisely on the basis of friendship: Brereton, as a young man, had been a clerk in the New South Wales statistician's office, headed by Coghlan. Although Coghlan was interested in literary matters, it seems unlikely he had expertise that would have allowed him to make a judgement about Brereton's academic qualifications in relation to those of other candidates.[49]

MacCallum's friendship with Brereton was particularly warm; although the older man worried about being unable to help his student and protégé, in fact he did so in various ways. The most decisive of these was in the matter of the Challis chair, as Lesley Heath has shown – although Coghlan's letter surely seeks to imply that his interventions in the meeting of the London selection committee were crucial. MacCallum encouraged Brereton to apply for the position, and when his application was successful, wrote to him on Boxing Day 1920 to explain his reaction:

> Trying to remember what I wrote, I fear I may not have expressed adequately my true delight at your appointment. I had done all I could to secure it & then when it was secured, I felt at the first blush, as one often irrationally does, a revulsion[?] of sympathy for Allen; & though never doubting the rightness of my advocacy, I may, in my regrets for his disappointment, have unconsciously put the damper on my congratulations for you. The fact that you seem to think that I had misgivings, & that they needed to be met, makes me think I failed to say what was in my heart; but in point of fact you are the successor whom I would have chosen and whom I deliberately chose – so far as the choice rested with me.[50]

The letters between MacCallum and the candidates, along with Coghlan's to Brereton, demonstrate the very direct ways in which mentoring could be decisive.

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48 18 November 1920, John le Gay Brereton Papers, ML MSS 281/4, Mitchell Library.

49 The information regarding Brereton and Coghlan pertaining to their work in the statistician's office comes from the *ADB* entries on the two; no date is given for Brereton's clerkship but he was much younger than Coghlan.

50 Letter from MacCallum to Brereton, 26 December 1920, John le Gay Brereton Papers, MSS 281/9/309, Mitchell Library. See also Heath (68). This letter, thence this collection, were drawn to my attention by Heath's fine study, in which this passage is also discussed.

One senses that MacCallum intervened not at all because he was determined to break the stranglehold of English-educated candidates, but because of his felt obligation towards Holme, and his intense affection for Brereton.

Ironically enough, it was during Brereton's and Holme's time that Sydney was to feel the effects of another charismatic Scot. During his last year at the university before his sudden death in 1933, Brereton was conscious of the impact that the advocacy of 'free thought' by philosopher John Anderson was having upon students. Anderson, like MacCallum, was a product of Glasgow, though of a later generation, and his approach to critique took a radically different form to MacCallum's: he preferred to question precisely those institutions critical idealism sought to preserve. MacCallum recorded his misgivings about the fact that 'the untrained minds of our junior alumni are subjected to the Professor's very able but unsettling lectures without any counteracting influence' (Jottings, 164). Brereton likewise was concerned. Writing to Duncan Hall in 1932, he referred to Anderson as the 'professor of atheism', and glumly noted that

> I go on talking about Browning – in full consciousness that John Anderson's pet pupils are derisively critical of everything that is idealistic & romantic … His Freethought Society has just issued the first number of *Freethought*; a journal that attacks religion and British imperialism … It'll cause a row of course.[51]

Brereton goes on to describe a clash between one of Anderson's students and Holme, Holme objecting to the student's failure to show respect during the playing of the American national anthem. But the irony lies in the fact that if anyone might have served as a conduit for the ideas of TH Green at Sydney it would have been Anderson, who lectured on Green and his work albeit whilst being critical of his views.[52] In the end Anderson's impact on the institution, and particularly on its Arts graduates, was profound, and might well have played a part in the retreat from 'everything that is idealistic and romantic' in the English department.

If we wish to categorise Brereton and Holme in terms of the intellectual influence of their mentor Mungo MacCallum, some obvious difficulties emerge. Brereton was the idealist of the two, that is certain, although there is less sense, at least from his published work and his lectures, that he aimed to revivify and transmit that critical spirit that was so fundamental to Green's intellectual life, notwithstanding Green's influence on MacCallum. There is a noticeably, even

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51 Letter from Brereton to Hall, 16 July 1932, H Duncan Hall Papers, MS 7229, National Library of Australia.

52 John Anderson, t.s., which notes that the Anderson Archive contains eight lectures on Green at http://bit.ly/2hVZB1z. I thank Denise Russell for bringing this material to my attention.

successively, gentler spirit at work in each of Caird, MacCallum, and Brereton, but did MacCallum ever discuss Green's ideas at any length with Brereton, or make them central to his lectures to undergraduates? Holme, one senses the less imaginative of the two successors, was also intellectually less self-confident, more serious, and perhaps incapable of the laconic, self-deprecating tone of Brereton. It might have been more for reasons of temperament than intellect that he did not follow his mentor's example of idealism, seeking refuge in the apparent certainties of 'language' study, which seemed to provide proof of academic rigour. Thus it was he who applied for the McCaughey chair. Nevertheless, and crucially for my argument, a sense of the usefulness of such study for inculcating cultural values via the supposedly 'objective' or 'scientific' stream of English study remained strong for him. Donald Horne, a former student, described him as using *Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Primer* 'as a text for a series of sermons on the virtues of Empire' (10).[53] That 'hard study' which Holme saw as proof of intellectual rigour did not disconnect him from cultural values, but in fact allowed them to be emphasised. As in the previous chapter, the lines between literature and language, this time *within* a discipline rather than between two apparently separate ones, blur when we attend to individual cases; commensurately, attempts to label the methods and values which structure scholarship and teaching fracture somewhat when applied to a range of evidence.

53 The British and Us 1: Mates in the Empire, 10.

4
MACAULAY AND AFTER

> Ten years ago I had a job interview with an English Department Chairman who quite unexpectedly confided in the middle of an otherwise ordinary conversation that he was alarmed by the demands of some female graduate students. These radical young women believed that classes ought to be devoted to the study of women – women in literature, literature by women!
>
> 'They want to throw out a thousand years of Western culture', he suddenly said. He spoke bitterly, with a soft, regretful Southern accent. 'A thousand yeahs of Westuhn culchuh!'
>
> I was shocked. 'Surely not,' I exclaimed.
>
> Looking at something like the majestic procession that passes through the third act of *Die Meistersinger*, a thousand years of Western culture paraded across my mind: grave monkish scholars, impassioned poets, thought-worn philosophers, and beautiful stately ladies, all dimly glowing, all holding out faintly imploring hands to me, their heir and guardian. *Remember us*, they seemed to signal as their noble robes swept by. *Don't throw us out!*
>
> 'Surely,' I added … 'we're all equally committed to the preservation of Western culture.'
>
> (Sandra Gilbert, What Do Feminist Critics Want?)

In the late nineteenth century in Britain and its Australian colonies, quite different positions were available in arguments for and about the teaching of English. The subject was seen by many – opponents and proponents of its introduction to universities – as a 'practical' one, giving knowledge of grammar and style; for others, who again might be supporters or critics, literary study could instil culture

or shape character in ways that were powerful yet could not easily be measured. One thing is clear: the most powerful beliefs about the 'need' for English were provided not by academics but by those who believed that culture was the most effective way to strengthen the ties of empire, and thereby to maintain the supremacy of what was then often termed 'the Anglo-Saxon race', or more often and more obviously, the British empire.[1]

Before the Australian colonies federated in 1901 'English' was not a specialist discipline, at least in terms of staffing, at any of the four local universities. It was part of the chairs of modern language at Sydney and Melbourne; at Adelaide it was linked with history; and at Tasmania it was coupled with classics. Each configuration reflects local exigencies, as well as a slightly differing conception of the discipline. For some, English was a 'modern' subject, as distinct from classics; for others, it occupied a *thematic* relationship with history; and for others, its methods were understood as being connected to those of classics, whether as literary or language study. It was the pairing with history that perhaps made it easiest to stress what might be called 'imperial' versions of the discipline, although as we have seen, any mode could be co-opted to this cultural program. But by 1926 specialist positions – chairs of English language and/or literature – had been created at Melbourne (1911, RS Wallace), Western Australia (1912, Walter Murdoch), Sydney (1920, ER Holme and John le Gay Brereton), Adelaide (1921, AT Strong), Queensland (1922, JJ Stable) and Tasmania (1926, AB Taylor). In the prewar period, there had been little to suggest that such a rate of expansion was inevitable. In this chapter, the focus is on the first generation of specialists, the discussion grounded in a consideration of one of the most powerful motivating forces for the study of English literature, imperialism, and to the guiding spirit of this approach, Thomas Babington Macaulay.

Arguments for the study of English have been linked to the political goals of imperialism, principally by Gauri Viswanathan in her history of the teaching of English in India. Viswanathan's key piece of evidence comes from debates recorded in parliamentary papers, which show British authorities, anxious to avoid political unrest, as explicitly committed to the use of secular (as opposed to religious) literary education to inculcate a love of British culture. But the most widely known document in the history of the relationship between imperialism and the study of English literature is TB Macaulay's 'Minute on Indian Education', an essay published in February 1835 that is a legal judgement on how to spend money laid aside for 'reviving literature in India'. Although the contents of the Minute are well known, the circumstances of its writing are less well publicised; these are important, however, because they bear on the ways in which we might interpret this document in terms of debates about reasons for 'the begin-

1 Although often a euphemism for 'white', the value of this dubious term to those who used it was that it excluded Britain's internal enemies.

nings of English'.

Thomas Macaulay arrived in Madras on 10 June 1834, in an era when well-connected young British men knew their fortunes could be made with just a few years of public service in what was then Britain's wealthiest colony. Five months later Macaulay was made president of the Committee of Public Instruction, a body which was at the time, in Macaulay's own words, 'divided into equal parties. All their proceedings were at a stand, and had been so for several months.'[2] The point at issue was the medium of instruction for literary study: half the committee supported the teaching of Sanscrit and Arabic; their opponents were in favour of using English. The problem was put to the governor by Macaulay in his Minute, in which he threatened to resign his post if English was not supported (which it was).[3]

The crux of Macaulay's argument is that Sanscrit and Arabic are intrinsically unfit for the transmission of complex knowledge, although he also admits having no familiarity with the languages. This claim about intrinsic intellectual deficiencies ignored scholarship which had demonstrated structural connections between Sanscrit and a language Macaulay *did* revere: ancient Greek.[4] And a different argument about the relationship between language, learning and cultural value can be found in a speech by Macaulay to the British House of Commons on 10 July 1833: 'If, instead of learning Greek, we learned the Cherokee, the man who understood the Cherokee best, who made the most correct and melodious Cherokee verses … would generally be a superior man to him who was destitute of these accomplishments' (GM Young, *Speeches*, 142). In Macaulay's words, the 'Orientalists' who supported the use of the classical languages of Indian scholarship were mainly the 'old guard', advocates of the policies of the East India Company which had ostensibly ruled the country before the British crown. Contrastingly, the supporters of English were those he saw as 'the cleverest and most rising young men'. And this group included Charles Trevelyan, who was courting Macaulay's sister. As Manju Dalmia has shown, senior colonial administrators such as Macaulay and Trevelyan were also coming under pressure from Indians lobbying for the introduction of English language education, on the grounds that such education would ultimately give them greater access to power in the administration of their own country (Dalmia, 44). This role of local elites is often set aside in postcolonial condemnation of the Minute, but so too is the fact that literature also came to bear on Macaulay's personal life in a perverse and powerful

2 Thomas Babington Macaulay, Letter to James Mill, 24 August 1835 (Pinney 148).

3 As the editor of Macaulay's Letters, Thomas Pinney, points out, Macaulay knew that his judgement would be accepted, for he had indicated that the governor was in favour of the use of English in a private letter the previous December.

4 Thus scholars like EV Boulger, among others, studied Sanscrit. I am grateful to Chris Darvall for bringing this point to my attention: see Dinneen.

way in his first year in India.

Macaulay had been accompanied to his new position by his sister Hannah. When she married Charles Trevelyan early in 1835 – around the time the Minute was being written – he was devastated by what he experienced as the 'loss' of his sister, albeit to one of his closest political allies. The governor and his wife saw Macaulay the evening after the wedding and wrote to Hannah and her husband 'begging us to return as soon as we could, as they were frightened about him. I am sure his mind was disturbed for he wrote me the most fearful letter of misery and reproach, followed the next day by one begging me to forgive it.'[5] If this seems melodramatic, the intensity of Macaulay's feelings of loss is confirmed in the contents of a letter he wrote on Christmas Eve to his other sister, Mrs Edward Cropper, who had remained in England:

> My only comfort is that she is happy and that I have made her so at my own cost – at a cost which neither she nor any other human being except myself can conceive … Everything is dark. The world is a desert before me. I have nothing to love – I have nothing to live for – I do not care how soon I am carried to the Cathedral on a very different occasion from that of yesterday. I have nobody but myself to blame. I have indulged in a foolish dream till it became necessary to me. I have refused to be awakened … [Yet now] I see what a madman I was to waste my tenderness as I have done – what a madman to think it would ever be returned. (Pinney, 114)

Whilst in this dire condition Macaulay transformed what was already a sustained interest in literature into an obsession. In the same letter to his sister in England he says that 'Books are becoming everything to me'; a year later he claimed to Thomas Flower Ellis that 'Literature has saved my life and my reason. Even now I dare not, in the intervals of business, remain alone for a minute without a book in my hand' (Pinney, 158). During this period of grief and confusion Macaulay claimed in his letters to have re-read the classical canon, in the original languages, twice over, for emotional sustenance. This deep dependence surely gives the lie to Macaulay's claim, made in the Minute, that English 'stands pre-eminent even among the languages of the West [and] abounds with works of imagination not inferior to the noblest which Greece has bequeathed to us.' And his now notorious words, that the study of English would help to cultivate 'a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect', while obviously racist, can also be understood as a wildly overstated claim about the transformative effects of reading (Young, 359).

Macaulay's is the crucial text in the history of literary education in the

5 Hannah Trevelyan, *Memoir of Thomas Babington Macaulay*, 62–63, quoted in Pinney, 116.

English-speaking world, including Australia. It occupies that place because it argues, with extraordinary rhetorical force and to lasting influence, that English literature transmits a morality, a sensibility and an intellectual habit of mind vastly superior to that of any other culture in the world. As we have seen, little in elite English education at this time could be said to have justified such a claim, but in some important respects it was easier to make these ambitious claims for the study of English in the colonies than in England itself. This imagined, imperial England, embodied in its literature and thereby *mobile* across the colonies, was quite as seductive for colonial elites as were British political authority and the lived place – for some, more so. Such claims about the pre-eminence of English, a belief expressed by politicians as different and as distant as Macaulay and Menzies, did not offer students or scholars a methodology for study, but *did* seem to provide a pervasive and powerful rationale for the subject. This explicitly political reason for English study gained much more traction in the public realm than 'scholarly' approaches, like critical idealism, ever could. That the argument was put most influentially in an essay that was not so much a profound expression of faith in English literature as it was a deliberately partisan intervention in a political debate, written in circumstances of private desperation, does not undermine the strengh of the relationship between imperialism and the study of English which it demands.

The weakness of method and the emotional or persuasive power of imperial sentiment are evident in published accounts of two lectures delivered in Sydney thirty years after Macaulay's Minute. In 1865 the Reverend John Graham gave a lecture on English literature to a 'large audience' at the Pitt Street Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society. In the tradition of Macaulay, Graham contends that

> the possession of a pure, forcible, copious language was the best test of civilisation in a people, and one of the greatest boons that one generation could bequeath another; and the easy, elegant, and correct use of language at once marked out the gentleman from the clown, the upstart, and the snob. (6)

Graham suggests that educators were coming to see that

> the principal use of classical studies was to give a more full appreciation, and to use the copiousness, force, and beauty of our own English language. Three of the grandest things in the world were – England's empire, on which the sun never set; England's constitution, with its unequalled equipoise of liberty; and England's tongue, the organ of utterance for the myriad-minded Shakespeare, or for the seraph-souled author of *Paradise Lost*. (6)

The lecture ended with the singing of the national anthem, 'in which nearly all present joined'. Few academics, at this time, would have made such bold claims for English literature or for English language. Almost none would have subordinated classics to English.

A different kind of rationale for the teaching of English is at work in a lecture given by George Barton at Sydney in 1868, just three years later. Barton was 'Reader in the English Language and Literature to the University' from 1865 until his appointment lapsed in 1868. As well as being the first person appointed to a position teaching English literature at an Australian university, Barton was the first to publish books on the history of literature in the Australian colonies. In contrast to Graham's advocacy of the moral and cultural value of English literature, Barton concentrated on elucidating the advantages of chronological reading as a method of study, in his lecture on *The Study of English Literature*. Only by reading selected texts in a particular order, and in light of each other, he argued, could their true significance be grasped. This method has obvious weaknesses in conceiving history only as literary history; it also implicitly presumes that all creative authors have experienced literature in precisely this serial fashion and are 'serially' influenced in the same way. But the appeal is that this kind of knowledge can be taught and tested: students can be examined on names, dates and 'influence' (simplistically conceived).

This approach was popularised by the appearance of English as an examination subject for various arms of the civil service, which in turn became the raison d'être of publications like Austin Dobson's *Civil Service Handbook of English Literature* (1874) as universities like Oxford shied away from providing for such pragmatic needs. The *Handbook* advertises itself as a crib for students which aims to 'give a concise, and, as a rule, chronological account of the principal English authors, noting the leading characteristics of their productions, and, where necessary, the prominent events of their lives' (1). Significantly, though, we can associate the need to teach and test English literature in this pseudofactual way with the rise of the idea of meritocracy and with imperial civil service. Indeed Benjamin Jowett was involved early in his career with revisions to the Indian Civil Service (ICS) examination which saw particular emphasis given to English, just as Jowett's Balliol gave particular emphasis to the ICS.

If we can see imperialism as providing impetus for the study of English literature in the nineteenth century in a range of very practical as well as highly political ways, certainly in the British colonies, it is also important to note that imperial fervour needed to be filtered through what were thought of as rigorous testing regimes, success in which gave a new social class of students access to higher levels of public service and the professions. It is not surprising, then, to find strong emphasis, in Barton's lecture, on the need to avoid 'unconnected and promiscuous reading' (13). Such practice might mean a student or reader becoming 'overloaded', surely a euphemism for reading which would find value

in anything other than patriotic themes: 'we may certainly acquire a vast variety of information on many topics, but we shall never be able to feel that we have grasped the invisible spirit which animates the literature of our country' (13). The patriotic spirit evident in Barton's presentation is weaker than in Graham's lecture, although the methodology is surer: our journey from past to present can proceed on the railway tracks of chronology. But as these two lectures also show, apparently very different ideas about the study of English were by no means mutually exclusive – in fact, they were in some ways complementary. Their co-existence illustrates the problem critics like Green and Ker were attempting to address: how to develop a scholarly approach to vernacular literature which could offer strong motives for study, firm criteria for evaluating texts, clearly defined methods for reading them and sure mechanisms for testing. It is against the backdrop of an awareness of the powerful political arguments for English being made from 1835 onwards that we can consider events at Melbourne.

MORRIS AND MURDOCH

After lengthy discussion it was decided to advertise a chair of Modern Languages at Melbourne in 1882. Moves to create and advertise the position increased in tempo when the leading local candidate, headmaster EE Morris, was offered a chair at Adelaide. Deciding that he was their preferred candidate Melbourne cabled Adelaide to request them to release their newly appointed professor, which they graciously did. Morris had been active in debates about modern languages, literature, curriculum and pedagogy in the tertiary and secondary sectors during the previous decade, and had himself urged the creation of a chair in his commentaries on the university and state politics published in the *Melbourne Review* and the *Victorian Review*.

Edward Ellis Morris was born in India in 1843. His grandfather had been a director of the East India Company, and his father, John Carnac Morris, the accountant-general for Madras. After John Morris died his family left India for England, where EE Morris attended Rugby, and then Oxford. After graduating with a second in classics, law and modern history, Morris taught at various places including the Indian Civil Service training college, Haileybury, and in Berlin. Appointed headmaster of Melbourne Grammar School in 1875, Morris was committed to the ideals instilled during his education. The *ADB* reports that he had

> early successes in developing the school along English public school lines … In 1876 he instituted the prefect system and the school magazine, *Melburnian*, to which he often contributed. He produced the first *Liber Melburniensis* in 1879, changed the school colours to Oxford blue and designed the school flag and coat of arms used until 1909.

However the school's numbers began to decline at the same rate they had increased after the new headmaster's arrival; Morris eventually resigned, evidently frustrated at being unable to 'transport' the Rugby model to Australia. In an essay not published until almost a century later, Morris explained his reasons for resigning, complaining that he had 'tried in every way to work the school upon the line of an English Public School … I … can see now most clearly that this is the prime, the fundamental, perhaps the only, cause why I have not succeeded' (84–85). Although it is never phrased quite so bluntly, Morris clearly felt that the fault for the decline lay not in the ethos he had tried to recreate, rather in the colonial population who had rejected it.

Morris was appointed to Melbourne after he had resigned from but before he had left the school, and he insisted on taking a year's leave before coming to the university. He therefore did not take up the chair until 1884, at which time he introduced subjects in English, French, and German literature, lecturing in all three as well as in a Master of Arts degree. (As at Oxford, the breadth of the curriculum made specialisation impossible.) Melbourne awarded Morris its first LittD in 1899 for his *Austral English*, originally prepared for the *Oxford English Dictionary*; his study of James Cook remains unpublished, but several essays did appear in 1899 and 1900.

A lengthy obituary for Morris published in *The Argus* in 1902 noted that 'his model was Lord Macaulay' ('Death of Professor Morris'). In his inaugural lecture at Melbourne, with the conciliatory title 'Language and Literature', Morris quoted extensively from Macaulay's Minute; the passage he quoted was that in which imperialist sentiments were most fervently expressed. English, it is said,

> stands pre-eminent even among the language of the West … It may safely be said that the literature now extant in that language is of far greater value than all the literature which three hundred years ago was extant in all the languages of the world together. (248)

Morris boldly asked his audience, 'of what, we may well ask, has an Englishman better right to be proud than of the glories of English literature?' (249). There are many other signs that Macaulay was a favourite, although it is not a simple matter of positioning Morris as a stereotypical product of Rugby and Oxford, influenced in his imperial ambitions by his connections with India. He was interested in local literature and language, a point demonstrated by his studies of Cook, and the dictionary.

When it appeared, *Austral English* was given a vicious review by AG Stephens. Stephens gave the book some grudging praise, but that praise lay alongside the complaint that 'insufficient brains and labour and care and time have been applied' (the red page). In the 1970s, the book found a defender: David Haberly claims *Austral English* is a landmark because it takes as its premise the

idea that meaning is relational and textual, rather than inherent. He concludes that the making of the dictionary is evidence of Morris' belief in 'the existence of a variant of standard English so thoroughly and so profoundly altered that it constituted a new and distinct language' (357). That Morris, like Macaulay, could be both a relativist and a passionate imperialist seems to be borne out in a comment made in his inaugural lecture, that 'In the nature of things there is nothing less poetical about Melbourne than there is about London' (237). Still we can read this comment, and the production of *Austral English*, not as pre-emptive postcolonialism (as Haberly might have it), but as colonial Romanticism. Morris believed in an organic connection between land, language and culture; it is entirely consistent with this view that he should argue that the English 'race' and language would be transformed by their transportation to a new landscape. Indeed, the risks attending such a transformation made it essential to establish schools and universities that would inculcate a love of English literature and culture in their students; inheritance alone would not be sufficiently powerful to maintain desired forms of Englishness in the colonies.

Although Morris had died in 1902, his position as professor of modern languages was not advertised until 1911; the delay was caused by lack of funding after an administrator absconded with a significant portion of funding. When a position was finally created it was decided to make the chair one in English literature, the first in Australia, although French and German were being taught in the interim. The teaching of English had been done first by TG Tucker; subsequently a lecturer, Walter Murdoch, was appointed to take charge. Murdoch was a graduate of Melbourne, with firsts in logic and classics; having done the work of the professor for nearly a decade, it was generally felt that he was in a strong position to apply for the chair when it was finally advertised. In a letter to Alfred Deakin requesting a reference, Murdoch asked if he would

> have time to write me a short testimonial, setting forth whatever good things (if any) you know about me, and skilfully suppressing the bad things; putting those people on their guard against giving too easy credence to lurid accounts, which may have reached them … of my moral depravity and intellectual incompetence. (La Nauze and Nurser, 49)

Deakin, then in the last, turbulent stages of his political career, wrote back to apologise for the delay in replying; Murdoch in turn apologised for putting him to the trouble: 'I had thought you would just pick up your pen at some moment and jot down a few particulars – good churchgoer, fairly truthful, kind to animals & things of that kind' (51).

Notwithstanding this light-hearted tone Murdoch was serious in his desire for the position. His first letter to Deakin noted that he did not 'want to surrender [it] without a struggle; and I honestly believe that a testimonial from you would be

without exception the strongest weapon in my armoury' (La Nauze and Nurser, 49). Murdoch's qualifications are worth scrutiny, as are those of the person who emerged as his rival for the position, Robert Strachan Wallace. By 1911 Murdoch had published numerous essays and reviews in *The Argus, The Book Lover* and *The Trident*, an academic journal which he edited; two textbooks and an anthology of literature for schools; a primer and an anthology of English literature (both with Tucker); and a collection of literary essays called *Loose Leaves*.[6] I have not been able to find any publications for Wallace for the same period. But Murdoch's high output might have counted against him, for many of his publications were for school students or general readers, or as he later termed it, 'literary journalism'. Both Murdoch and Wallace had first-class results in their undergraduate degrees and an MA, though Murdoch's qualifications were obtained from Melbourne while Wallace had degrees from Aberdeen and Oxford. Murdoch had been a lecturer in English at Melbourne since 1903; Wallace had taught English at Aberdeen since 1907. It was known that Murdoch had strong connections in the literary and education communities, and was a popular teacher – indeed, in a rather unusual step, several hundred of his current and former students petitioned the university council to support his application. On the other hand, again, there is little doubt that teaching in the Scottish university would have counted for more with a selection committee than experience in Australia. Another factor that sometimes entered the selection equation was age, but it is unlikely to have been a factor here: Murdoch was in his late thirties, Wallace in his late twenties.

The selection committee in England, consisting of WP Ker, Sir Walter Raleigh and CH Herford, ostensibly declined to make a final recommendation, ranking Murdoch equal with Wallace.[7] They did note that Wallace

> seems to be best suited to the post, and to have the strongest qualification in both literature and language.
>
> With regard to Mr Murdoch, who is in Australia, the Committee was impressed by the testimony before them as to his character and literary ability, and was convinced that in him the University has a scholar and writer of high distinction. He differs from the other candidates named in their history and in the predominance of the literary over the linguistic qualifications. The Committee was particularly impressed by the evidence of the valuable

6 Murdoch signed many of his columns in *The Argus* 'Elzevir' and published creative work and occasional essays under various pseudonyms. An annotated bibliography compiled by Elizabeth Nurser, Amanda Gordon, JA La Nauze and Christopher Connelly is held in the National Library of Australia.

7 TH Anderson Stuart, an academic at Sydney, felt that 'considerable difficulties' had arisen when committees operated in England, or in both countries simultaneously, 100–01.

> work he has done as a Lecturer in the University. The Committee could not of course have the advantage of seeing Mr Murdoch, and therefore decided not to attempt to choose between him and Mr Wallace. Either gentlemen [sic] appears to the Committee to be admirably qualified for the position. (quoted in La Nauze, 52–53)

Referring the final choice to Australia was unusual, although the implicit preference for the British candidate was not.

Ker seems here to reverse the preference for classics evident in his comments on Brereton (above) made nearly a decade later; the (small) committee seems to have seen Wallace's degrees in English as constituting better qualifications than Murdoch's in philosophy and classics. This might reflect the nature of the position, in English, but such an order of priorities is unusual in this period, even more so because the Australian committee included three classicists, two of whom were almost certainly its most influential members. The Australian committee's chair, Alexander Leeper, had successfully moved that EE Morris be offered the chair of modern languages in 1882, and in 1927 was again a member of the selection committee for the chair of English.[8] The other committee members were Murdoch's colleague and former teacher TG Tucker, EH Sugden and Theodore Fink.[9] Murdoch himself was well aware this group was likely to favour a candidate from Britain, something even he seemed to accept, if reluctantly. He wrote to Deakin that 'if they get a really good man from Oxford, I am not so irrational as to grumble; but what I do grumble at, and what I have chiefly to fear, is Dr Leeper's view that *anyone*, no matter who, from Oxford or Cambridge, is quite certain to be an improvement on a local man' (La Nauze and Nurser, 55–56). In their report to Council the Australian committee did not minute the reasons for its choice, simply noting that having examined 'all the available evidence' it recommended the appointment of Robert Wallace.[10]

Melbourne at large was indignant, and local newspapers received letters protesting the appointment; the matter was also raised in state parliament.[11] One

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8 Leeper was born in 1834 and took his BA, MA, BD and DD in Dublin (Burtchaell and Sadler, 491). He was a referee for E Vaughan Boulger in his application for Adelaide, and a long-time college head at Melbourne.

9 Minutes of Council, 27 November 1882, Melbourne University; Reports on Behalf of the Standing Committee on Professorial Appointments, 18 July 1927, Reel 8, Book 21, 23 December 1925–29 October 1928, University of Melbourne Archives. Sugden, like Leeper, was a college head and classicist; Fink had chaired the 1903 commission into the university.

10 Item 7, Minutes of Council, University of Melbourne, 7 August 1911.

11 The events are noted in the Report of the English Committee of 19 June 1911, and the Minutes of Council of Melbourne University for 7 August 1911. The appoint-

of Murdoch's students wrote to *The Argus* to complain about the selection of Wallace (Old Student), while Basil Kilvington, who worked at the university, accused Melbourne of being 'importers':

> I wish to draw your attention to the persistent attitude of the University Council in passing over Australian candidates in filling the higher positions at the University … Of the recent appointments made, those competent to judge say that an equally good, possibly superior, local candidate applied for the chairs in music, engineering and geology. In each case an English applicant was appointed … There are two other professorial chairs to be filled shortly, and presumably any local candidate will be treated as in the case of the English chair. (Kilvington, 9)

Although the Philosophy chair was filled by a graduate of Oxford and Jena the agitation obviously had some impact, as the appointee to the chair of Agriculture, Thomas Cherry, was a graduate of Melbourne – the first Australian to be appointed to a chair at Melbourne since 1886.[12] Murdoch himself was clearly devastated and left the university, spending a year on the literary staff at *The Argus* before being offered the foundation chair of English at Western Australia.

The rejection of Murdoch seems to have related to his local training, his preference for literature over language study, the nature of his literary criticism, and his interest in Australian literature. Many of Murdoch's newspaper essays from this period can be read as direct refutations of Tucker's often-repeated assertion that, life being short, it was best for students and readers to stick to classical literature. In regard to idealism Murdoch was also a heretic, remarking in a letter to Deakin that

> I hardly feel that the last word is said about art when it is left divided into three. One yearns for some unifying principle … But I dont [sic] know that it is possible to reconcile le vrai, le beau, & le bien without having recourse to mysticism (La Nauze and Nurser, 32).

Although there has been speculation as to who on the committee opposed

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ment was announced in *The Age* and *The Argus* on 8 August 1911, and letters from JDB, JP Bainbridge, 'Fairplay', and 'Graduate' are published under the heading 'The Chair of English', *The Argus*, 11 August 1911: 4, and from Old Student, *The Argus*, 9 August 1911: 15. See also *Victoria Parliament Legislative Assembly, Papers presented to both Houses of Parliament* [Victorian Parliamentary Debates] 127 (1911): 550–55, 593.

12 A slightly misleading account is given by Blainey, who implies that subsequent pressure on the university to appoint local candidates came out of the blue, 130.

Murdoch's candidature, and there is no reason to assume that Murdoch's fears regarding Leeper were not well founded, Tucker's role was also surely vital. Given his reputation at Melbourne, and his professional relationship with Murdoch, it seems unlikely that a strong recommendation from him would have been disregarded unless – as is possible – there were tussles between Leeper and Tucker for the position of senior classicist, their commonality making them rivals rather than allies.

Morris' official successor in the chair, RS Wallace, was born in Aberdeenshire in 1882. He won a scholarship to Aberdeen and graduated with first-class honours in English; after a short time teaching he went to Christ Church college, Oxford. There he studied English with Sir Walter Raleigh, who, according to Chris Baldick, had somewhat 'lost faith' in the discipline during his time 'implementing Macaulay's cultural crusade' in India (*Social Mission*, 76). Wallace graduated from Oxford in 1907, and the same year obtained a teaching post at Aberdeen. After coming to Melbourne in 1911 he taught for several years before enlisting, working mainly in educational administration.[13] Behind the scenes of this appointment we might also wonder about Raleigh's role, as Wallace's supervisor and a member of the London selection committee – did he, for example, suggest to his former student that he apply for the position? Did he press his student's case during the meeting of the London committee?

During the war the teaching of English again passed to a lecturer, now AT Strong, who had been doing the evening classes. On his return to Melbourne, Wallace became active in administration and, through the agency of his fellow Scot Mungo MacCallum, became vice-chancellor at Sydney in 1928. When Wallace left Melbourne, selection committees for the chair of English were again established in England and in Australia. The Australian committee members were Wallace, Dr Sugden (again), Leeper (again), Sir Robert Garran and Dr Edward Stevens, with MacCallum and Tucker 'for consultation'. The committee sitting in England consisted of professors of English from Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh and University College London – as well as the ubiquitous Tucker. Again a British candidate was preferred, the London committee proposing the appointment of Leeds graduate GH Cowling, a recommendation subsequently accepted. The strongest of the Australian applicants had been RC Bald, whose doctoral research on Elizabethan drama had been completed at Cambridge and published by the University Press – he was one of only a handful of scholars in the period with a PhD. But the English committee concluded that although his 'scholastic career' was impressive, Bald – around the same age as Wallace had been at the time of his appointment to Melbourne – was 'still a little immature for an impor-

13 Most of Wallace's publications were collaborative ones. *A Short History of English Literature* (1921) is listed as being by Strong and Wallace, but was largely written by Strong.

tant chair'.[14] By contrast, the committee saw Cowling as 'a ripe scholar in both departments of his subject' – although there was no suggestion that Bald did not have qualifications in language as well as literature, and indeed there was evidence to the contrary. Cowling's main areas of research interest were northern English dialect and Shakespeare, work that the committee suggested had 'already won the respect of scholars in the same field', and he was certainly prolific.

At the time of application Bald had few publications, although after a brief period at Adelaide he would go on to academic positions in the US, during which he edited numerous volumes and wrote much of what is now the standard biography of John Donne, edited and completed after his death by Wesley Milgate (see Mann). In this, Milgate replicated Bald's own work as editor of the work of AT Strong. In this making of tribute, we see colleagues and students (as with TH Green) building the monument that is publication, as a tribute to friends and teachers which posthumously enhances their careers and reputations. Most of Bald's own career was spent at Chicago; he also turned down a chair at Leeds. Northrop Frye described Bald as 'a rather dry stick of a man', though it is worth noting that when he lectured on Australian literature at Toronto in 1950, Bald's topics included not only Barbara Baynton and Joseph Furphy but the 'modern' poets John Manifold, RD FitzGerald, and (almost certainly) Charles Jury, whom he may have known during his time in Adelaide (247).[15] In terms of his attempts to obtain a position in Australia, Bald's case is similar to Murdoch's but perhaps worse, at least in the case of Adelaide, for which he applied in 1933. Again, a British candidate with an Oxford degree was preferred: JIM Stewart was about the same age at appointment that Bald had been when considered too young for Melbourne. Stewart's only publication was a two-page note in *Review of English Studies* on Montaigne; he would go on to make his name mainly as the author of popular detective fiction.

COWLING AND THE AGE *DEBATE*

Born in Leeds in 1881, George Herbert Cowling spent some years in business before enlisting, although he had embarked on an academic career just before the First World War and subsequently taught at Leeds from 1919 to 1927. Like Morris, Cowling was a follower of Macaulay; in his introduction to the essay by Macaulay he included in his anthology *Essays English and Australian*, Cowling noted with approval that 'in 1834 he went to India as a member of the Supreme

14 Reports on Behalf of the Standing Committees on Professorial Appointments, Melbourne University, 21 November 1927, University of Melbourne Archives.

15 Frye gives the name of Bald's third Australian poet as 'Drury?' on page 248; Frye's editor, Denham, expresses equal puzzlement about who this might be, 718.

Council, where he codified the criminal law, and promoted the study of European literature and science in the schools in an endeavour to civilize India' (116). In proposing prescriptions for Australian students in 1935, Cowling reiterated Macaulay's views on these matters expressed a century earlier. In his essay 'On Reading and Criticism', from *Essays in the Use of English*, he was even more forceful:

> If we say we insist upon breaking away from our civilization, if we wish to begin again 'free from the outworn trammels of the past', letting 'dead Europe bury its dead'; make no mistake about it, we begin as the barbarians of a fresh dawn. *We have no culture*. (213; my emphasis)

Things could be worse, though, for Australians – still, at this time British subjects rather than Australian citizens – were simply Britons in the wrong place. Thus they at least had the potential to be the rightful inheritors of the 'eternal' cultural values and habits of mind of the English. As he continued his theme, Cowling made his case for absolute standards by referring to Shakespeare:

> If a perverse critic says that Shakespeare is dull and without pretension to literary merit, his taste is uncultivated and unsound. We must either follow the taste of our age or be eccentric. Taste is built upon the feelings and thoughts which belong to our nature as men of the age in which we live. If our sentiments are prejudiced and perverse, they can be rectified by comparing them with those of the great critics. (215)

These arguments again recall those of Jackson Knight; it is not surprising to find Cowling's textbook, *The Use of English*, constantly affirming the inferiority of the local.

On the other hand, it is possible that a single newspaper essay has disproportionately affected Cowling's reputation, given that Australian literature – contrary to popular assumption – *did* appear on the curriculum at Melbourne during his tenure there. Cowling's now notorious contribution to discussions of Australian literature came as part of a series on 'The Future of Australian Literature' in Melbourne's *Age* newspaper in early 1935. The series was prompted by an article entitled 'Australian Literature: Its Scope Too Limited', obviously intended to whet readers' appetites for debate. 'F.M.' suggested that while Australian writing had a wide stylistic range, it was narrow in its themes and subjects, focusing on 'the bush' at the expense of the urban (4). The first essay in the series proper was by Vance Palmer, followed by Cowling, New South Wales educator George Mackaness, thence Miles Franklin, along with a flood of letters beside each of the weekly essays.[16] It is by firmly ignoring this surrounding material that critics have been able to buttress claims about the universal hostility of university-based

critics towards Australian literature in this period.[17]

In the first instance, the demonising of Cowling overlooks the similarities in argument between Cowling's essay and that of the first contributor, Vance Palmer. While it is possible that some might be offended by the remarks that 'the books that have poured out from [local presses] have been uneven in quantity [sic], and some have small literary value', or that 'There is no art in these, nothing of permanent worth; but they serve their purpose as sketchy surveys of country yet to be ploughed', these comments were made by Palmer, not Cowling. Palmer implicitly took up the questions raised by the conveniently provocative F.M., arguing that Australian writing *did* have great variety of theme and subject, and was gathering support from local publishers and readers. He identified the real difficulty as the failure of criticism: 'there are columns of gossip about books and authors in all our papers, but little sense of values. Criticism in Australia has lagged badly behind creative work'. The stage had been set for a reply by an academic; in the meantime several letter writers praised Palmer's article. Andrew Millett suggested that 'true patriots will applaud Palmer for his brilliant and visionary article and commend *The Age* for its progressiveness in giving the light of day to vital matters that affect the soul and substance of Australia' (6), while Furnley Maurice applauded the 'excellent and characteristic article' by Mr Vance Palmer (6). Like these letter writers, Cowling sang the praises of Palmer's article, suggesting that it was so 'judicious and pointed' and 'so full of reason that it leaves little room for discussion'.

The only dissenting view was put by Millett, who suggested that the fact Australia was 'not tainted with tradition' was a virtue rather than a defect. It was precisely this 'lack of tradition' that Cowling took up, for in his eyes the most important criterion in judging literature was longevity – a polemical position given the newness of English literary studies, demonstrable volatility in the reputations of writers, and the gap between public and university taste. Nevertheless, Cowling argued that Australian literature could not be worthy of study because it lacked a Past. Thus his main objection to Australian literature was that it was set in Australia:

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16 Australian literature had long been a subject of study at the Sydney Teachers' College where Mackaness was a staff member: Zora Cross' lectures were published as *An Introduction to the Study of Australian Literature* in 1922.

17 This selectivity has been encouraged by Geoffrey Dutton's circulation of PR Stephensen's account of the debate. Cowling's essay prompted Stephensen to write *The Foundations of Culture in Australia: An Essay towards National Self Respect*, and Dutton reprints much of Stephensen's account in his *The Snow on the Saltbush*. Joy Hooton, in an essay on Australian women's writing, fairly claims that Stephensen's argument manifests 'paranoid hysteria', 316.

> I cannot help feeling that our countryside is 'thin' and lacking in tradition. Do not misunderstand me. I am not criticising Australia. I love the country … What I mean is that there are no ancient churches, castles, ruins – the memorials of generations departed. You need no Baedecker in Australia … from the point of view of literature it means that we can never hope to have a Scott, a Balzac, a Dumas, a Konrad Ferdinand Meyer, nor a poetry which reflects past glories. From a literary point of view, Australia lacks the richness of age and tradition. (6)

Needless to say, no contributor or letter writer commented on the ignorance of Indigenous cultures which these remarks demonstrate. Cowling did make the valid point that one handicap for writers was the limited local market for books, but he made no connection between the absence of a market and his own failure to develop the study of Australian writing to any significant extent at Melbourne. Nor did he did take up Palmer's charge of the failure of criticism, which could only have been aimed at Melbourne English staff.

Yet how seriously should such attitudes be taken? Given the coincidence of the initials, it seems possible that it was 'Furnley Maurice', a pseudonym for Frank Wilmot, who wrote the first essay. Maurice and Cowling had collaborated on editing a volume of Australian essays published in the same year, and in one sense it is odd that Palmer should attack the university when he surely knew his own writing was set for study there. Nettie Palmer gives no clues in her journal, even though she records at some length the conversations she and her husband Vance had with Miles Franklin when they spent the evening together on 19 March 1935, less than three weeks after Franklin's essay had been published. It seems unlikely the controversy would not have been mentioned, but if the fearsome-witted Franklin were not aware that the debate had been staged, that could explain the Palmers' silence on the issue (or, more likely, Nettie's decision not to record their conversation in her journal). It is not unlikely, I think, that Cowling was designated agent provocateur, to the delight of the newspaper. Perhaps the heart of the matter was discerned by the correspondent who remarked, 'I don't think there are many copies of [the newspapers] containing these articles left unsold' (K.B., 5). For Cowling could quite easily have refuted the arguments about the neglect of Australian writers by universities by pointing out that Palmer's novel *The Passage* was studied at Melbourne. That he did not do so lends weight to the speculation that, to a certain extent, the controversy was prearranged. It is worth noting, then, that only Franklin contested Cowling's claims at any length. Her succinct and forceful arguments were ignored by later commentators, some of whom might have been wise to seek reinforcement for their claims.

Franklin put the case that it was not the intrinsic but the ascribed value of 'place' and 'tradition' that was at issue, particularly the idealised place that was

the product of Anglophile reading practices. With typically forthright precision, she noted that it was indeed

> more profitable, as well as easier, to flee to historical environments where there is romance in even the daily sunset because it has been realised by a cloud of forerunners. Sturdier power and purpose must be called upon to invest more glorious sunsets which are empty of associations. (The Future of Australian Literature, 5)[18]

Unlike Palmer, who had claimed that 'the problem of the immigrant spirituality lost in a new world is largely a thing of yesterday', Franklin asserted that the problem of the relationship between colonial cultures and the environment persisted, and should be tackled. Writing privately to American scholar of Australian literature Hartley Grattan ten days later she was more caustic, lamenting that she did

> not have a copy of Yowling at hand but it was weak piffle on the thesis that we cannot expect much in the way of literature here. Dreadful stuff. No one with any self-respect wd put up with such a driveller, yet he is typical of the small-grade Britons we import to man our universities. They are a veritable blight. (Roe, 315)

UWA AND QUEENSLAND

Walter Murdoch's academic career was ultimately pursued at the other side of the continent – a fitting metaphor. The universities of Western Australia and of Queensland were both established just before the beginning of the First World War, and in each case there was discussion about which subject areas would be covered by appointments, and the level of appointments that should be made. The symbolic significance of chairs is clear in the public and institutional debates about these two aspects of foundation. In Perth it was decided that there was sufficient money to create four chairs and four lectureships; after agreeing that there should be a chair and a lectureship covering classics and English, debate in the university's senate focused on which discipline should have the chair (see Alexander).

Mungo MacCallum, one of two eastern states advisers consulted, 'most vig-

18 Franklin surely grinned at her reference to sunsets, which feature in her novel *My Brilliant Career*, where an ironic contrast between the claims made on the first and last pages of the novel, as they relate to the depiction of sunsets, offers commentary on readers' expectations of romance and realism.

orously advocate[d]' the establishment of a chair of classics, with English having a lectureship if funds did not permit two humanities chairs (Alexander, 31). In voting for the four foundation chairs, mathematics and physics (a single chair) and mining and engineering (also one) were unanimously supported by the senate. English received fourteen out of a possible seventeen votes, and therefore was the most favoured humanities discipline. In the voting for the final chair classics made an unexpectedly strong showing, tying with geology. The casting vote was made by the chancellor, John Winthrop Hackett, who although a classicist by training voted in favour of geology. Murdoch's application had been supported in a letter to Hackett from Deakin (Alexander, 58), the latter surely keen to make up for the fact that Murdoch's 'strongest weapon' had been insufficient to gain him the position at Melbourne.

Walter Logie Forbes Murdoch was born in 1874 at Rosehearty, a small fishing village on the Moray Firth, the fourteenth child in his family. Murdoch spent his childhood in Scotland, England and France, coming to Australia at the age of ten. (Although he usually wrote as an Australian, Murdoch could become Scottish as it suited.) He attended Camberwell Grammar and Scotch College, graduating from Melbourne in 1895. Following the death of his father while he was studying, Murdoch managed to complete his degree with the assistance of various scholarships and prizes; after graduation, he worked as a teacher. He was professor of English at the University of Western Australia from 1913 to 1939, pro-chancellor from 1941 to 1943 and chancellor from 1943 to 1948. His laconic comment on hearing that Perth's second university would be named after him – 'it had better be a good one' – has become that institution's *de facto* motto.

It was while teaching that Murdoch began to publish essays and textbooks, and to write regularly for newspapers. And it was through his writing for newspapers that he reached his largest audience, in a career that lasted nearly seventy years; his nephew, Keith Murdoch, was to build a newspaper empire. The first Murdoch essays on literary subjects were published in *The Argus* in 1899; from then until his departure for Perth, his column 'Books and Men' focused on literature. Like most of the literary columns written around this time, 'Books and Men' was basically a forum for reviewing; the gender exclusivity implied by the title is not inaccurate in terms of content. But although he was sexist, and very racist, Murdoch's vision of culture was more democratic than that of most of his peers: early in his career he argued that 'the nobility of a nation does not depend on its literature or its art or its culture; the nobility of a nation may be gauged by the extent to which these things are shared by all' (*Enemies of Literature*, 21). Later, more general Murdoch columns included 'Life and Letters', another 'Books and Men', 'Answers', and 'Afterthoughts'. By the time he ceased writing 'Afterthoughts' Murdoch was – like Leeper at Melbourne – ninety-three years old.

Murdoch's social and political concerns were broad – he was a witty com-

mentator on Victorian pruderies, and scathing of a time in which 'the people who wept like anything over the sufferings of imaginary characters in fiction were singularly callous to the sufferings of women and children in the factories and mines of the north' (*Victorian Era*, 21). He suggested that the age was epitomised by Macaulay, whom he deplored: 'open [his books] where you will, you get a glimpse of that desperate weakness of the Victorian Era, its smugness' (*Victorian Era*, 9). His former student Katharine Susannah Prichard claimed in her autobiography that Murdoch's lectures at Melbourne

> were a joy … Most of his students, studying for a degree, didn't absorb the literary value of his lectures, as I did, I thought. To me they were manna, and I rushed to read articles in the Saturday *Argus* by Elzevir, which Hilda and Nettie [Higgins, later Palmer] told me were written by … Murdoch (98).

In his anthology of criticism *The Writer in Australia* John Barnes includes an 1890 essay on 'The Characteristics of Australian Literature', (Anon 1890) a very early piece given its academic context. The essay begins by engaging with Marcus Clarke's claims that the keynote of Australian writing was melancholy, going on to suggest that modern writers had more or less nothing in common apart from an overindulged sense of Australianness. Barnes attributes the unsigned essay to EE Morris, literature editor of *The Australasian Critic* (in which it first appeared), but Morris did sign more than a dozen other contributions to the same journal that he made the following year. There is an equal possibility the essay is by TG Tucker, one of the journal's editors (with Baldwin Spencer), not least because the claims that modern work is characterised by a 'too conscious effort to be Australian', and that 'It is the chief weakness of our rising poets that they too often write for no other purpose than to be Australian', seem 'Tuckerish' (48). The author expresses the conviction – several times – that there are no discernible similarities between writers working in Australia at that time.

At the end of the 1890s, Walter Murdoch took a very different line, not only arguing that there was a 'New School of Australian Poets', but that the very homogeneity of their work was its chief defect (4). In his first published essay, Murdoch argues that 'a chorus of undiscriminating praise' had made Australian writers ridiculous in the eyes of readers. He calls for 'calm, impartial, and candid criticism' of their work, a call that would be reiterated countless times in relation to Australian literature – as it is, for example, by Franklin in her letter to Grattan quoted above. The reassembly of lines by five different poets into one technically and thematically consistent verse was an unusual but effective critical tool for substantiating Murdoch's claim that contemporary poetry was unoriginal. Arguing that this uniformity of subject matter and style was because all were imitators of each other, of Swinburne, and (especially) of Kipling, he suggested that

> the song which is to express, vitally and adequately to express, the life and soul of a new land must itself be a new song … And if the Australian spirit is to find utterance at all, it must be uttered by a poet whose voice is his own, not merely an echo of the older singers. Brought to this sure test of originality, the pretensions of the new school of Australian poets to be considered as the spokesmen and interpreters of the Australian spirit appear exaggerated and a trifle ridiculous. (4)

Critics of the essay focused on Murdoch's questioning of the claim that these writers were 'the spokesmen and interpreters of the Australian spirit' and ignored his statement that poets should aspire to 'a voice of their own.' A defensive letter came from novelist 'Rolf Boldrewood', while AG Stephens devoted an entire page to an attack ('Under the Gumtree').

In his application for the lectureship in modern languages at Melbourne in 1903 Murdoch included the information he had been invited by Angus and Robertson to write a history of Australian literature, although if it were written, the study was never published. Three years later, in his essay 'A Plea for Australian Literature', he stated his belief 'that the interpreter of the land in which we live gives us something which neither a Flaubert nor a Dante can give us – something which is eminently worthwhile getting hold of' (4), a view again at odds with that of Tucker. But Murdoch's attempts to engage in debate on Australian literature and criticism seem to have done him no favours: there is no question his newspaper essays were a negative element of his reputation in his application for the Melbourne chair, and it is noticeable that his wiser colleagues JJ Stable and AT Strong left their literary journalism off the list of publications in their successful applications for professorial positions made around the same time. Murdoch did not introduce Australian literature into the curriculum at Western Australia when professor and head, although a number of academics who spent time in his department went on to teach the subject at other universities, notably his MA student Brian Elliott.

Ironically, given his early advocacy of Australian literature, Murdoch was irrevocably marked as an imperial and critical anachronism by the publication of an essay on the subject in *The Times* in 1938, and in later editions of his *Oxford Book of Australian Verse*.[19] *The Times* essay was part of a sesquicentenary Australia Day Supplement that had a distinctly imperial tone: there were advertisements for the work of the Fairbridge (child colonisation) scheme; essays on Australia's economic and political links with Britain; even a description of 'Canberra Today' by the everpresent Menzies. (There was no mention of the protests by Indigenous people about the event.) One of the main points in condemnation of Murdoch's

19 Although for similar views see his much earlier 'An Australian Garland'.

essay and his *Anthology* was their institutional placement, critics claiming that he had failed to meet the 'special obligation' that publication in these media placed upon the writer/compiler.[20] *The Times* essay *is* unashamedly racist, but this was not the point that came to be at issue. Once again, what Australian writers objected to was the claim that their work owed a debt to English literary culture (see for example Davison, 'Reply to Murdoch'). Murdoch's essay worked too hard to counter the stereotype of the colonial Philistine, with the first two paragraphs spent providing assurances along these lines: 'Australian literature does not begin with infantile stammerings, but with highly sophisticated imitations of English classics'. These comments, at odds with others he made elsewhere, seem to anticipate a conservative British reader. Unsurprisingly they were taken badly by Australian creative writers, who were hardly pleased by the claim that they were producing 'sophisticated imitations' (36c).

Negative responses to the *Oxford Book* have a distinctly regional element, appearing mainly in the Sydney journal, *Southerly*.[21] The fiercest of the negative reviews were in 1946, with four 'analyses' of the third edition, by RG Howarth, James Devaney, T Inglis Moore and Kenneth Slessor, placed one after another under the title 'Anthology Anatomised' – the only case, other than that of Leonie Kramer's *Oxford History of Australian Literature* (see Croft; Elliot), I can find of multiple reviews published in a single journal. RG Howarth's comments are indicative of the prevailing tone: he expressed resentment at being 'represented to the English-speaking world by this poorly chosen, incomplete, and sometimes utterly unworthy selection' (190). The main point of concern was clearly the omission of Slessor and other Sydney poets such as Christopher Brennan. These are legitimate issues, but the barrage of malice did not go unanswered, with Murdoch defended by AB Taylor and FWW Rhodes. The journal was hardly cowed: *Southerly*'s 1951 review of the fourth edition of what was by then the *Oxford Book of Australian and New Zealand Verse* (still edited by Murdoch) was titled 'Once More unto the Breach …' Predictably, it found that poets from Western Australia were over-represented and that 'Sydney poets receive the shabbiest treatment of all' (Lancaster). Revisions that *Southerly* had suggested in 1946, especially regarding the work of women, were now queried, and in the meantime the journal maintained its attack on Murdoch with two essays published in 1947, one of which likened Murdoch's popular essays to fairy floss (Hadgraft). Fifteen years later, Cecil Hadgraft was clearly still irritated by Murdoch's apparent

20 See for example the remarks in 'Australian Literature', *The Bulletin*, 16 March 1938, which complain that Murdoch 'underestimates and misrepresents' the field (2).

21 The hostility marked a distinct change in relations between Sydney and Perth, as Murdoch had written to John le Gay Brereton for advice in compiling the first edition: Letter from Walter Murdoch to John le Gay Brereton, 11 July 1914, John le Gay Brereton Papers, MSS 281/13/299, Mitchell Library.

refusal to regard either literature or being a professor of English with sufficient seriousness (see his *Australian Literature*, 275).

The most negative assessment of Murdoch and his work is by Geoffrey Dutton, in his account of 'the Australian literary experience' in *Snow on the Saltbush*. Dutton claims that Murdoch rarely wrote on subjects to do with Australia or Australian literature, and dismisses him as anti-nationalist. He claims that 'there is nothing contemporary about his themes … Nothing to do with contemporary political thought, religion, attitudes to sex or drink or sport, nothing even about mateship' (134). If we are to take Dutton on his own terms – and there are reasons to query them – we can note that Murdoch's essays were insistently concerned with linking the everyday with politics. Indeed the classic structure of a Murdoch essay is to shift from a meditation on a quotidian object, such as a three-penny bit or tripe and onions (to take two of his more bizarre), to a consideration of some social problem or political issue. It must be said that the metaphor or moral is never particularly opaque, and Dutton's criticisms hint at a lack of acquaintance with the object of his attack. This suspicion might be confirmed by the fact that the essay 'My Bush-fire', in the collection Dutton claimed to have examined, declares that 'ten centuries hence it will be seen that … the ideal of mateship … has been Australia's great contribution to civilization' (Murdoch, *Collected Essays*, 119). Again, we might query the sentiment, but there is a certain irony in seeing an iconoclast under attack from a writer who claims to reify rebelliousness, even if it is doubtful that Murdoch experienced the attacks this way.

Another notable feature of Murdoch's writing is that there is less evidence of militarist fervour than was the case for his contemporaries and colleagues. Murdoch does not seem to have been heavily involved in military promotion or censorship during the First World War, which might explain why he did not receive one of the many honours awarded to academics in English soon after (e.g. Wallace and Strong). He was generally more wary than they about Australia's involvement in overseas military conflicts, and after travelling to Italy in the 1930s, no doubt seeking to develop his studies of Italian, he was sombrely critical of what he saw:

> unquestionably a reign of terror is in full blast at the present moment in [Italy] … Many good men and true, men of fine intelligence and high patriotism, have been kicked or clubbed to death by bands of young blackguards of the Fascist militia … Suspicion, spying, whispering, tale-bearing, sycophancy, hypocrisy, are the natural fruits of the Fascist revolution. (Italy Today, quoted in La Nauze, 120)

In the context of Murdoch's characteristic levity, these sentiments are expressed with unusual force.

In contrast to his essay on Italy, the most obvious and consistent aspect of

Murdoch's writing is a certain easy geniality, coupled with a reluctance to pass decisive judgements. His response to a reader's question, 'what is meant by calling a book a classic', and could George Eliot's novel *Adam Bede* be called one, is worth quoting at length for its demonstration of these qualities:

> Your correspondent has asked a difficult question, which ever so many people have tried to answer. If 'Argument' wants to see how complicated the question is, she had better read Sainte-Beuve's essay 'What is a Classic?' The cynic would say that a classic is a book that everybody praises and nobody reads. I should prefer to define it as a book that has stood the test of time … But then the question arises, how long a time is required? Here there is no agreement. Some people would call *Adam Bede* a classic; others would say we should wait a century after the date of publication. I am not a whole-hearted admirer of George Eliot, and do not feel at all sure that her books will endure. But … I think you might safely call it a mid-Victorian classic. That is, a very minor classic among the great books of the world, but one that will always be read by students of that particular period. (Classical Literature, 3)[22]

Eliot fans will flinch at Murdoch's hesitation, but the hesitancy in relation to literary judgement is notable, as is the recommendation of specialist sources for this general reader. Murdoch's discussion of the potentially complicated aspects of the question contrasts with the kind of dismissive self-assurance more often evident in, say, Cowling's writing, or more pertinently perhaps, that of Tucker.

The self-deprecation that pervades Murdoch's work has been integral to the making of his reputation. It seems likely that an important source for this was Murdoch's bitterness or shame over not being awarded the chair at Melbourne. Harold Oliver wrote a lengthy obituary which quotes Vance Palmer's description of Murdoch as the '"wise uncle of our Australian family"' (4). Although he draws attention to the variety of Murdoch's writing, Oliver (misleadingly) plays up Murdoch's 'dislike of the suburban mind'. More typically, a sentimental obituary in the *Canberra Times* chooses to quote Murdoch against himself:

> Sir Walter Murdoch, historian, anthologist, biographer, sometime poet, will not go down as a literary giant. The most humble of men, he predicted in his farewell to the Answers column: 'I have never for a moment imagined

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Sir Walter Murdoch, historian, anthologist, biographer, sometime poet, will not go down as a literary giant. The most humble of men, he predicted in his farewell to the Answers column: 'I have never for a moment imagined that these answers or any other writings of mine have any enduring quality. They are bits of journalism; and journalists do not aspire to immortal fame'. (Preacher from Pitsligo, 10)

> that these answers or any other writings of mine have any enduring quality. They are bits of journalism; and journalists do not aspire to immortal fame'. (Preacher from Pitsligo, 10)

In the same vein, the official history of the University of Western Australia implies that English teaching under Murdoch was less intellectually respectable than it might have been:

> Professor Murdoch set himself to stimulate literary appreciation and simple but effective self-expression, among not only students majoring in his department but also in all others who attended his classes. Specialised concentration on the needs of the students in English who had the requisite background of philological and linguistic knowledge for intensive advanced work was a secondary objective only rarely realised. (Alexander, 124–25)

The first part of this observation is a reflection of the fact that the curriculum included more literature than did that at other Australian universities, and less language. Even so the impression of intellectual lightness is not reflected in the level of postgraduate research: during Murdoch's time in the chair nine students graduated with an MA, their theses mainly on Victorian literature. The comparable figures for Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide between 1910 and 1940 are thirteen, zero, and six respectively; Sydney, with thirteen students, was the largest department. The judgement relies, then, on an assumption about the relative scholarly value of 'language' as against 'literary' study. More generally, we can see that Murdoch's publishing in newspapers, while it probably made him the academic of his generation whose work was most widely known and enjoyed, in the end probably diminished rather than enhanced his scholarly reputation.

The same pragmatic spirit about subject choice that ultimately prevailed in Perth is evident in debates about the founding of a university in Queensland. When a congress was held in Brisbane in 1906 to discuss the proposal, proceedings began with the recitation of a poem written for the occasion by George Essex Evans. Nevertheless advocates for the humanities were few among delegates from a range of public, business, and educational organisations.[23] One brave voice was that of the principal of Girton College, a girls' school in the nearby city of Toowoomba, who argued that it was important to include English literature so that women would be encouraged to attend the university.[24] But the majority of speakers were more concerned with ensuring that agriculture, engineering, mining and forestry would be taught. The general mood favoured the view that the

23 Coverage of the congress ran from 14 to 19 November in the *Brisbane Courier*.

24 'A Queensland University.' *Brisbane Courier*, 15 November 1906: 3.

university should avoid the elitism cultivated in other institutions, and concentrate on being useful. When humanities teaching did begin at Queensland some years later it was with the awkwardly titled Chair of Arts, held by classicist JL Michie. The first appointee in the field of modern literatures was, like Murdoch, a graduate of Melbourne, and in another way quite exceptional: in 1911 Hermiene Ulrich became the first female academic at Queensland, and the first woman in Australia appointed to teach English literature. However, there is little for feminists to celebrate in the appointment, which might even signal the lack of regard in which humanities subjects were held. For although Ulrich briefly constituted the English, French, and German departments, her position was an acting one and her reign brief (on Ulrich, see D'Arcens). A year later, in 1912, JJ Stable was appointed to head a single department of modern languages.

Joseph Jeremiah Stable was born in South Australia in 1883, and grew up in Switzerland. He attended school in Geneva and university in England, graduating in mediaeval and modern languages from Cambridge, with a specialisation in English. Stable was fluent in French and German, had studied at Bonn, and taught at the commercial University of Cologne. Like several others of his generation he was school teaching in England at the time of obtaining an appointment in Australia. The pass and honours courses he developed at Queensland were based on changes made to the curriculum at Cambridge at the same time.[25] Stable's teaching was interrupted by the First World War, during which he gave just one weekly honours lecture as he, like colleagues in other states, worked as an interpreter and censor. In this latter position Stable was 'accused in the Queensland Parliament of stifling modern languages in general and the Australian one in particular', after he had, in response to an order by the then Prime Minister, seized all the copies of a speech against conscription made by the state premier TJ Ryan (Gregory, 146). Stable 'continued to report to the Federal government after the war on organisations thought to be subversive', and was district censor for Queensland from 1939 to 1942 (Gregory, 147). This might seem to position him with colleagues like AT Strong, but in his application for the chair, Stable includes the information that he had refused an MBE, noting simply and enigmatically that he 'did not see [his] way clear to accept this honour'.

Ulrich, who had resigned in order to marry, returned to the department to take over most of Stable's teaching during the war, although the study of German was halted. After the conflict in Europe had ended there was no demand for that subject, but teaching loads in other areas remained heavy. In his application for the newly created McCaughey Chair of English language and literature (funded

25 JJ Stable, Application for McCaughey Professorship, 15 July 1922, UQA S135 Staff files, 1911–, University of Queensland Archives. The *ADB* notes that grazier and philanthropist Sir Samuel McCaughey left half of his vast estate to the universities of Sydney and Queensland, when he died in 1919.

by the same bequest received by Sydney), in July 1922, Stable noted he had

> realized that … the whole of my time would have to be devoted to teaching, and that any private research work and literary activities outside the University were out of the question. This entailed a very real sacrifice, for the future of a lecturer, as a rule and under normal conditions, is affected not a little by the amount and worth of the work that he publishes.

The selection committee presumably accepted this reasoning, and Stable became the first holder of the McCaughey chair (in 1932 retitled the Darnell chair; now defunct). But notwithstanding his claims Stable was heavily involved in cultural activities: he was a member of the city's historical society, dramatic society and repertory society, as well as being on the board of the state's art gallery and president of the Queensland Authors and Artists Association from 1921 to 1931. He did not publish any major works of criticism although he did edit several anthologies of poetry, collaborated with HH Alcock on a short history of the university, and was general editor of the Australian Students' Shakespeare series published by Oxford University Press. He was a regular contributor to Brisbane's *Courier*, and received an honorary Doctor of Laws in 1950. When he retired in 1952, Stable was made the University of Queensland's second professor emeritus.

Stable's life and work show the influence of three strands of thinking current at the time: belief in the primacy of classics; imperial commitment to English literature, particularly for schools and the reading public; and the importance of language over literary study in the teaching of modern languages. In his inaugural address as founding president of the English and Modern Languages Association, he repeatedly referred to the study of English literature as an essential instrument for education (5). He was critical of the 'practical' training given in English schools that he claimed was resulting in 'a growing section of the middle classes [being] intolerant, narrow-minded, self-centred, money-worshipping, and in a state of educated ignorance'. He enjoined his audience to acknowledge and promote the study of classical literature, claiming that this was essential for effective understanding of English literature. The focus was on the importance of Matthew Arnold's 'best that has been thought and said in the world' (see chapter five, section two). Australian literature was not mentioned in Stable's address, but in the following year he co-edited with AEM Kirwood an anthology of Queensland poetry, published to mark the centenary of white settlement in 1823. Stable's introduction confidently expresses judgements about Queensland verse; only two paragraphs in fourteen pages are needed for writing by women. He subsequently edited two other anthologies used in schools, including the widely used collection *The Bond of Poetry*; the 'bond' of the title is the bond of empire.

The anthology is divided into three sections – narrative, descriptive and

patriotic poems – each section then arranged in increasing order of difficulty beginning with Australian poems and ending with English ones, although Stable claimed that, by putting them first, he had given 'pride of place' to works by Australians. In his introduction, Stable claimed that the main reason for compiling the book was to combat 'distinct national development', to close the gulf, 'gradually widening, between English life to-day and Australian life, and therefore between English and Australian sentiment' (viii). He told his readers that time was the only sure test of literary greatness: 'Never for one moment should the claims of art that has survived the test of time … be set aside for an untried standard', for 'The work of those who have stood the test of ages has a claim to that respect and veneration to which no modern can pretend' (ix). At one level such claims seem to acknowledge the longevity of the English literary tradition, yet in the light of the *newness* of the discipline, they take on a slightly different cast. Indeed, this more or less constant emphasis on longevity, tradition, precedent, and the authority associated with the passing of time encourages students to memorise (and memorialise) a history which has only recently been made; put another way, in a sleight of hand, the history of creative texts is substituted for, and thus *becomes*, the history of the discipline. That longevity is being used to signify an almost transcendent value is not surprising, but laying claim to a kind of predestined preeminence obscures the volatile and contested nature of value judgements about literary texts. Whilst reassuring, this is also unfortunate for students, because it undermines their capacity to understand the nature of critical contestations about value, leaving them to feel that their 'failure' to appreciate such texts is a kind of cultural lack or emotional or intellectual incapacity rather than a matter of their different position in a debate.

STRONG MEN

The fortunes of English at Adelaide tended to fluctuate in accordance with the interests of the person appointed to the chair of history and English. Certainly there was no specialist until AT Strong became the first holder of the Jury Chair in 1922, but English did receive enthusiastic support from historian George Cockburn Henderson. The dismissal of Robert Douglas in April 1902 had meant an opportunity for Henderson, who was literally 'just passing through' Adelaide later that month but had a modest record of publication, including a published lecture outline (on citizenship). Henderson, whom vice-chancellor William Mitchell had met when he was in Oxford in 1899, was interviewed for, offered, and accepted the chair on 30 April 1902, subject only to the offer being made in writing.[26] His referees were MacCallum, Edward Caird and AL Smith. Smith had succeeded Caird as master of Balliol, and was also chair of the Adult Education Committee in Britain (Great Britain, Ministry of Reconstruction).

Henderson was born in Hamilton, near Newcastle, now a suburb of that city, but attended the selective Fort Street High School in Sydney. After completing his BA at Sydney in 1893 he was appointed as a lecturer for the university's extension scheme. His undergraduate career had been highly successful, and after a year of lecturing he was awarded the James King of Irrawang travelling scholarship. He completed a further degree at Oxford (Balliol) in 1898, graduating with second-class honours. Henderson subsequently became an outstanding member of the university extension lecturing staff in England, teaching history and philosophy. In 1899 he was appointed acting professor of history at Sydney, and the following year acting professor of philosophy. After this he returned to England, and to extension teaching, until his appointment to Adelaide. Henderson, like his predecessor Douglas, was divorced in 1911 but he did not resign from Adelaide until 1923, and then because of health problems. He was made professor emeritus, and began a series of trips to research publications on Fiji. He committed suicide in 1944 (Casson, n.p.).

Henderson's English literature course reflected his preference for the patriotic and the imperial. He spoke 'convinced of the value of his literary, history and philosophical views; these advocated a high moral idealism, opposed materialism, and stressed nature's beauty and bounty'. Henderson's public lectures on literature, which the *ABD* once called 'fervently evangical' [sic], proved so popular that they had to be moved from the university to the town hall, and even then people had to be turned away. These, and lectures for the university extension movement, resulted in the publication of numerous outlines of lectures on topics related to literature, history and imperialism. A recurrent topic is the British navy, perhaps reflecting the influence of JA Froude, biographer of Carlyle and proto-imperialist, who was Regius professor of history at Oxford from 1892 to 1894 (see Symonds, 50). We can also discern the influence of the idealist philosophy discussed in the previous chapter, and its proponents, in keeping with Henderson's time as a student at Sydney under MacCallum and at Balliol.

As well as English Henderson taught colonial history, in the belief (in the words of the *ADB*) that 'Australian universities should foster interest in Australian history and undertake a "systematic and scientific" history of the British Empire'. Henderson himself had undertaken such a task with his study of Sir George Grey, another passionate believer in Macaulay and himself a renowned imperial administrator. Henderson noted Grey's good advice: 'Secure your outposts on the frontiers of civilization', he said in 1894, 'and not only by military force, but by museums, libraries, and schools for civilizing the people' (quoted in Henderson, *Sir George Grey*, 7). Henderson also praised Grey's meshing of race imperialism with Christianity: 'like Cecil Rhodes, he was profoundly impressed

26 Minutes of Council, 8 April 1902, Series 18, University of Adelaide Archives.

with the possibilities of the Anglo-Saxon race, and he regarded the British empire as a great and beneficent power in the world by which the influence of Christianity might be extended' (Henderson, *Sir George Grey*, 8). Apart from teaching and research, Henderson's politics were expressed through his honorary membership of the British Empire Club and Oxford's Raleigh Club, the latter described by Richard Symonds as effectively an Oxford branch of the Round Table (see below). Other honorary members included Winston Churchill, Menzies, and Jan Smuts.

Henderson's work was part of an increasing militarism that was expressed in Australian universities leading up to the First World War, and which was criticised at the speaker's peril. When Henderson's predecessor, Robert Douglas, had spoken on 'A Lost Ideal' in a public lecture in Adelaide, he expressed concern about the nationalist ethos that he claimed had replaced the idea of a common humanity:

> Full of energy and conscious of its own strength, the English democracy had embraced the new national Imperial ideal in its extremest form. The one desire had been to see a triumphant, all-prevailing Anglo-Saxondom, and a national ideal had taken the place of a universal ideal. The faults of the new ideal were conceit, selfishness, and materialism. An Englishman now seemed to be absorbed with the idea that it was greatly to his credit that he was an 'Englishman'.[27]

The lecture had only 'a fair attendance', and the newspaper account does not record the effusive expressions of gratitude or loud applause customary in such accounts, noting only that the vote of thanks was 'cordial'. By way of contrast, when Henderson gave a lecture which managed to entwine fervent patriotism and an account of Oliver Cromwell for the university extension the following year, his words were greeted with 'cheers'. The reporter enthused about his ability to 'depict the great figures of history in a few sentences'.[28]

Henderson was succeeded in the 'English' part of the chair by a person with whom he had much in common, Archibald Thomas Strong. Although Strong was six years younger than Henderson the two were near contemporaries at Oxford, Strong in fact graduating first, in 1897, and Henderson in 1898. Both were ardent race patriots who poured their lives into education and the imperial cause, yet it is Strong who is one of the dominant personalities in this history, not because of his wit and longevity (as with Murdoch), nor his personal warmth and scholarship

27 '"A Lost Ideal": Lecture by Professor Douglas', *Register*, 23 July 1901, Press Clippings, Vol. 5, 1898–1906, Series 163, University of Adelaide Archives.

28 'University Extension Lecture: Oliver Cromwell', *Register*, 18 July 1902, Press Clippings, Vol. 5, 1898–1906, Series 163, University of Adelaide Archives.

(as with MacCallum), but because of the theatrical passion of his conservatism and imperialism. He was regarded as an outstanding lecturer, on at least one occasion electrifying his adult audience with the declaration that he believed in the existence of the devil!

Strong's father, HA Strong, was professor of classical and comparative philology and logic at Melbourne from 1871 to 1884, and sometime teacher of English literature there. AT Strong spent his adolescence in England after Strong senior was appointed to the chair of Latin at Liverpool, and attended Sedbergh school in northern England (as did H Montgomery Hyde). This school, which even today advertises itself as a 'stern nurse of men',[29] was then a place at which 'he went through a training Spartan even beyond the wont of English public schools' (Bald, 'Sir Archibald Strong', 104). Bald notes that, through his father, Strong was able to meet well-known scholars such as AC Bradley, Walter Raleigh and Oliver Elton, each of whom held the chair of English at Liverpool. In the words of his application for the Jury Chair,

> the bulk of [his time] was given to strict classical scholarship, to Latin and Greek composition, to study of the Latin and Greek poets and playwrights demanded by Honour Moderations … to the Ancient History and Philosophy, and the modern German, English, and French Philosophy, comprised in Literae Humaniores. While reading for this school I made a special study of German Philosophy, paying particular attention to Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer and Hartmann.[30]

In 1901 Strong gave up his study for the bar because of ill-health, and returned to Melbourne.

Strong became a teacher and examiner in secondary schools and a lecturer in the university extension movement. He was an active member of various organisations and discussion groups, particularly those concerned with literature, philosophy and theatre. In 1912 he was appointed to a lectureship in English at Melbourne, and was acting professor from 1916 to 1919. He applied for chairs at Western Australia (1912), Sydney (1921), and Adelaide (1922), succeeding in the latter application after being second to Murdoch in Perth and third to Brereton at Sydney. There had been six English applicants for the Adelaide chair and seven from Australia, including Stable of Queensland and 'Miss E. Denham' [sic].[31] The latter, the first application I have found by a woman for a professorial

29 The school's website noted in 2006 that its motto 'Dura Virum Nutrix' ('stern nurse of men') was not made official until late in the nineteenth century. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/2hg6kCJ.

30 Application for Jury Professorship in English Language, [Staff] Docket no. 818/1921, Series 200, University of Adelaide Archives.

position, was in fact Enid Derham, an outstanding student of Tucker's who had taken firsts in classics and modern languages at Melbourne. She spent a short time teaching at Western Australia with Murdoch before becoming the first woman appointed to the department of English at Melbourne in 1922. She lectured there until 1941 and was acting professor in 1938 – the first woman in Australia to obtain a professorial position in English literature.[32]

Like many of his colleagues, including Brereton, MacCallum and Tucker, Strong wrote poetry, which he first published while very young.[33] His work is distinguished mainly by sustained imperial sentiment, although this was not especially noted by reviewers. Rather, the general tenor of assessments is that, although the poems are mechanically very good, they lack spontaneity; the prevailing opinion is summed up by the cutting praise offered by the reviewer in the *Daily Mail*, that Strong's work was 'immaculately academic'.[34] In regard to criticism, idealism

> coloured his whole outlook on literature … His philosophical training had shown him the vital connection between literature and life on the one hand, and literature and thought on the other, and scholarship which did not branch out in either of these directions had little meaning for him. (Bald, Sir Archibald Strong, 108–09)

Strong's academic specialities were Elizabethan and Romantic writers, and he had a particular interest in Swinburne. That said, his interests were broad: he also translated *Beowulf*, and completed a project begun by Wallace on the history of English literature. HM Green has suggested that because Strong 'was a fine lecturer and a man of considerable personal charm … his work has sometimes been overrated by those who knew him' (*A History of Australian Literature*, 712). On the other hand, RC Bald claimed that Strong was 'certainly the most widely read man in Australia', not least because of his command of French, German, Spanish and Italian, as well as Latin and Greek (Bald, Memoir, 7, 8). AA Phillips

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31 Minutes of Council, 5 December 1921, Series 18, University of Adelaide Archives.

32 The passion and wit of Derham's poetry, particularly the unpublished work, is at odds with her public restraint on issues related to women. She became president of the Melbourne Literary Society when Strong was appointed to the chair at Adelaide, and was also a founding member of Melbourne's Lyceum club.

33 Reviews of his first book, *Sonnets and Songs* (1905), appeared in the *Aberdeen Evening News, The Argus, Athenaeum, Book Lover, Daily Mail, Globe, Liverpool Courier, Liverpool Daily Post, Outlook, Scotsman, Sheffield Telegraph*, and the Times, and are preserved in Strong's papers.

34 26 March 1905, [newspaper cuttings collected by author,] Special Collections, University Collection, 820.4.S92n, no. 5, University of Adelaide Archives.

felt Strong had a significant influence on students, because of 'the infectious zestfulness of his loves for literature and for living', and because 'he felt less at home with his scholarly colleagues than with the bohemian artists and writers whom he met over the chianti flasks at Fasoli's restaurant' ([Self-titled essay] 45; see also John Arnold). These accounts are at odds with the severe persona which seems to emerge from Strong's published work, notably his lectures on the war.

Strong was able to put his views through his work as literary critic for another Melbourne paper, *The Herald*, for fifteen years. His weekly essays were mainly on works by or about English writers from all periods, with fewer on other European literatures, and occasional essays on general topics: drama and the Melbourne theatre scene; piracy; pugilism; horror; and the British navy. The breadth of his reading across modern English, French, German and Russian literature is demonstrated in the scope of these essays which, like Murdoch's 'Books and Men', function as reviews and digests of recent works of literature and criticism. In a review headed 'Pirates and Saints', for example, his last for the newspaper, Strong looks at *The Pirates' Who's Who* by Philip Goss, *Tolstoy* by Janko Lavrin, and *Monday or Tuesday* by Virginia Woolf. The first book rated five enthusiastic paragraphs, while the second – bearing in mind that Strong was a devotee of Russian literature – rated just two, as did the work by Woolf. There are few references in the essays to Australian literature but there is evidence that he kept abreast of new publications by leading writers, particularly local ones.

By far the most persistent of Strong's non-literary topics was the history and glory of British imperialism, his particular hero being Alfred. In an essay on the beginnings of imperialism he argues that 'we must regard the wise and heroic King of Wessex not only as the man who deepened England's faith and learning, drove the Danes into the sea after many a glorious victory, and founded his country's navy, but also as the foreshadower of her vast Imperial policy'.[35] This imperialism shaped not only Strong's political activities but his reading of literary texts: he goes on to claim that writers of the English renaissance 'were as fully seized of the Imperial Idea in their own day as Lords Milner and Curzon are in our own'.[36] Moving to a stately full speed, Strong argues that:

> The spirit of religion … flames forth in Davis with a white and steady heat of conviction, and embodies the faith that the English nation are the chosen

35 'Imperialism. Its first beginnings: The age of discovery', *Melbourne Herald*, 11 February 1913, Newspaper Cuttings, Special Collections, University Collection, 8204.592n, No. 6, University of Adelaide Archives.

36 'Curzon and … Milner were near contemporaries and had much in common. Both were undergraduates at Balliol, read Classics and won many prizes … Curzon in India was surrounded by Balliol men, just as Milner's staff in South Africa was almost exclusively selected from New College' (Symonds, 35–36).

> of the Lord, and that all their discoveries and colonisation are worth nothing unless directed to the betterment of the heathen races among whom they move and settle … Imperialism at its best is, in the words of Lord Milner, not a cry but a creed, and a creed which is our spirit's very breath.

Strong was emphatic that the military and cultural tie with Britain was the essential element of Australian life. His public activities, the broad reach of his reading, and his easy Europeanism mark him as a product of the idealist thinking associated with TH Green and Oxford, but this seems to have been submerged, in his published work at least, by imperial passions.

Although there is a demonstrable conservation in his criticism and other writing, several of Strong's essays deal with Oscar Wilde and, interestingly, express no distaste or disregard for the writer or his work. There might have been empathy because Wilde had been a resident of Strong's college, Magdalen, and taken the same course; Wilde's trials of April and May 1895 would have been in the news when Strong was a student at Liverpool, but it is difficult to imagine they were lost as topics of discussion at Wilde's old college a year or two later. Perhaps on the basis of this, or some more personal knowledge, Strong laid bold claim to the Irish writer in his review essay on Laurence Housman's *Echo de Paris*. Noting that the play deals with Wilde's time in Paris, after his release from Reading gaol, 'living in poverty and disgrace', Strong comments that

> [t]here is one very dramatic piece of action in the play. A man whom Wilde had helped in his days of prosperity comes in sight of the lunchers as they sit in their open-air cafe, and meets Wilde's eyes, but at once averts his own and passes by. This elicits from Wilde an impassioned parable, and fills his friends with indignation when they realise what has happened … I happen to know from independent evidence that this incident, or a very similar one, actually occurred; and, indeed, the bitterest part of Wilde's existence in Paris must have been the fear of such unchristian and ungentlemanly and inhuman conduct.[37]

I addressed meetings nearly every night during the two conscription Referendum campaigns, and delivered recruiting speeches in Melbourne and in many of the suburbs and country districts … I supplied the Federal Government with the literature for two of its War-Loans, and for the recruiting appeal which it launched after the failure of the second Conscription Referendum. I suggested to Mr. Watt, then Acting-Prime Minister of Australia, the organisation of a scheme for Propaganda on War and Peace issues … I also contributed articles on war subjects to the press throughout the whole period of hostilities, and … did my utmost to keep before my readers the importance of the Imperial tie, and the imminence of the German peril.[38]

38 AT Strong, Application for Jury Professorship in English Language.

Another very sympathetic essay on Wilde, which mentions the encounter between Wilde and André Gide in Algiers, was published the next year.

After he had twice been rejected for military service, Strong worked obsessively to promote Australian participation in the First World War. He described his efforts in his application for the Jury Chair:

> I addressed meetings nearly every night during the two conscription Referendum campaigns, and delivered recruiting speeches in Melbourne and in many of the suburbs and country districts … I supplied the Federal Government with the literature for two of its War-Loans, and for the recruiting appeal which it launched after the failure of the second Conscription Referendum. I suggested to Mr. Watt, then Acting-Prime Minister of Australia, the organisation of a scheme for Propaganda on War and Peace issues … I also contributed articles on war subjects to the press throughout the whole period of hostilities, and … did my utmost to keep before my readers the importance of the Imperial tie, and the imminence of the German peril.[38]

Strong was highly critical of those who had not supported Australia's participation, and in his essay 'Facts to be Faced' argued that the country 'would be stronger and cleaner if it were purged of these people's presence' (*Australia and the War,* 54). In 'Self and the State' (in the same collection) he demanded that the 'seditious aliens' who were 'a menace to our national honour' be 'stamped out utterly from among us' so that Australia could remain 'a clean and decent nation' (70). (Strong was not actually proposing extermination here – he suggested that those who were against Australian participation in the war be deported to the United States.) More significant, perhaps, is that such information was thought, at least by Strong, to be a credential in an application for a chair of English. The claims signal clearly the divide which opened, in the wake of both wars, between those who placed primary value on having sacrificed advancement in their academic career in order to engage in some kind of service, and those who continued their study and teaching. We might wonder whether Strong was aware that at Adelaide, both the numbers of German students and the intensity of anti-German sentiment seem to have been higher than at any other Australian university.

Strong made reference in his propaganda to the consequence of defeat for England. In an essay with the title 'Life and Death', he suggested that it 'might conceivably mean the subjugation of herself to the race of devils who have just been perpetrating unnameable atrocities upon Belgian boys and women' (22). His metaphor of the rise and fall of the nation calls forth, as Dowling argues it must, the image of a male polity whose integrity and security are constantly un-

38 AT Strong, Application for Jury Professorship in English Language.

der threat from effeminacy. This highly sexualised division lies at the heart of Strong's imperial rhetoric and, I would argue, the discipline of English in many of its most influential configurations, notably the bifurcation of scholarship and teaching. For while England itself is feminised, 'the great country which is the Mother of [our] being', the exercise of imperial or military power is a strictly masculine affair. For Strong, then, in his essays in *Australia and the War*, the rhetoric of valour is emphatically masculine, disloyalty obsessively female:

> Germany … is the *femme incomprise* of the nations, the kind of female familiar to most of us, who goes about suggesting that nobody understands her, and that everyone would love her if they did. (A Volume of Warning, 49)
>
> [Dissent represents] the effeminate thinking which has eaten into the English race and brought it to the very brink of destruction. (Life or Death, 22)
>
> [The present situation] behoves us to put away all effeminacy and cant, and to ensure sternness and vigilance and unflinching resolution. (The Worker and Germany, 27)

Femininity could be astonishingly mobile as a pejorative – in *Story of the Anzacs*, Strong described the ideology of the socialist party in Melbourne as being made up of 'feminism, anti-militarism, general faddism, and everything except true socialism' (11). In his reply to Bernard O'Dowd's address to the Melbourne Literary Society on 'Poetry Militant', Strong argued that the poetry of 'passion, patriotism, and nature' was at least equal, if not superior, to the poetry of social concern: 'Is poetry, a queen in her own right, to abdicate and to become the kitchen slut of science and socialism? I think not.'[39] (Perhaps surprisingly Strong was accorded a 'hearty vote of thanks' by his hearers at the socialist club on at least one occasion, and seems to have addressed the group regularly.[40])

Elsewhere, writing on 'Women and the War', Strong sought to remind women that 'by virtue of their sex they [were] the first guardians of civilisation' (*Australia and the War*, 73). He is caught in the logical dilemma that marks

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39 'Poetry Militant': Mr O'Dowd's Presidential Address: An Appreciation and a Criticism, *Melbourne Herald*, [cuttings collected by author] Special Collections, University Collection, 820.4.S92n, no. 1, University of Adelaide Archives.

40 On Strong's appearances at the Socialist Club see Swinburne: Poet of Humanity, *Socialist*, 2 November 1907, and Peradventure: Mr. A.T. Strong's Essays, *Socialist*, n.d. Newspaper Cuttings, Special Collections, University Collection, 8204.592n, No. 3, University of Adelaide Archives. It is a measure of his catholic interests that Strong could be the university's most notable conservative, and a speaker at such gatherings. Either that, or the two press reports are entirely satirical!

not only his imperialism, but English studies: women are everywhere, as novelists, poets, students, quiet researchers, unexpected applicants, strong characters in drama and fiction, even monarchs, giving their names to two of the most studied periods of English literature, the Elizabethan and the Victorian. 'In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, women were regarded as the natural producers of culture. They contributed hugely to imaginative writing and, as the larger body of readers, arbitrated upon literary taste'; fear of effeminacy is therefore pervasive in the discipline, and its status also permanently diminished by the high proportion of women students and academics (relative to other disciplines). This 'effeminacy'

> is a misogynist construct whereby the sexuality of men is policed through the accusation of sliding back from the purposeful reasonableness that is supposed to constitute manliness, into the laxity and weakness conventionally attributed to women. Englit and literary culture have depended on an effeminacy which they also need to disavow, and hence the derogation of the writing and reading of women. (Sinfield, *Cultural Politics*, 32)

Fear of feminisation, coupled with the use of effeminacy as a term of denigration, runs through criticism, reviewing, and biography for decades. This prevalence suggests that it is doing valuable ego work for those who produce it – that it is something more significant in understanding the structuring values of the discipline than 'a product of its time'. But there might have been other reasons for Strong's obsession with German perfidy.

As Frank Turner notes, 'From the [eighteen-]twenties on, British students, scholars, and clergymen visited Germany and studied German philosophy, theology, science, philology, and classical scholarship' (*The Greek Heritage*, 105). Intellectual, cultural and personal links between Germany and a number of scholars working in Australia were strong: MacCallum's wife was German, he himself had studied at Berlin and Leipzig for two-and-a-half years, during which time Germany became, in his words, his 'spiritual home'. Likewise, Holme spent time at Berlin in 1905, and his papers in the Sydney archives suggest personal connections. E Vaughan Boulger spent time studying in Germany, as did Stable, who also taught there. Morris studied at a German university and taught in Berlin, while Cowling was lecturing at Hamburg in the year immediately prior to the outbreak of war. Even Strong's application for the chair noted his specialising in German philosophy, although it did *not* include the information that after graduating from Oxford he had spent some months at Marburg.[41] Germany was the

41 See Bald, 'Sir Archibald Strong' (105), and VA Edgeloe, 'Archibald Thomas Strong: Jury Professor of English Language and Literature 1922–1930', t.s., 1981, Special Collections, University Collection, Adelaide University Collection 92 S91856.E.

epicentre of higher education and intellectual thought as they were understood in the west throughout the nineteenth century, even if, towards the end of that period, the German higher education system had felt itself besieged by proliferating specialisation, an influx of middle-class and foreign students, and the proposed admission of women (Mazón, 5).

Britain declared war on Germany in early August 1914 and troops engaged in combat later that month. From late 1914 Strong launched a series of ferocious attacks on German society, but no anti-German sentiments had been expressed in his work before the outbreak of the First World War – in fact, his review essays frequently touched on works of German literature and criticism. The vilification occurs first in an essay published on 14 November 1914, in which Strong declared that 'the depth of moral and intellectual degradation attained at German Universities can hardly be conceived by those educated in free and civilised foundations' (*Australia and the War*, 25). He went on to discuss the work of Kuno Meyer, a German specialist in Celtic literature and his next essay, 'Kuno and "Kultur"', was devoted almost entirely to documenting Meyer's 'treachery'. Meyer was pilloried as a 'learned and unscrupulous foe of England' and Strong reiterated the accusation, made in the previous essay, that Meyer's visits to Ireland had been made in order to encourage anti-British feeling. Some thirty years before, Meyer had co-authored a history of German language with HA Strong, when the two were colleagues at Liverpool (Meyer had also received an honorary DLitt from Oxford in 1911). Strong the younger seems to have whipped himself into a frenzy over his father's 'collaboration', and perhaps over his own dense network of connections to Germany. But if this *is* the case, then the invective is at odds with that personal loyalty Strong clearly values when discussing Wilde in Paris (see also Bald, Memoir, 12) – although it is possible that he felt betrayed by Meyer's own sympathy for Germany and for Ireland.

For academics like Henderson, Murdoch and Strong, passionate nationalist and imperial sentiments were by no means incompatible. The argument that an imperial parliament should be established in London, to which colonial representatives should be sent, was an old one: EE Morris, in his lecture *Imperial Federation* given in Melbourne in 1885, had stated that he regarded this as the most important question facing Britain at that time. Morris' lecture was delivered at the first public meeting of Melbourne's imperial federation league. In the twentieth century there were attempts to give greater impetus to the idea through the formation of a quasi-clandestine organisation called the Round Table, established in London by young men who had served under Milner in South Africa. Its aim was to promote imperial federation by influencing the agendas of legislative, educational, religious and economic organisations. Milner, a student of Jowett, had been high commissioner and governor of the Cape Colony during what was termed by the British the Boer War. Leonie Foster describes him as 'a dedicated British race patriot': 'obsessed by the Christian moral righteousness of the civ-

ilizing mission to the empire's subject races, he was determined to prevent any decline in British supremacy. His imperial patriotism was his religion, his hell a disintegration of the Empire' (8).[42]

The Round Table, its name evoking Arthurian legend, eventually had branches in South Africa, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, while the journal of the same name was published until the 1980s. The Melbourne and Sydney branches were the last to disband, with meetings held in these two cities until the 1970s. Although the all-male organisation and its objectives were widely known, the names of members were not; among those listed by Foster as members in Australia are MacCallum, Holme, Henderson, Strong, Murdoch and William Mitchell. Only the departments of English at Tasmania (where there was no branch) and Queensland (where the group was dominated by members of the clergy) were not represented among the foundation Round Tablers, who were generally prominent in political, patriotic, commercial and educational institutions.

Given the density of the networks of urban professional men in Australia, a single individual could wield considerable influence. For example, Walter Murdoch was central to the formation of the Melbourne branch, joined the Perth group on his arrival, and was a close associate of another Round Tabler, Herbert Brookes. Through his friendship with Brookes, Strong and others, connections were formed with a number of important figures in Melbourne society whom Murdoch later recruited for the Round Table. Two literary and political groups to which Murdoch belonged were the 'Boobooks' and the Brown Society. The Boobooks – who referred to each other as such, as in 'Arch-Boobook Strong' – dined together and discussed matters from literature to politics. The Brown Society met at the home of Herbert and Ivy Brookes to discuss the work of TE Brown, later becoming a general literary gathering whose members included leading Melbourne figures such as Brookes, Ernest Scott, Robert Garran, Alfred Deakin and Bernard O'Dowd. For these intellectual elites, the support of imperial federation reflected their desire to retain their connection to empire – in one sense, it was a means of *rejecting*, not embracing, their status as 'colonials' – but they sought equality with, rather than separation from, Britain. The inculcation of a form of nationalism that buttressed (rather than opposed) imperialism was pursued in South Australian schools in 1936, when the following material was included in the student magazine *The Children's Hour*:

> you will sometimes hear other people speak as if loyalty to the Empire ought to be discouraged, being likely to prevent us from being patriotic Australians. Talk of this kind is foolish; loyalty to our own country and

42 I am indebted to Foster's study, and to Spencer Routh for drawing the book – 'with a red cover, I think' – to my attention.

> loyalty to the Empire are not opposed to one another; they go together … the united Empire has a greater and more glorious destiny in store for it than could possibly be achieved by any of the Dominions acting separately. (quoted in Kwan, 232)

These remarks come from Murdoch's school primer *The Australian Citizen*, that had been published nearly a quarter of a century earlier. As Murdoch's argument implies, the distinction between imperial and colonial becomes crucial in this period: 'imperialism' implies emotional and cultural links between the metropolitan centre and its colonies, rather than exploitative economic ones – not subordination, but partnership, for displaced English men.

Members of the Round Table 'believed in education as a "civilising force"', and used university extension and worker education movements to promote and disseminate imperialism (Foster, 55). The aims of the Sydney extension movement, for example, were (in their own words)

> not to educate the masses, but to permeate them with the desire for intellectual improvement, and to show them methods by which they can attain this desire. Every man who acquires a taste for learning and is imbued with the desire to acquire more of it, becomes more valuable as a citizen because he is more intelligent and perceptive. (quoted in Heath, 56)

Morris, MacCallum, Holme, Strong and Henderson were involved in the extension movement, surely convinced of its value in spreading the imperial message. And we should not assume that the kind of imperialist sentiment we see in Murdoch's prose, recycled in 1936, was unusual. A Queensland school inspector writing during the war observed that in his jurisdiction,

> Children are taught that they are citizens of the British Empire, that they are heirs to great rights and privileges, traditions and conditions which have been handed down to them through the centuries and for which many brave men and women suffered and died.[43]

The frankly assimilationist aims of such teaching were articulated even more clearly by one of Farrell's colleagues, probably referring to the northern part of the state where there was a significant community of people from Mediterranean countries, including Italy and Spain:

> Lessons in Civics and Morals receive attention in every school, the latter

43 J Farrell, District Inspector, Brisbane, Kilcoy, 23 January 1942. Annual report for 1941. ADU737, Queensland State Archives.

> being inculcated in the British way, more by example than precept. It is still necessary, however, that a teacher should make his own attitude clear to his charges on such matters, especially in those localities where descendants of a foreign race, possessing to some extent an alien culture, are in process [sic] of assimilation. Unquestionably the English tradition in education remains the essential core of our own culture, even though, in developing an Australian tradition we are adapting our acknowledged heritage. It is a duty, therefore, to re-iterate those ideals of purity, truth, honour, self-control, justice, and self-sacrifice, which are the fundamental principles of our race.[44]

But as Foster notes, it was probably in universities

> that Round Table influence on teaching was strongest. It is impossible to reject the notion that … dedicated Round Tablers who were eminent teachers–Professors Mitchell, Scott, Moore, Peden, Strong, Laby, MacCallum, Wilson and David [to whom could be added Henderson, Holme and Murdoch] – transmitted some of the values and beliefs that circulated in the Round Table groups. (172)

Needless to say, in many cases the students at university assumed key roles such as that of school teacher, school inspector, publisher, or writer, and Round Table members were active in the formal codification of knowledge about Australia and its culture in other ways. Arthur Wilberforce Jose, a reader for Angus and Robertson and an editor of their *Australian Encyclopedia* (1925), was a member of the organisation, and it was possibly he who arranged for AT Strong to write the article on 'Literature'. Strong was also the author of the essay on 'Cultural Development' for *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*; the Australian section of that work was edited by Ernest Scott, a Round Table member. It is surely no coincidence that sixteen of the twenty-three essays in the Australian section were written by fellow Round Tablers. In his essay on 'Cultural Development', Strong pre-empted Cowling in suggesting that the landscape was a hindrance to literature in Australia:

> The poet in the heart of the Australian bush may steep himself in Wordsworth or Coleridge as thoroughly as may the dwellers in Devon or Westmorland [sic] … but in his case the sucession is, and always must be, broken and incomplete … [Though the Australian environment may inspire a freshness of vision] an Australian city provides little of the stimulus to art

44 Mr AB Copeman, District Inspector, Various Inspectoral Districts, 21 February 1941. Annual Report for 1940. ADU737, Queensland State Archives.

> and thought which may be found in many cities of the older world. In Oxford and Cambridge, ancient towers and courts are themselves incitements to artistic creation; and beauty born of weathered stone passes insensibly into the life and nature of every imaginative undergraduate. (626–27)

This quotation sums up the anxieties about the 'broken and incomplete' succession, the disrupted paternity of Englishness – or is it failure in the duty of maternal care, as ER Holme would have it? – that academics sought to repair through their teaching and criticism.

5
VARIATIONS

One of the imperatives in writing an historical account is to balance the demands of generalisation – finding larger patterns – against the need to account for contradictory or complicated evidence. The first published version of this study paid undue attention to the pattern of imperialism at the expense of drawing out competing narratives about how the history of the teaching of literature in Australian universities might be understood. The cases considered here as 'variants' offer what I hope can function, if only implicitly, as commentaries on other methodological aspects of the study. Their placement in separate sections hints at the tensions inherent in attempting to create a narrative organised around intellectual movements and chronology, further segmented by individuals and institutions.

It is easy to lose sight of the point that the discipline is being *made* by those institutions and individuals: through the processes of scholarship and teaching that are described here. But amidst these practices and pressures of the disciplines and their conventions, there are cases of individuals and institutions which suggest that the broadly discernable patterns described above can be decisively broken; that factors beyond the discipline – individuals, local circumstances, or even global events – can decisively configure or reconfigure careers and curriculum. For example, in relation to the latter, arguably a separate study is needed to consider the effects of the First and Second World Wars on literary and language study, for these were profound. Not the least of these was the reshaping of the male student body in the most dramatic way possible, by death, disfigurement and illness, as it gave added responsibility and prominence to women students and academics, and gave birth to movements in literature and criticism. At times, then, events that affect the discipline or its practitioners do not fit accounts which focus on intellectual movements or historical periods; competing themes jostle for 'chapters of their own'.

In the first section of this chapter an example of the way in which local institutional factors can bear – or overbear – on a single discipline to which they are not directly related is considered. In the second, the slightly differing functions of three recurring 'icons' of 'English' are analysed: a critic (Matthew Arnold), a ter-

tiary institution (Oxford), and a literary author (Shakespeare). Any one of these three might have been the subject of a separate study, or have been used to organise this book thematically. In the third section an even more complicated case (at least for those seeking chronology) is considered: a field which lays claim to a position at the very beginning of 'English', but the emergence of which belongs historically to the 1940s. Finally, in defiance of this uncertainty, the final section in this chapter makes some bold generalisations about the first seventy-five years or so of the teaching of English in Australian universities, in a kind of retrospective which adds demographic data to consolidate the main lines of argument.

TASMANIA AND THE ORR CASE

The self-effacing beginnings of the University of Tasmania might in hindsight seem like a warning of the problems ahead: three foundation lectureships were advertised, a modesty of aspiration that reflected the troubled and precarious beginnings of the university itself. Unusually, advertisements were placed only in Australian and New Zealand papers, perhaps because it was felt, probably realistically, that the lowly paid positions that required the appointees to 'take evening classes, travel outside Hobart, give extension lectures to non-matriculants [and] set and mark examinations for schools as well as for the University' (Davis, 23) would not appeal to anyone not already in the colonies.[1] Nevertheless, the three appointees were all graduates of Cambridge.

The first occupant of the chair of classics and English was William Henry Williams, who was born in 1852 and graduated with a first in classics from Cambridge in 1876. After teaching at a school in Cambridge for eight years he was appointed headmaster of Newington, a private boys' high school in Sydney. He was forced to resign eight years later when the school council decided that the post should be filled by a clergyman. In 1894 Williams was appointed lecturer in classics and English at the University of Tasmania, becoming professor in 1896; when classics became an independent subject Williams was able to teach solely in English. His main area of interest was Elizabethan and pre-Elizabethan language. He edited numerous literary works, mostly from the early modern period, including, it is claimed, five plays by Shakespeare, although I have only been able to find one, *The Tempest*.

Lecturing staff were, initially, not permitted to become members of the governing council, but Williams later became a council member elected by senate. After he was 'finally forced to resign' in 1925 (when in his mid seventies)

1 I take Cassandra Pybus' point that Tasmania is too easily read this way because of (mainland) stereotypes. Nevertheless, her own last chapter points to problems that cannot be omitted from any account of the university's history, 205–14.

Williams remained a quiescent voice, perhaps in part because of his financial dependence on the university (Davis, 87). The historian of the university, Richard Davis, and WH Eddy, who is less sympathetic to the institution, both indicate that relations between staff and the university's administration had always been troubled; both attribute this to the council's undue influence on academic matters. The conflicts eventually led to a royal commission, but nearly three decades earlier, assertions made by council members – that the staff were 'the servants of the Council' – caused resentment among academics when they were reported in the press (Eddy, 2). There were various uprisings, but Eddy records that

> the revolt of the late 1920s was crushed. Those academics who stayed had to adapt themselves in greater or lesser degree to the prevailing conditions and the Royal Commission's report took note of the effects this had had when it listed as one important contributing factor to the 'unhappy state of affairs' in 1955: 'A small professoriate, the senior members of which having grown up with the University and become inured to existing conditions, have not been as forceful as they might either in matters of administration or in their presentation of the Staff Case to Council' (Eddy, 1–2).

Although Williams seems to have left before the worst of the ructions, Davis' account of his career implies he was among this group. He was also one of two academics who requested to go on record as opposing the appointment of Tasmania's first female staff member.

When Williams retired he was replaced by a thirty-one-year-old Oxford graduate, AB Taylor, who held the chair until his own retirement thirty years later, in 1957.[2] Albert Booth Taylor was born in Manchester but he was educated in Auckland. A Rhodes Scholar in 1918, he graduated with a first in English language and literature from Oxford, after which he lectured in the same subject at Leeds from 1920 to 1921 and at Armstrong College in Durham from 1921 to 1925. Taylor edited *The Merchant of Venice* and *Macbeth* for the Australian Students' Shakespeare, as well as a Middle English romance. His major work of scholarship was *An Introduction to Medieval Romance,* an introductory survey of the main themes and characteristic styles of poetry of England and Europe. Notwithstanding what unfolded during their careers, both Williams and Tylor were made professor emeritus, something which demands the support of senior members of the university executive.

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2 A suggestion that the chair be offered to Walter Murdoch was apparently blocked by Robert Dunbabin, an Australian-born Oxford-educated professor of classics who was the de facto leader of the academic staff (Davis, 87). Murdoch's biographer, JA La Nauze, posits that he had not formally applied for the position, but had made it known in writing that he would accept an invitation, 88.

Richard Davis describes Taylor as having been 'a radical exponent of academic rights and staff-student relations' who was 'intimately involved in academic politics' (90) – although 'radical' is probably too strong a term. Davis suggests that it was the strain of this involvement that led to Taylor's simultaneous resignation from his positions as president of the staff association and the chair of English in 1957. Taylor had been president during the 1955 royal commission that had been prompted in part by Sydney Orr's open letter to the premier of Tasmania about conditions at the university, a letter co-signed by thirty-seven staff. He had also supported Orr with an official letter from the staff association that was published in the student magazine, *Togatus* (Eddy, 15).[3]

The royal commission had been preceded by lengthy debates about the government of the university, debates in which Taylor played a leading role: he was one of the staff representatives in an early meeting with the state premier to discuss the possibility of an enquiry. In earlier generations, the role of government and benefactors in university decision-making had become an issue for academic staff, as we have seen of Adelaide and Melbourne, for example. Academics were pressured by the commission, as they were denied funding for legal representation by a university council that did approve such funding for itself. Eddy suggests that the enquiry became adversarial, even inquisitorial, and his description of Taylor's participation suggests it was very stressful for him:

> Professor Taylor (English) had long been in ill health, was subject to memory lapses under emotional stress, and retired on medical advice shortly after the Commission at the age of sixty years. As Chairman … Taylor presented formally the case for the Staff Association … No doubt a longer preparation and more careful sifting of material … would have been desirable. But the ruthless cross-examination of Taylor aroused a great deal of indignation. (Eddy, 19; see also Pybus, 49)

This account seems to euphemise personal failings, but Taylor did stay in his position long enough to urge that the findings of the commission be fully implemented. There was trouble over this, and worse to come.

Taylor was still at the university in 1956 during one of Australia's most sustained and bitter academic controversies, one that Eddy argues was not unrelated to the royal commission and its outcomes: the dismissal of a charismatic professor of philosophy. Sydney Orr – middle name Sparkes – was sacked after a sexual harassment charge was filed by a student, the procedure used to dismiss him subsequently being protested by academics in Tasmania and elsewhere. The case

3 For a different account of events see Pybus, 47–49. His own writings in *Togatus* had seen Taylor become the focus of attacks by Christian groups on and off campus, and his *Introduction to Medieval Romance* was criticised for being anti-Catholic.

received international attention and the repercussions were felt in the university and in Tasmania more generally for years. Apart from vehement personal animosities generated by conflicting views about Orr's behaviour, and the response of the university's administrators and council, the university was subjected to an international boycott of the chair of philosophy, a discipline characterised by a strong professional solidarity. That boycott was subsequently extended to include all academic positions. For Taylor, and perhaps in an earlier time for Williams, survival became the first priority, particularly towards the end of their careers.

I think we should not underestimate the destructive effects such an environment might have on the capacity to do research, which requires high levels and long periods of concentration, not to mention mental equanimity. The change in pace of Taylor's own research career was palpable, indeed devastating: after having produced four books in his first decade at Tasmania, he had no publications after 1937 except a letter to *Southerly*. And there is evidence that student culture and teaching were also adversely affected. The first MA was not awarded until 1953 and numbers of postgraduates did not match those of other institutions until the 1960s. That said, it is difficult to be certain about what can be attributed to institutional and what to personal factors. For example, there is a general pattern of decline in research output across the course of an academic career: it is during their climb to the professorial position that academics tend to publish most. This might reflect the fact that the early years of a career can be productive because postgraduate study offers a platform for subsequent publication; such a concentrated period of research is rarely available during a career that includes teaching and administration. The failure to publish might also reflect the impact of increased demands commensurate with seniority or, in some cases, the fact that for those who have obtained a chair, there might be little incentive to add research to essential duties. Alternately, it might reflect the fact that scholars feel able to take time to do their best work when not under the pressure of trying to obtain tenure and promotion.

Tragically, Taylor's successor in the chair at Tasmania, FM Todd, who also became president of the staff association, passed away after just four years in the position.[4] A press report at the time refers to an illness which occurred just before Christmas, and Todd was then transferred from Hobart to St Vincent's Hospital in Melbourne, where he died just before the end of the year ('Professor Todd'). Like Taylor, Todd was originally from New Zealand, and also like Taylor, was appointed to the chair at the age of thirty-one, although he was unusual among his contemporaries in having completed a PhD, a degree that was, significantly, taken at London rather than Oxford or Cambridge. This suggests that

4 As president, Todd had taken a different stance on the Orr dismissal to Taylor: he was part of the campaign for the lifting of the academic boycott. These actions caused resentment among some of his colleagues.

he might have been seen as an agent of reinvigoration at the university, not least because his major publication was a study of Wordsworth, based on the PhD. Unusually, he also had a number of reviews and lectures on Australian literature to his credit, an essay on Henry Lawson being reprinted three times. But such was the longevity and intensity of the dispute over Orr's sacking that not only Todd but his successor, James McAuley, ultimately became involved in further controversies and attempts to mediate them (Coleman, 101).[5] What we might call the microclimate of the institution at Tasmania seems to have had a more decisive impact on the shape of the discipline there than any larger trend, and to have seriously impeded the development of a culture of scholarship.

ARNOLD, OXFORD AND SHAKESPEARE

Tasmania was briefly the home of Thomas Arnold junior. Thus his daughter, later known to readers of novels as Mrs Humphry Ward, author of the novel featuring the fictionalised version of TH Green, was born in Tasmania. These direct connections between the Arnold family and Australia are secondary, though, to the influence of Thomas Arnold's son Matthew, as poet, critic and educator. For many, Matthew Arnold is still popularly regarded as a founder of English studies, and his espousal of 'disinterest' perhaps the most famous critical credo in the discipline. In fact, Arnold is something of a peculiarity, historically; few of his contemporaries or those of the next generation would have regarded him as a leading scholar, despite his widespread influence in public debates about education and criticism. He was a poet and perhaps what would now be termed a 'public intellectual', who aimed to simplify and disseminate rather than refine complex ideas. To a certain extent Arnold's motives in relation to education were practical, and his assumptions about critical method were essentially exegetical – he expresses belief, at least in his criticism, in a timeless text, its meanings immanent and unchangeable. More complicatedly still, the author of one of the great Victorian poems about loss of faith (Dover Beach), in the twentieth century almost perversely became associated with the opposite of what he represented in his own lifetime: elitist and idealist in his promotion of the value of the study of English. Arguably, if the former version of Arnold had not existed, those who

5 See also Pybus, who says that McAuley was instrumental in negotiating a financial settlement for Orr that would see the boycott lifted, 182–84. The new vice-chancellor, Keith Isles, and two other players in the Orr case, John Kerr and Roy Wright, were members of Alf Conlon's wartime intelligence unit in Melbourne. This is pointed out by Pybus (134), but she does not note that McAuley, too, worked there. Roy Wright became a champion of Sydney Orr; his brother Reg was counsel for the university.

seemed to be his spiritual descendants would have had to invent it.

One of the most famous of Arnold's collections is *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), which begins with the essay 'Sweetness and Light', and also includes his famous dissertation on 'Hebraism and Hellenism'. In 'Sweetness and Light', a phrase often used as a metaphor for refinement or high culture, Arnold makes an argument which owes its premises equally to Plato and Christian faith.

> Culture is then properly described *not as having its origin in curiosity*, but as having its origin in the love of perfection; it is a study of perfection. It moves by the force, not merely or primarily of the scientific passion for pure knowledge, but also of the moral and social passion for doing good. (Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 31; my emphasis)

In such a statement we can see Arnold's desire to reject the critical idealism which was beginning to find purchase at Oxford, which was turning to questions of context in considering written texts, and which was attempting to theorise the value of art. To choose Arnold as 'father' is to choose Christian faith over philosophical reason, absorption of English tradition over study of European scholarship, Jowett over Green.

In perhaps the most quoted essay for critics of English literature, 'The Function of Criticism', Arnold defined criticism as *'a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world'* (*Lectures and Essays*, 283). Again, we can note here the implication that the emphasis should be on absorption and reiteration, or in university terms, training rather than research. This is not usually pointed out by followers of Arnold; nor is it generally noted that he immediately followed his declaration by arguing that very little of English literature should be included in 'the best that is known and thought'. In fact, this is a key point that is reiterated throughout the essay, for Arnold was no nationalist when it came to literature: like so many of his generation, he accepted the cultural and intellectual authority of the Greeks. But what *is* crucial is that, just as the selection of (a version of) Arnold as progenitor tells us much about the time in which that choice is made, so too do Arnold's ideas about history tell us something about his own time. Frank Turner is at pains to argue that Arnold's appropriation of Greek culture and thought was highly selective, perhaps even ill-informed. As Turner's broader argument shows, while Greek and Roman cultures had great authority, it was an abstract and idealised 'ancient world' that lived in the minds of the cultural elite and which was used to authorise their own dominance.

If invoking Arnold offered a kind of guarantee of academic authority to literary critics in the middle decades of the twentieth century, so too did possessing an Oxbridge degree. In the nineteenth century, colonial universities had often served as places for preliminary education. Those who studied Arts at Sydney

or Melbourne, and later Adelaide or Tasmania, might then proceed to Oxford, Cambridge or Edinburgh to complete a degree. Educator Charles Pearson, who collaborated on a number of translations with HS Strong, commented in the late 1870s that

> Our own wealthy men, if they send their sons to Melbourne University at all, send them as rule for only part of the course; and wisely, as I think, send them to finish their education in England.

It has been noted that, at about the same time, there were some thirty Australians studying medicine at Edinburgh (Gardner, 114). When Australian universities set up their own professional degrees this movement slightly decreased, so that those students who did still travel to England were not so much upper-middle-class students in search of professional qualifications that would allow them to earn a living, but upper-class ones like Charles Jury (or Patrick White) who sought in a way to solidify their cultural credentials. The exceptions are those able to obtain scholarships, particularly a Rhodes scholarship to Oxford, or the James King of Irrawang travelling scholarship from Sydney.

In a period in which Australian universities might have been expected to have become more independent in curricula and staffing through growth, they and others in the Empire moved very deliberately to strengthen relationships with British universities. A formal alliance was mooted at a conference in 1903 and an association for universities across the empire was formally constituted at a second conference in 1911, with enthusiastic Australian support. At this meeting, it was said by the vice-chancellor of McGill (Canada) that the representatives from the colonial universities could feel 'like children gathering round the family hearth' (*Community of Universities*, 9). But like the Round Table, this community was ultimately a political one:

> Commonwealth leadership is largely in the hands of graduates, and, by virtue of the cohesion among Commonwealth universities, graduates from as far apart as Singapore and Vancouver, Ghana and Aberdeen, find that they share common assumptions, common cultural traditions, common canons of criticism and facility in using a common language. (*Community of Universities*, 95)

An important element of this strengthening of ties was the development of postgraduate study in British institutions that had previously been committed mainly to undergraduate teaching. There were pressures from universities in what were termed 'the dominions' (like Australia) on Oxford and Cambridge to increase postgraduate teaching. Most Rhodes scholars, for example, had already taken degrees and therefore wanted to take a postgraduate qualification rather

than taking a second undergraduate one, as earlier generations had been content to do. More importantly, demand for postgraduate degrees in England was accelerated after the First World War, because it was expected that German and Austrian universities would no longer be attractive to the English-speaking students who had generally travelled there for further study. At a small conference held in May 1917, the radical suggestion was made that some postgraduate qualification be introduced to British universities. The proponents of the idea, including members of the British Foreign Office, had the dual aims of taking over the role previously filled by the German-speaking countries, and thereby strengthening links between England and the rest of the English-speaking world.

When a larger conference reconvened a year later, with representatives from Canada, Australia and New Zealand, it was resolved that action to develop the degree of doctor of philosophy be commended to *British* universities. This shift was 'crucial in the history of British higher education' *and* for universities throughout the Empire (*Community of Universities*, 17). The conference aimed to make Britain the centre of cultural and intellectual development in the English-speaking world.[6] When the second congress of the universities of the British Empire was held in 1921, it was claimed in the opening address by the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston (Lord Curzon) that the defeat of Germany and the destruction of her universities had provided 'a rare opportunity' for Britain (4). It should therefore

> come forward and take the vacant place, becoming the recognised Mecca of the education world. With the new spirit that is moving the souls of men, with the enhanced sense of unity and co-operation that imbues the minds of all those who were so recently fighting together and risking everything in the common cause, and with a conviction of the tremendous urgency of the task, it is our duty to address ourselves to it without delay. (5)

The unspoken rival, of course, was no longer Europe but the United States. The apparently self-satisfied statement from this product of Eton and Oxford, a former Viceroy of India, can also be read as a 'radical' challenge to those of his colleagues who thought that the very idea of taking a postgraduate degree was shabbily materialistic.

Regardless of the actual mode of study, Oxford positions its students and academics as embodying intellectual and related forms of authority. Arguably

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come forward and take the vacant place, becoming the recognised Mecca of the education world. With the new spirit that is moving the souls of men, with the enhanced sense of unity and co-operation that imbues the minds of all those who were so recently fighting together and risking everything in the common cause, and with a conviction of the tremendous urgency of the task, it is our duty to address ourselves to it without delay. (5)

this is even more the case in the discipline of 'English', with which Oxford is almost literally synonymous because of its dictionary, its press, and the university's perceived relationship to English culture. Conversely, the institution's almost ostentatiously arcane rituals, that might in other contexts or other cultures be seen as authoritarian or simply foolish, are an essential part of its mystique. They acquire gravity by virtue of their longevity, as well as the seriousness about which they are spoken and with which they are performed. What is distinctive about Oxford is not so much a reputation in teaching and research, but the tensile strength of the institution's norms, and more specifically in the case of English, the capacity of those who reverence the university's authority to set aside the institution's long history of opposition to the discipline, as well as criticism of the unimaginative forms which English literary study subsequently took there.

In the early decades of the discipline, Oxford offered not so much an elite education as training in ritual and response. It is an assimilative model, or as PA Barnett, a professor of English in South Africa, put it,

> it is … of incalculable moment that able young men and women of English origin … should in the motherland feel themselves members of those disinterested public institutions which conserve and embody the high English tradition … [the colonial father] sends his son to an English University, his daughter to an English school, *not so much to teach them* how to build bridges or practise a profession successfully, *as to place them in the stream of the traditional thought and life of England*. (Barnett, 131–32; my emphasis)

This 'immersion' enables 'practices to be objectively harmonized without any calculation or conscious reference to a norm and mutually adjusted in the absence of any direct interaction or, *a fortiori*, explicit co-ordination' (Bourdieu, *Logic*, 58–59). More simply, the student is not directly coerced into taking up a set of cultural values, but experiences their assimilation as higher learning.

There was, however, lasting resistance in Oxford to the idea of becoming a postgraduate destination, not least in the discipline of English. In a paper given at the fourth congress of the imperial organisation in 1931, David Nichol Smith suggested that there was considerable ambivalence towards the PhD, sometimes (pejoratively) termed 'the American degree', notwithstanding its much longer association with the universities of Germany (Untitled Paper). Nichol Smith, Merton Professor of English at Oxford, suggested that the preference was for students seeking more advanced qualifications to do the BLitt. Ironically enough his own reputation in the discipline owed a great deal to the fact that he was the first person to graduate from Oxford with DPhil in English, but in 1928–29 only two candidates were awarded the same degree, compared to thirteen who graduated with a BLitt; numbers were similar the following year. The effect of these de-

velopments in Australia was to retard the development of research degrees: the first PhD in English in Australia seems to have been submitted in 1954, and the awarding of the degree was not widespread until the early 1970s. In the 1950s and 1960s, as in the decades around the turn of the century, it would be young men with sometimes modest formal qualifications received from British universities who were best placed to compete for one of the rapidly increasing number of positions created by the dramatic expansion in the number and size of Australian universities (Schonell).

Oxford was by far the preferred destination for postgraduate students, although a handful of those who later obtained professorial positions before 1975 – David Bradley, Vincent Buckley, Clive Hart and George Russell – went to Cambridge. The influence of the *idea* of Oxford can be seen in the work of Australian-born and educated intellectuals who, like ER Holme, were inspired by but had not actually studied at the university. An example is provided by Harold Oliver, best known as an editor of Shakespeare.

Born in 1916 in Sydney, Oliver graduated from Sydney with a university medal in English before proceeding to a law degree. He spent only a year in his legal studies before being appointed to a tutorship in the Department of English at Sydney, where he remained for twenty-three years. He subsequently became the first professor of English at New South Wales in 1960, remaining there until his retirement in 1982. The department at the old 'University of Technology' had been established in 1949 and had long been staffed by women, but Oliver was credited by his Sydney colleague GA Wilkes with 'establishing a new department' when he arrived (Harold James Oliver, 93). Wilkes noted that Oliver's commitment to 'standards' 'may have left him at times feeling besieged' by movements to allow democracy in administration, not to mention options between subjects (94). David English has written of Oliver that 'the name of FR Leavis caused him to go speechless, and nineteenth-century character appreciation was itself the kind of amiable chat reserved for relaxation after tutorials on plot and textual variants' (56). Despite this, Oliver was by no means averse to the task of evaluation: in a review of Helen Gardner's *The Business of Criticism*, for example, he is dismissive of her argument that judgement is not the concern of the critic, and endorses the dogmatism of another male critic: 'Miss Gardner's book, then, is pleasant in a gossipy sort of way, wandering, rarely provoking, and to be honest, thin; Mr Bowers' is overstated and impolite, heterogeneous, often provoking, and not to be missed' (Theory and Practice, 57; see also his Shakespeare and Surveyors). It is hard to imagine a better example of the ways in which stereotypes could structure the gendered selection of adjectives, presented as 'disinterested' academic judgement.

As David English's account of Oliver's methods suggests, the kind of training which Oxford now offered and which was copied by Australian universities was radically different to that envisioned by idealists like Green. (A much more

ambitious, pedagogically driven and politicised version of English would re-emerge, but at Oxford's great rival Cambridge: see chapter six.) The Oxford BLitt, by contrast, offered training in 'research methods' based on precisely that positivism and scholasticism that Green and his associates deplored. These included studies of 'Elizabethan handwriting, the relation of manuscripts, the establishment of texts, the history of English editing and of English studies, bibliography, [and] the resources of the Bodleian' (Nichol Smith, Untitled Paper, 86–87). This empirical version of English emerges in – and was shaped by – the journals published by Oxford's own press: *Review of English Studies, Essays in Criticism* and *Notes and Queries*. A postgraduate student's first publication was often a contribution to the latter, a short comment on some textual or interpretive point (the latter usually grounded in some new 'factual' discovery), a biographical note, or a correction or citation for the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Contributions had modest titles, such as 'The Date of Donne's Birth', or 'The Building of the Theatre Royal in Bridges Street: Some Details of Finance'. Gustav Cross (see below) more or less made a career out of contributing to this journal, having twenty-four notes on John Marston published in *Notes and Queries* between 1954 and 1963, leading up to his appointment to a chair, along with a range of other essays in that and other journals.

FW Bateson, an original subscriber and frequent contributor to the *Review of English Studies*, described that journal as a 'general diet … of biographical discoveries, attributions, sources and influences' (201). He concluded that although his preference was for *Review of English Studies* (over *Essays in Criticism*, that name signalling the 'lighter' or 'softer' version of the discipline), it was also necessary to acknowledge that the *Review* represented a 'fundamentally non-humane ideal of scholarship' (201). Professors of English in Australia who published in the *Review of English Studies* (in chronological order) were Brereton, Cowling, JIM Stewart, Colin Horne, Waldock, Oliver, HW Piper, SL Goldberg, John Colmer, Ian Donaldson, Ralph Elliott, Tony Gibbs, JD Hainsworth, JP Hardy, AN Jeffares, Johnston, Harold Rogers and William Scott – of whom thirteen were graduates of Oxford. Their contributions focus mainly on early modern English writers, and there are none on the work of a woman writer.

This new, 'scholarly' version of Oxford English came to Australia in the 1930s. Its first professorial representative, fittingly, was a holder of the Jury Chair at Adelaide, JIM Stewart. James Innes Mackintosh Stewart was born in Edinburgh in 1906 and educated at the Edinburgh Academy. After taking an MA at Oxford, Stewart briefly held a lectureship at Leeds. He was recruited from there by Adelaide's assiduous vice-chancellor, William Mitchell, who had had consultations with David Nichol Smith before making the offer to Stewart. After a decade at Adelaide, Stewart left Australia for a position at Queen's, Belfast, eventually returning to a fellowship at Oxford. His best-known contribution to literature was some sixty detective novels, published under the pen-name

Michael Innes, twelve of which were published when he was in Adelaide. During Stewart's time in Australia he also published two studies of literary education, *Educating the Emotions* and *Study and Experience*. These books indicate an interest in the kinds of issues that we might associate with followers of Leavis, or Cambridge English, signalling the permeability of boundaries between the two approaches.

Stewart's autobiography, *Myself and Michael Innes*, is sprinkled with derogatory clichés about Australia, and demonstrates that the policing of accent described in chapter one was actively pursued in Adelaide during his period in the Jury Chair. From Stewart's perspective, the demand to maintain a certain kind of speech was surely tied closely to his sense of maintaining an identity which entwined his past and his profession:

> I had in fact found Australian speech the only positively and absolutely ugly thing in that extraordinary continent, and there probably preserved with care – and perhaps, obtruded – the kind of modified southern English speech I had picked up partly at school but chiefly at Oxford. (130)

Stewart's discussion of his time in Australia begins with an anecdote about a visit to Darnley Naylor, who had been professor of classics at Adelaide. At the end of an otherwise relaxed visit, the Englishman Naylor hisses a dramatic warning to Stewart and his wife: 'Let nothing except penury take you into exile' (97). Needless to say, Stewart's chapter on Adelaide ends with the same warning, his time at Adelaide represented as a wearisome and unfulfilling apprenticeship, during which he and his wife had been dogged by 'a persistent home-sickness which at times had threatened to deepen into a nostalgia proper' (114). At times, more pernicious emotions took hold. On seeing the Western Australian coast for the first time, Stewart claims to have imagined himself 'gallantly but forlornly awaiting engulfment by some status quo ante in which an almost empty continent would again be thinly roamed by obstinately primitive persons with sticks or bones through their noses' (99). He modifies this appalling remark, in part: 'Although this first impression was, of course, extravagant, something of it was to remain with me, and in retrospect seems arguable still' (99). It is a strange rhetorical move by which a supposedly sparse population, 'obstinately primitive', function as proof that the country is a 'cultural desert': the disappearing fragment (as Stewart describes them) somehow threatening to overwhelm. As Stewart experiences them, Australia's people are always at risk of lapsing into a different and primitive past.

Only on his return to England did Stewart return to publishing criticism, mainly on Shakespeare and Thomas Hardy. Following his departure the chair was occupied for several years by Charles Jury, then for a year by the person who had presumably recommended Stewart for the position, David Nichol Smith. Nichol

Smith was in his mid seventies at that stage, having retired in 1946 after some forty years teaching at Oxford. Following his departure from England he took up a series of professorships at universities including Smith College in Massachusetts, Chicago, Cambridge, King Faud I in Cairo, Edinburgh, Adelaide and the University of New Zealand, spending about a year at each. He is remembered in Australia by the David Nichol Smith seminars at the ANU, and Canberra also benefited from donation of his books to the National Library. Nichol Smith was often consulted during the search that preceded the advertising of chairs in Australia, was a member of the selection committee for his successor and a referee for the successful candidate, co-supervised the BLitt thesis by Melbourne academic SL Goldberg (albeit that Goldberg was a Leavisite), and was subsequently one of Goldberg's referees.

Another form of institutional influence associated with Oxford has been the university's press, including the branch based in Melbourne. The Oxford University Press imprimatur has been given to some controversial collections of 'Australiana', notably Murdoch's *Oxford Anthology of Australian Verse*, as well as GKW Johnston's *Australian Literary Criticism* and Leonie Kramer's *Oxford History of Australian Literature* (discussed in chapter six). These publications are significant not only because they have been overt exercises in canon-making, but because publications like *The Oxford History* and 'Writers and Their Work' are 'standard' texts that aim to play a role in shaping initial impressions – impressions that are surprisingly difficult to dislodge. The connection between Johnston and Frank Eyre, manager of the Australian branch of the press, made Oxford University Press important in Australian literature, as GA Wilkes explains in discussing the 'entrepreneurial' role played by Johnston:

> He himself produced *Annals of Australian Literature*, as a counterpart to *Annals of English Literature*, and the *Australian Pocket English Dictionary*, as a counterpart to the *English Pocket Oxford*. He persuaded O.U.P. to take over the series Australian Writers and Their Work from Lansdowne, to remodel it on the pattern of the Minnesota pamphlets, and commission a number of new titles. He edited *Australian Literary Criticism*. He also persuaded Oxford to adopt the project of an *Oxford History of Australian Literature*, with himself as editor, and arranged according to genres and not historical periods. (The Writing of Literary History, 5)

Johnston had begun his life in scholarship as a medievalist, but like several academics turned to Australian literature more over the course of his career. He regularly reviewed Australian writing, including issues of journals and new poetry, particularly for the *Observer*. A graduate of New Zealand and Oxford, Grahame Kevin Wilson Johnston was recruited by George Russell to Queensland from a teaching post in New Zealand, leaving Queensland at the same time Rus-

sell did. After teaching at Canberra University College (CUC) from 1957 he was appointed to the Robert Wallace Chair at Melbourne in 1962, when still in his early thirties. From Melbourne he returned to Canberra, as professor of English at Duntroon (the Australian army college, later absorbed into the Australian Defence Force Academy) from 1966 to 1977. Johnston provided a preface to James McAuley's collection of essays *The Grammar of the Real*, and ironically, his last publication before his own death (in his late forties) was an obituary for McAuley (A Sort of Lifeline).

Like Adelaide, Melbourne University had strong connections with Oxford. After George Cowling's retirement the university tended to appoint to chairs its own graduates who had completed higher degrees there, a pattern which began with the designation of HG Seccombe as acting professor during 1944 and continued with the appointment of Ian Maxwell.[7] From the early 1950s Oxford connections began to manifest across Australia, the university's graduates having been represented in the 1930s by just three professors: Taylor at Tasmania, and Strong and Stewart at Adelaide. This influence was by no means limited to the older metropolitan universities: in 1968, ten out of nineteen full-time staff in the English department at New England in Armidale were Oxford graduates, as was the visiting professor.

The other great 'signature' of authority in the discipline of English is Shakespeare. Just as 'Shakespeare' plays a central role in relation to popular ideas about English literature and culture, so too does Shakespeare *scholarship* play a central role in the history of the discipline of English. The importance of 'Shakespeare' to Australian literary and academic culture in the first century of the discipline can scarcely be over-estimated: from the turn of the century to the 1950s, during which time the discipline consolidated its position within the academy, some reputation in Shakespeare scholarship was all but essential. 'Shakespeare' played a significant role in the careers not only of early teachers like Williams and MacCallum, and MacCallum's students such as Brereton and Waldock, but for successive generations of professors of English literature including David Bradley, ON Burgess, Cowling, Ernst de Chickera, SL Goldberg, JP Hardy, Derick Marsh, Harold Oliver, HL Rogers, Nichol Smith, Stewart, Taylor and GA Wilkes; Arthur Brown, John Colmer, Gustav Cross, Ian Donaldson, JD Hainsworth, Murdoch, Raymond Southall, Stable, Strong, Tucker and Wallace also had at least one significant publication on Shakespeare's work. Put another way, half of those who held chairs in English in the first century of the discipline have at least one publication on Shakespeare, while a quarter could fairly be regarded as specialists.[8] The dominant figures are those who gained or

7 Seccombe is possibly the HG Seccombe who took a first in English from Oxford in 1932. He is likely to have applied for the chair himself; he died suddenly after Maxwell's appointment was announced.

consolidated their reputations with studies of Shakespeare's work, notably MacCallum.

The reification of Shakespeare and of his plays was based on the recuperation of character or 'nature', the view that Shakespeare was not (just) a great writer but an exemplary man [sic]. Thus Alma Hartshorn remembers Queensland academic JJ Stable choosing 'Shakespeare the Man' as the theme for her fourth-year English honours class. The approach was surely influenced by one of nineteenth-century Britain's leading figures, Thomas Carlyle, particularly his essays in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (one of which was on Shakespeare). In his inaugural lecture delivered in 1884, EE Morris quoted and then commented on Carlyle to argue that recognition of the universal value of Shakespeare and English literature was essential to the maintenance of cultural connections between England and Australia:

> England, before long, this island of ours, will hold but a small fraction of the English. In America, in New Holland, east and west to the very Antipodes, there will be a Saxondom, covering great spaces of the Globe. And now, what is it that can keep all these together in virtually one nation …? … From Parramatta, from New York, wheresoever … they will say to one another, 'Yes, this Shakespeare is ours, we produced him, we speak and think by him, we are of one blood and kind with him'. What Carlyle says of Shakespeare is true, though in less degree, of others; true of the whole mass of poets and essayists, of thinkers and historians, that we call English literature. This common stock of thought, as of speech, forms the best bond to keep together the English in all parts of the world. (249)

The community that is able to reconstitute Shakespeare as a living presence legitimises its claim to commonality with the metropolis. Morris, like MacCallum in New South Wales and Boulger in Adelaide, was founder of the Shakespeare Society in his state. The Melbourne society became the largest in the world, with over 450 members (Stewart, 15). AT Strong was president for 1913–14, and a

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supporter of Alan Wilkie, a touring thespian who attempted to keep Shakespeare performance 'alive' in Australia.

Claims about the resemblances between Shakespeare the human being and the authorial sensibility evident in his work are often strongest in readings of his (last?) play *The Tempest*, and specifically, in interpretations of the play's protagonist, Prospero. In part this is because Prospero's final monologue, in which he asks the audience to set him free, is often read as Shakespeare's own farewell to the theatre. Readings which take the relations between Prospero, his daughter Miranda and his slave Caliban as a metaphor for colonialism have become commonplace since Octave Mannoni's *Prospero and Caliban* (1956), but for students reading English in Australia, *The Tempest* has more often been represented as a parable about the dangers of barbarism than the dangers of colonisation. An extract from lecture notes held in the Enid Derham papers is symptomatic of these interpretations of the play, and of the way this interpretation slides from veneration of Prospero the character to veneration of Shakespeare the exemplary man. At the same time, questions about power and politics are set aside in favour of a supposed 'universal human value' that is a thinly disguised stereotype of British benevolence:

> we cannot but feel that *The Tempest* expresses in language of noble simplicity and sweetness the last thoughts on life of that greatest of all men … Even the supernatural is no longer … the old legendary world of England, but rather the spiritual domain of the powers of the air, belonging to no land, sexless, ethereal, the viewless spirits of nature herself … Whether he was originally merely a picture of the West Indian savage – as is most likely, – or no, Caliban holds for us a note of deep tragedy, hopeless, hag-born, demon-rid type of all the submerged and lost creatures that hide themselves in the slums of great cities and the recesses of lands still dark to knowledge and the finer breath of life.[9]

This pity for 'lands [and people] still dark to knowledge' buttresses the position of student and teacher who, in their appreciation of the fineness of Prospero/Shakespeare, are made members of a 'common humanity' whose values transcend time or place. In lecture after lecture the same movement occurs: sources or performance histories are mapped with careful detail, then Shakespeare and his work are suddenly made 'timeless'. But the claim about 'lands still dark to knowledge' reverberates with Stewart's fear of being overtaken by blackness. Repeatedly, the fear that the discipline of English will not find traction or per-

9 'The Position of *The Tempest* in Shakespeare's Plays', Lecture Notes, November 1905, Group 1, Box 1/3, File 6, Enid Derham Papers, University of Melbourne Archives, 3–5.

manence is expressed as a fear that colonisation will be reversed: in the terms of colonisation itself, that white will succumb to black, civilisation to barbarism, knowledge to ignorance.

It is important, then, that Shakespeare seems to belong to the precolonial era (at least in British terms): that the colonisers come bearing his books, that unlike colonial writers he is not charged with making meaning in the new place. The critics constantly shuttle between seeing his work as an expression of its time and place, and as a verification of timeless human values. The methodological difficulty produced by this contradiction is clearest in the work of Mungo MacCallum, who resolves this conflict (in part) by confining his discussion of 'history' to literary history.[10] As his study of the Roman plays showed, he was indefatigable in tracking sources. For example, he observes that there were three contemporary accounts of the Virginia wreck that might have been the catalyst for *The Tempest*, and proposes numerous possible sources for the story-line.[11] He points out that in the *Annals of Genoa* (1477) it is recorded that the Duke Prospero was deposed by his brother Antonio, and that Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (translated in 1591) describes the retreat of a hermit and a powerful tempest. The name of 'Setebos' is traced to a translation of Magellan's *Voyage to the South Pole* (1577), the convention of 'strange noises' to the *Travels of Marco Polo* (1579). But this careful contextualisation is set aside when the detail of the text comes under scrutiny: the hermeneutic circle is snapped. (I think this must have confused students, who could reasonably wonder how the discussion of context they had heard could be ignored when they were coming to a reading of the play.)

MacCallum now argues that *The Tempest* is, above all, a refutation of Montaigne's argument that 'men call that barbarism which is not common to them'. In his unexpectedly politicised reading, *The Tempest* becomes an emphatic argument that the difference between civilisation and savagery is *not* a matter of context, as Montaigne would have it, but is absolute, and intrinsic. The 'critical' aspect of idealism is discarded so that the connections with historical texts and events that MacCallum himself has painstakingly pieced together, which offer such strong evidence of Shakespeare's reference to the dramas of colonisation being played out in his lifetime, are discarded. Instead, *The Tempest* is ultimately read as a statement about culture and barbarism that fits with – is in *part produced* by – MacCallum's own reading position. For someone who saw himself as a cultured man of letters, albeit in exile, MacCallum assumes and endorses culture over barbarism, metropolitan over colonial, beliefs which give value not

10 Mungo MacCallum (ed.), *The Tempest*, 8, Box F, Mungo MacCallum Papers, University of Sydney Archives. Partially published as The Making of *The Tempest*.

11 He says, 'apart from its European origins (specifically German and Spanish), the original conception is a very old one and occurs in an Indian version of the remotest antiquity'.

only to the literary text but to those who teach it. In effect, his reading of the play constitutes a passionate defence of his own life and work as a Shakespeare scholar. That MacCallum concludes with the observation that 'fallen' members of the 'civilised race' such as Stephano and Trinculo are morally even more culpable than the likes of Caliban, who knows no better, could serve only as a warning to teachers of literature of both the precariousness and the importance of their mission.

A quite different reading of the play was offered to students at Adelaide by Charles Jury. Jury, drawing on Lytton Strachey, suggests that Prospero 'is a man who makes himself studiously unpleasant, at one time or another, to nearly every other character in the play'. Whereas MacCallum reads the play as a coherent refutation of Montaigne, Jury rejects the argument that it is possible to find a 'systematic and consistent allegory' in *The Tempest*. What is intriguing is that Jury, much more likely to be regarded as an 'unscholarly' figure and only sporadically associated with the academy, produces a more tentative but also more nuanced and potentially more persuasive reading. He qualifies this reading with an acknowledgment that he was offering his own, not *the* interpretation:

> I see *The Tempest*, then, not a systematic allegory, or even as a work in which symbols are systematically used, but as a play in which the figures may from time to time speak at places of reality other than the naturalistic plan. I don't believe that Prospero stands always for God, or for the beneficient [sic] ruler, or even for Shakespeare himself. Prospero is primarily what he purports to be: a deposed and benevolent enchanter.[12]

Jury's lecture on *The Tempest* is also distinctive in that it explains the play in terms of performance, and suggests that it is not a naturalistic work. As this brief example shows, we cannot presume the techniques, erudition or otherwise of any critic or teacher without access to evidence, evidence that is only rarely available. MacCallum was the renowned Shakespeare scholar and Jury easily presented as a dilettante, but it is the reading by the latter which offers a more nuanced account of the play.

OLD NORSE MYTH: MAXWELL AT MELBOURNE

In the nineteenth century a small group of assiduous enthusiasts argued that the 'origins' of the English language, the progenitors of English literature, and the masters of literary scholarship could be found not in Germany but further north.

12 Charles Jury, Shakespeare Lectures (English III), Charles Jury Papers, PRG/20/11/2, State Library of South Australia Archives, 38–44.

England had, of course, experienced various waves of invasion and immigration, but a certain degree of selectivity often pertains in accounts of that history. Heather O'Donohue's 'short introduction' to *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature* suggests that for some nineteenth-century British readers, the sagas

> were presented as a significant and valuable alternative to the body of Greek and Roman literature, a status which backed up ideas beginning to circulate about *the early Germanic languages being on a par with Latin and Greek* as equal Indo-European descendants from Sanscrit. (110; my emphasis)

These claims for the pre-eminence of the northern cultures do not seem to have gained academic respectability in the nineteenth century, even during conflicts which made the search for an alternative to German scholarship and literature urgent (see Wawn, 371). The editors of *Corpus Poeticum Borealis* of 1883 give the game away when they assure their readers 'it is the amateur scholar, "earnest and devoted"' who pursues his or her interests 'without any desire for reward or fame or publication' who 'every writer must cherish as furnishing many of his best readers' (Vigfusson and Powell, cxxi).

The assumption that the study of the English language was institutionalised before the study of English literature, and that language study is therefore, in some profound sense, 'foundational' (see Clunies Ross, 5), cannot be correct, for the historical order in which texts have been written is no useful guide for understanding the history of their study. But claims about the value of a specific field of English *are* related, in complicated ways, to claims about the value of a particular body of texts – something that would profoundly shape early academic discussions of Australian literature.

The veneration of Old Icelandic is part of a larger debate about the origins of English literature itself, as well as the English language. The earliest major work of English literature is generally taken to be the poem *Beowulf*, thought to have been written before or after the tenth century; Geoffrey Chaucer, generally regarded as the first major English author, was born in the early 1340s and died in 1400. The sagas were probably written in the intervening period. *Beowulf* is now thought to mix various dialects from what is now England, although it is set mainly in what is now Denmark and Sweden; by contrast, the sagas use a language called Old Norse or, sometimes, Old Icelandic, and are set in Iceland. By claiming them as antecedent, a more complex, non-Germanic origin is posited for 'English'. It seems clear that early claims for the significance of Old Icelandic rested more on political debates than their actual place within the history of either language or literature. In England, one modern commentator suggests that the sagas became popularly associated with 'political liberty, democracy, legal freedoms and the independence of the individual', along with physical bravery, and

a refusal to fear death (O'Donoghue, 121). This faith in violent, quasi-mystical charismatic leadership – often thought the mark of a primitive society – was, in O'Donoghue's view, marked by Carlyle's positioning of Odin as the first 'great man' in his *Great Men of History* (126).

A sense of the kind of disdain these sentiments could provoke among scholars emerges in a set of testimonials for an applicant for the chair of Anglo-Saxon and Northern Antiquities at Oxford around 1876. The Reverend Frederick Metcalfe had just one reference from an academic working in Britain, a reference which began by noting that the writer had been in the same form at school as Metcalfe, 'now a good many years ago' (Holland, n.p.). If that hint of distance were not sufficient, TE Holland, Chichele Professor of International Law, noted with slightly too much humility that 'I feel painfully my incompetency to weigh the special merits of the candidates for the chair of Anglo-Saxon and Northern Antiquities' (n.p.) – perhaps more telling than that, thirty-three of the thirty-five leaves in this collection of testimonials are blank. The only compliment Holland could muster, in the third and final sentence of his reference, was that Metcalfe had 'a vivid interest in his subject'. (There are more enthusiastic references from academics in Norway and Denmark, and one sentence from the author of *Norse Popular Tales*.) Whilst we can of course attribute Holland's difficulties to personality, it is telling that the first British scholar appointed to a university position in Old Norse-Icelandic, John Sephton, was probably at Liverpool (O'Donoghue, 128, 129). O'Donohue gives no details, but his publications suggest that Sephton spent a considerable time at the university. As with English and Australian literature, more 'peripheral' institutions seem to be more adventurous in terms of curriculum; this of course has the effect of confirming the marginality of the subject in more prestigious institutions, who have less reason to invest in innovation as the means of developing their reputation.

More troublingly, according to O'Donohue, in Germany itself, those who had taken up the same field helped to fuel insidious versions of nationalist passion. In this respect, the study of Old Icelandic language and literature demonstrates – as Martin Bernal has argued, to the discomfort of his colleagues – that the study of language *and* literature has, in various periods and in different ways, helped to provide the intellectual architecture of racism in the twentieth century. This is rather different from the common sense view that while literary studies is in danger of becoming captive to ideological (that is to say, 'cultural') values rather than scholarly ones because of its lack of rigour, those who use more 'rigorous' methods of 'language' study are, by virtue of their attachment to detachment, protected from the influence of those values. However the discourses of language study, as much as if not more than the discourses of literary study, have helped to shape a world in which the welding of imaginative literature *or* language, national character, and the racialised contours of society, are brought together in ways that ostensibly make sense of the veneration of bold and brave

white men. For *which* language is studied matters, deeply, to students and teachers. One participant in the debate about the inclusion of English literature in the curriculum at Oxford, for example, complained that 'An English School will grow up, nourishing our language not from the humanity of the Greeks and Romans, but from the savagery of the Goths and Anglo-Saxons. *We are about to reverse the Renaissance*.'[13]

A more successful case for the study of Icelandic was later made on the basis that England and Iceland had 'common origins', as well as 'a common geographical situation … and both had an indigenous literary culture with a similar history: a Germanic, oral literature transformed, in complex but parallel ways, by the coming of Christianity' (O'Donoghue, 135). As an indication of the importance of political contexts, it is noteworthy that Old Icelandic did not consolidate its institutional presence until during the Second World War. This is perhaps why the proliferation of popular translation in the nineteenth century is under-represented in the Melbourne and Sydney libraries, although both universities have been strongholds of the field internationally.[14] John Martin's enthusiastic account of Icelanders in Australia suggests that the teaching of Old Norse began at Melbourne in 1944 and at Sydney a year or two earlier. As Martin describes it,

> Stranded in Melbourne on a world tour during the First World War, [Augustin Lodewyckx] stayed and before long took over the teaching of German at the University of Melbourne. In 1937–8 he was at last able to realise his life-long ambition and spent part of a sabbatical year in Iceland.[15]

Lodewyckx retired in 1949, after which the teaching was taken over by Keith Macartney and then, in 1954, by Ian Maxwell (Martin, People, 103).

Ian Ramsay Maxwell was born in 1901, and like Walter Murdoch attended Scotch College and then Melbourne University, from which he graduated with honours in English and a law degree. In 1926 Maxwell was admitted to the bar, where he worked until the onset of the Depression, at which time he left the law and returned to university. This time, however, he went to Balliol College, where he took a BLitt in 1935 after first entering the university in 1932. After graduation he obtained a position at the University of Copenhagen, where he lectured for several years before obtaining a position at Sydney. Maxwell commented late in

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13 Thomas Case [professor of moral philosophy], *An Appeal to the University of Oxford against the Proposed Final School of Modern Languages*, Quoted in Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Studies*, 114, emphasis added.

14 Holdings are mainly of material published after the First World War (Sydney) and the Second (Melbourne).

15 See also Tom Clark, who perhaps draws on Martin. I thank Jenna Mead for these references.

life that the hardest workload he encountered was in Denmark, although he was head of department and dean in Melbourne (Maxwell, Interview).

Maxwell was among the first of more than a dozen male academics from Sydney's English department to obtain chairs at Sydney and elsewhere, taking up a chair in his home city in 1946.[16] He remained there until 1968, and is one of the most influential figures in what was a formative period in the discipline. In terms of publications his output was not large, as he himself observed: three or four articles, and one book. In the acknowledgements to the latter, Maxwell thanks his supervisor at Oxford and, interestingly, Walter Murdoch, whom he says read a draft, and suggested that a monograph would be feasible. The subject and tone of an interview with Maxwell in the archive of the National Library of Australia seem to reveal a man who enjoyed the timbre and precision of his own voice, who placed particular emphasis on the spoken word, and who believed strongly in enthusiasm for writers and writing as the foundation of good teaching. The aesthetic preferences which emerge are for poetry (particularly the sagas); for Milton (whom he defends against Leavis, without naming him); and for Walter Scott. In all, for literature which reveals the souls of great men (the term is Maxwell's). The interview is equally revealing for the fact that no women are mentioned, as writers, colleagues, family or friends. And although he is now identified primarily as a scholar of Old Icelandic, Maxwell notes that he did not learn the language until entering his fifties; his first major publication was not until ten years after his appointment to the chair at Melbourne.

Maxwell was described by AA Phillips as his 'most intimate university friend, and one of the most engaging and colourful personalities I have ever encountered':

> He was full of contradictions. For example, he drew a deep satisfaction from the exercise of primal energies with axe or gun; but his aesthetic responses were notably delicate, though there were seeming contradictions here. In prose he particularly favoured adventurous romantics such as Scott, Borrow, or T.E. Lawrence; but in poetry he had a special liking for the tight-lipped classicists, such as the medieval balladists, Housman or late Yeats. (Self-titled Essay, 32)[17]

Notwithstanding this friendship with the author of 'The Cultural Cringe',

16 Other short-listed candidates for the Melbourne chair were Allan Edwards and Alec King from Western Australia, and WA Sewell from Auckland. Reports on Behalf of the Standing Committees on Professorial Appointments, Melbourne University, 17 December 1945, University of Melbourne Archives.

17 The two edited the anthology *In Fealty to Apollo*, which appeared when Maxwell was in Oxford.

Maxwell was unsupportive of Australian literature, something which emerges in the interview where he notes his concern that no member of staff should ever specialise in the subject. His correspondence indicates that he was prepared to sacrifice the journal *Meanjin* in order to use the money which funded it, the Lockie Bequest for Australian literature, to provide a position in the English department for Vincent Buckley.[18]

There is a sense in which Maxwell occupied a place at the periphery of the academy in terms of his relatively slender output of published work and his absorption in a new and marginal field of study. But there were counterweights, one of which might have been his speaking voice, the exactness of which is peculiarly redolent of Menzies (who also had a career in the law in Melbourne). So, too, a certain self-confidence, which falters, in a rather moving way, at the end of the interview as he notes his increasing distance from the department at Melbourne, a distance assuaged by his continuing to read the sagas with former students. For during the fifties and sixties Maxwell enjoyed a position at the very centre of the discipline in Australia, a position hinted at and consolidated by his authorship of the essay on 'English' for A Grenfell Price's volume on the humanities in Australian universities. More specifically, Maxwell's influence was felt in his supplying of references for the many students of Melbourne English who entered the academy, references that are preserved in the university's Archives. These testimonials – which like the *Meanjin* archive were a rich source for this study – make fascinating reading, being nearly always positive, judicious, detailed – and late. They tend to begin by discussing the applicant's qualifications and abilities in teaching, and often mention looks and accent. Comments on female students, later senior scholars, express measured disapproval of what is characterised as disorganisation or lack of discipline in style. Reading them as a group, it would seem that 'eccentricity' of view or interest was more tolerated in men than women.

Maxwell's views on postgraduate study, which affected the way in which he evaluated the achievements of his colleagues and students, are expressed frequently in the references and were made public in his essay on 'English':

> In one sense there is no reason why a Ph.D. student, working on an Australian subject, should not begin and end his inquiries here; but most of us would feel that there were strong objections to awarding the degree to a candidate of purely local experience. In Sydney the policy is to insist that

18 In the interview, Maxwell mentions that the decision to appoint Buckley to the position was made before Buckley went to Cambridge. If that were the case, it would make an interesting contrast with the situation at Adelaide, and perhaps had some bearing on Buckley's decision (see below) to write a book rather than to complete a thesis and graduate.

> candidates should spend a year abroad; in Melbourne, that they should take the degree abroad, if they take it at all. (138)

The 'if they take it at all' reflects the lingering effect of views like those expressed by Nichol Smith, who objected to 'professionalising' literary study. Maxwell himself was part of a generation who were directed to the BLitt, and in one reference he expressed approval that a student has decided to enrol in this degree rather than a PhD – although this might also be connected to the fact that the person concerned was female. Clearly, it is culture and not scholarship that was gained in overseas study, hence the remark that there would be 'strong objections to awarding the degree to a candidate of purely local experience'. In several references, Maxwell notes that the applicant is 'handicapped' by having researched only Australian subjects – or, as he expressed it in one letter, 'Good men should not be confined to Aust. Lit'.

THE STORY SO FAR

The commitment to imperialism was energised, intellectually, by a critical idealism remoulded in the colonial environment as a duty and mission to maintain and transmit a wholly British literary aesthetic to students. The ambivalence about the value of Australian education and culture that we can see in some writing from this period is a symptom of the difficulties many experienced in trying to instil faith in the supposedly universal values of English educational institutions. Classics had long reigned supreme in the universities, but English literature came to increasing prominence in a period when 'Englishness' itself became a prized virtue. More specifically, what was coveted was that ideal Englishness shaped in a British university, preferably Oxford or Cambridge, ideally Oxford. With a first in *Literae Humaniores* and some teaching experience, it was possible to 'parachute' into a chair at a relatively young age. MacCallum, a graduate of Glasgow, is the exception, but his teachers and mentors, who would become his referees and patrons, had close connections with Oxford.

Aided in part by packed curricula, and in part by extensive periods of study and travel in Europe, almost all the academics teaching English in the early period were multilingual: German, French and Latin seem to have been regarded as a bare minimum, to which many added a little Greek, and at least one other modern language: for Murdoch, Italian, for example. Many professors of English, such as Cowling, Douglas, Henderson, MacCallum, Murdoch, AT Strong, Waldock, and Williams had active and lengthy careers in research and popular writing. They produced monographs, collections of critical essays, anthologies and scholarly editions, as well as publishing articles in scholarly journals and newspapers. These first two generations of scholars were also, and perhaps most

notably, breathtakingly active in community groups, usually those devoted to literature and drama. Many of the group named above reviewed regularly for the metropolitan newspaper in their state, reading half a dozen new books in a range of European languages and reporting on them every week or every fortnight. They can by no means be characterised as cut off from the literary culture of their time: on the contrary, in many respects, they can be seen as that culture's epicentre, in their home city at least. And they were social elites in a time when political and educational institutions were much more obviously committed to providing resources for that elite, and when the rewards of belonging to that elite were high.

For local candidates, the path to a chair was very different, and longer, than for their English colleagues. An important accomplishment was scholarship in medieval or Elizabethan literature, ideally with a classical slant. Publications were valued, but not to the extent that Oxford or Cambridge degrees were. Taking these degrees produced surrogate Englishness, an attribute necessary at all universities except Sydney. There, the lasting influence of MacCallum was central to the establishment of an independent tradition, but one that was still greatly indebted to an idealised England. The other exception is Western Australia, where Murdoch obtained the chair of English with the direct support of a former prime minister, Alfred Deakin. Put simply, would-be Australian-born academics needed a mentor of sufficient status and will to ensure their appointment was made; only through such strong intervention could the hegemony of 'Englishness' be challenged. It is ironic that some of the most influential male names in the history of the discipline owe their positions to what might be termed 'positive discrimination', even as they scorned the writing and scholarship of women. A precise measure of the hierarchy of English and Australian can be seen in the time which it took for an Australian-born academic to obtain a senior position. Those appointed to chairs from England in this period had an average age of twenty-eight; the average age of British candidates working in Australia at the time of their appointment to a chair was forty-two; the average age of Australian-born candidates who obtained a chair was forty-seven.

If academic staff were *de facto* required to be graduates of an English university, students and others could vigorously protest this policy. Just as students at Melbourne petitioned the university's council in 1911, Sydney undergraduates petitioned the senate to appoint a graduate of Sydney to an assistant lectureship in classics advertised in 1890. There were also complaints about the dominance of English over Irish or Scottish (see M.F.H.), and of British over European (see Thibault). The Scottish is a more complicated case, for several senior figures in the discipline were Scots – notably Mungo MacCallum, also Robert Wallace and, more tenuously, Walter Murdoch. Three Scottish universities were founded in the fifteenth century – St Andrews (1413), Glasgow (1451) and Aberdeen (1495), while Edinburgh dates from 1582.[19] During the nineteenth century these institutions could fairly lay claim to greater credibility than their English rivals and as

a consequence the Scottish 'minority' seems to have been a more powerful force than any other. On the other hand, claims about 'the Scottish invention of English literature' risk overlooking the collisions which occurred between those of Scottish descent or accent, and the intellectual influence of Europe in the nineteenth century: whilst Robert Crawford, who coined the phrase, avoids overstatement, not all commentators who cite his work do.[20]

Despite the significant differences between the universities, Bachelor of Arts courses were relatively standardised in their structure. Study of other languages was often compulsory. There was usually no choice of subjects within a degree until the final year of study, and perhaps not even then. English courses included a large component of language, except at Western Australia. Ironically it was Adelaide – the home of non-specialists – which gave most emphasis to language. Many courses relied upon various editions and volumes of the five-volume collection of *English Prose* edited by William Peacock and published by Oxford University Press in its 'World's Classics' series. Texts tended to be arranged chronologically, an indication of the emphasis on a historical approach to teaching. Against chronology, Shakespeare was often 'done' twice, in first year, and then again in honours, although at Sydney in the interwar period his work seems to have been studied every year. Changes in senior staff almost invariably resulted in a reshuffling of the content of courses, while genre and period often remained fixed – *King Lear* would replace *Hamlet* or a history play; a novel by Thackeray one by Meredith or Trollope; students would read Macaulay's essays, rather than Hazlitt's or Lamb's. In terms of nationality and gender, the texts are overwhelmingly weighted towards male English writers. George Eliot, Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë make occasional appearances, though they are not consistently represented; the number of texts written by anonymous writers, mainly the Bible and Middle English epics, outnumber those written by women.[21] There were some courses in nineteenth-century literature, but the poets and novelists listed on them tend to vary. George Meredith was highly regarded by AT Strong, Mungo MacCallum and Walter Murdoch – who rated him the most important novelist of the Victorian period – but was rarely studied, and was not highly regarded by TG Tucker.[22] Non-fiction prose was given greater empha-

19 These possibly contentious dates are listed on the respective university websites.

20 For a more plausible account, which attends to the very different circumstances in the United States, see Court.

21 To arrive at these figures I compiled a database of every text taught in every course for each year until 1970, using text lists from university calendars.

22 See Strong, *Nature in Meredith and Wordsworth* and *Three Studies in Shelley and an Essay on Nature in Wordsworth and Meredith*; MacCallum, *George Meredith, Poet and Novelist*. Murdoch regularly mentioned Meredith in 'Books and Men' in *The Argus* (see Works Cited) and in essays including Obscurity Again, A Talk with

sis than became customary in the second half of the twentieth century, fiction less. Two popular writers were Thomas Carlyle (especially *Sartor Resartus*) and John Henry Newman (*Idea of a University*). Apart from the odd anthology of Australian poetry, only English writers are represented in the first five decades of the study of literature in Australia. That said, we cannot be sure how closely these lists reflected what was actually taught, and therefore cannot measure the level of Australian content with certainty. It is clear, though, that there was little impetus to diversify or modernise curricula, particularly while library resources were strictly limited and examinations demanded recapitulation rather than interrogation. Above all, the revolutions in English, American and European literature known as modernism that would profoundly alter creative and critical writing were more or less invisible in formal study, notwithstanding the involvement of students in what would become landmarks of Australian modernism, notably the magazines *Barjai* in Brisbane (see Hatherell) and *Angry Penguins* in Adelaide (see Miles).

The upsurge in imperial sentiment that accompanied the First World War and the concomitant denigration of all things Germanic severed some arteries of literary study, vital sources of intellectual rigour and imaginative richness. If the war made (German) idealism and (German) philology suddenly vile, so too did it damage the reputation of (German) Hellenism, (German) Romanticism, and most damaging perhaps, (German) philosophy. Another important effect of the war was to disrupt or cut personal ties between teachers of English and German universities: the withdrawal from these relationships is indicated, symbolically and practically, by the fact that many took on roles as censors. Nevertheless, it seems that some of these connections were maintained in the teeth of the hysteria which swept through Australian universities and which led, at Adelaide, to the absurd proposal that graduates with German ancestry have their degrees rescinded.

The First World War, however, had 'positive' consequences for the influence of British universities and for the study of English literature, for in more or less destroying Germany as a destination for postgraduate training, and the popularity of the rival field of modern languages, it created institutional 'space' for the emergence of the British universities in postgraduate study, and for English as a vernacular study. During the First World War some women were hired on a temporary basis, as many staff and students left university to enlist, but the exclusion of women from senior academic positions was all but absolute. This majority was in a real sense invisible. A male Arts student at Adelaide commented that

> There was, I believe, some sort of organisation for women students, but there were not very many of them [eighty-three out of 210, nearly forty

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George Meredith, and George Meredith. Tucker's view of Meredith drew letters to *The Argus* from Ada Cross and Furnley Maurice.

> percent]. They had a hide-out somewhere in the main building, but I never knew quite where it was. We saw them of course in the Library. (Duncan and Leonard, 63)

The perspective of a female student at Adelaide around the same time was rather different: 'In our day, women were only tolerated by the men. We were not allowed into the Sports Union, or even recognised as University teams' (Duncan and Leonard, 63). It is not surprising that the women students who obtain firsts tend to disappear from calendars and histories, while male students with lower results resurface as part-time or temporary tutors, sometimes going on to obtain full-time academic positions. Women, as mothers and teachers, were entrusted with the work of inculcating 'proper' accents and sensibilities in children, and in many respects they were understood as embodying and guarding imperial and racial virtue. But although maintaining the pre-eminence of the British race and empire was central to the mission of universities like Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide in particular, reason ruled in matters of selection of staff – the appointment of a gentleman of high moral purpose to senior positions was regarded as essential, if not always achievable.

In the period around 1920 there began to be subtle but significant shifts in critical discourses: universal values came to be English and not classical. As representatives, in some sense, of an earlier period, teachers like Brereton, Henderson, Holme, MacCallum and Strong drew (in different ways) on an idealism that proved mobile and long-lasting as a political, a critical, a pedagogical and a social doctrine. But intellectually, in some respects, the discipline could be said to have foundered in the interwar years. Stagnation seemed to ensue as budgets were strained, and there was little or no turnover in staff. Misogyny was exacerbated by the more or less constant fear about being seen to work in a 'soft' area, a fear perhaps exacerbated by war. The constant invoking of imperial authority might be understood as a form of layering of reassurance over doubts about the virility of one's chosen profession. This would explain the pervasiveness of expressions of contempt for women writers, and especially, for women critics – as well as the seductions of a Leavisite criticism which promised a 'muscular' criticism. A fertile ground for Leavisism and practical criticism had been prepared – new reading methodologies developed and spread in England and the United States which seem to promise not merely rigour but vigour.

6
DEBATING LEAVIS

> The trouble is that the Englishman is so quietly convincing about his superiority. The beautiful sheen of his self-assurance exercises an hypnotic influence on its victims. (AA Phillips, The Cultural Cringe)

Amidst the complex and competing forces of literary modernism, political upheaval, military trauma and worldwide depression, the discipline of English experienced profound transformation in England between the wars. But apart from in Western Australia, the effects of this transformation, identified particularly with the work of the critic FR Leavis, would not be felt in force in Australia until the 1960s. As with idealist philosophy, there is no neat and pure method at work here, but rather *competing* schools of thought evident in pedagogy and criticism, as the influence of Leavisism arguably continues to be felt in public life and educational values in Australia.

During and after the Second World War, in the discipline of English in Australia, there was a distinct 'changing of the guard'. The appointees of the 1910s and 1920s left the universities: Murdoch retired in 1939, Holme in 1940, Cowling in 1943 and AJA Waldock in 1950. JIM Stewart, who replaced AT Strong at Adelaide in 1934, returned to take up a senior lectureship in Ireland in 1946. The last of the group who span this period are JJ Stable, who retired from Queensland in 1952, and AB Taylor, who left Tasmania in 1957. This turnover preceded a period of rapid expansion of the tertiary sector which, in the 1950s and in particular the 1960s, enabled a group of much younger men, mainly Oxford graduates, to obtain chairs while still in their mid thirties. Many had few publications and little teaching experience. Members of this generation are distinguished from their predecessors (other than Robert Wallace) by having postgraduate training specifically in English literature, and by their tendency to restrict themselves to English rather than European literature or languages; most worked in isolation, too, from the now burgeoning and dynamic North American literary scholarship. In general they seem to have opted for conservative versions of the discipline, perhaps in the

face of rapid social change that seemed to threaten what were now claimed as the traditions of English literary study.

To the extent that it is possible to generalise, many of this new generation can be associated with QD and FR Leavis, who in turn claimed to draw much of their missionary zeal from Matthew Arnold's work. Others self-consciously adhered to what they saw as a more 'scholastic' tradition, deliberately eschewing what Chris Baldick has called 'the social mission of English criticism'. Superficially, these competing critical and pedagogical modes are associated with the education in English literature received at Cambridge and Oxford respectively, and in Australia would come to be associated with Melbourne and Sydney respectively. (That said, postgraduate student destinations gradually began to diversify, assisted in part by the Commonwealth Postgraduate Scholarship scheme.) However the new pre-eminence of English also reflected the declining status of classical languages – the exception being Oxford, where more than half the academics were classicists – as well as the separation from English of the discipline of linguistics. Classics diminished in influence as Australian universities dropped the requirements of Greek, and then Latin for matriculation, evidence of the influence of schools, as well as the pressure to increase student numbers.

ELIOT AND RICHARDS

In the face of what was, in the 1920s, widespread challenge to the value of the study of classics, TS Eliot offered one of the most influential arguments for the value of the past, and the role of the creative writer. Eliot argued for the reinvigoration of the classical 'inheritance', implicitly generalising from his arguments about the nature of the creative writer's relationship to literary texts, to literary education. In some senses Eliot himself was an 'outsider', having been born in St Louis, Missouri, before studying at Harvard, thence Merton College Oxford, ultimately becoming not only an Anglican but a British subject (Drabble, 321). While the First World War was still in progress, and almost immediately after his arrival in England, he made a staggering claim to the European cultural inheritance: 'It is the final perfection, the consummation of an American to become, not an Englishman, but a European – something which no born European, no person of any European nationality, can become' (quoted in Baldick, *The Social Mission*, 111). Eliot's move was towards a dramatic assimilation.

Renowned as a poet, editor and critic, Eliot offered a thoroughly conservative articulation of the relationship between past and present in literature in his essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'. In parallel with Macaulay's Minute (for the nineteenth century), this fluent and persuasive piece is perhaps the most influential text in twentieth-century literary education in English-speaking countries, as well as countries in which literary education in English is significant,

notably India. Eliot outlines a vision of historical order that implies both perpetual obligation and perpetual subordination to the past: creative writers are enjoined, in the words of Ezra Pound, to 'make it new'.[1] The paragraph from the essay that is quoted to support this view is always the same:

> the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity. (Eliot, 22–23)

The argument here rests on a metaphor of wholeness that purports to be diachronic, but is synchronic in its effect: it does not link past and present, but places of difference which must affiliate to the centre. However nonsensical to a historian, in its simplifying of the relationship of past to present, this set of claims illustrates Eliot's view of the function of tradition: as an overwhelming force that individuals must acknowledge their subordination to.

Pierre Bourdieu uses the term *habitus* to describe that collection of behaviours and demeanours which become normative in an institutional environment. His description of this concept is strikingly similar to Eliot's formulation of literary influence and innovation: 'The *habitus*, embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history – is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product' (*Logic of Practice*, 56). What is crucial, here, is the *forgetting of history*, a history of what is often conflict and competition, which occurs after the time in which specific values or practices become normative. This forgetting of history accompanies the internalising of institutional behaviours as norms, thus these norms are regarded as timeless and authoritative.

> This autonomy is that of the past, enacted and acting, which, functioning as accumulated capital, produces history on the basis of history and so ensures the permanence in change that makes the individual agent a world within the world. The *habitus* is a spontaneity without consciousness or will ….

1 Noel Macainsh has shown that it has been this understanding of tradition, as affiliation with the colonising culture, that has been mobilised in discussions about Australian literature: see his Tradition and Australian Literature, 42; see also John Colmer, Constructing a National Tradition.

(Bourdieu, *Logic*, 56)

Eliot's prescription, and Bourdieu's critique, are about a similar process: the subordination of critical judgement in the present to the authority of what is imagined as an ineluctable past. Thus the act of knowing that past is in one sense an expression of a different kind of obligation, arising from the belief that things need not be as they are. By contrast, Eliot's claims take the authority of order for granted; what is significant for this history is that he should make those claims at precisely the time when that authority he declared eternal and right was under threat, not least and literally by war itself.

For Eliot, the past comes to seem timeless, eternal, universal, and 'right', in the moment that it is embodied in the speaker who respects it. Put simply, the great seduction of Eliot's formulation is that it not only explains the relationship between a writer and literary history, it explains *and helps to form* a homologous relationship – based on an equivalent process of assimilation – between individuals and the institutions in which they become students, teachers and critics. For the colonial student at Oxford or Cambridge, for example, initiation into the great tradition is a process by which their own culture is set aside in favour of absorption of (and thereby into) an idealised Anglo-European cultural order. In Eliot's formulation, this order is signified by a select group of literary texts. But texts are released from the historical conditions of their making, made meaningful instead by their place in a tradition, just as the work of the critic and teacher are made meaningful by their place in a larger mission. In an essay with a similar theme to 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', 'The Classics and the Man of Letters', Eliot pointed explicitly to the Eurocentric nature of his understanding of the term 'culture':

> My particular thesis has been that the maintenance of classical education is essential to the maintenance of the continuity of English Literature … My appeal can only address itself to those who already accept the contention that the preservation of a living literature is more than a matter of interest only to amateurs of verse and readers of novels; and who see in it the preservation of developed speech, and of civilization against barbarism. (222, 224)

Notwithstanding its magisterial tone, then, this essay, like Macaulay's Minute, is a deeply polemical one: a strident intervention in debates about the meaning and uses of classics. But modern readers are not always encouraged to ask why it might have seemed necessary to Eliot to make such arguments at the time; instead, the essay is read as exactly that timeless truth it advocates belief in. Indeed, to put such a question about historical context is to refuse the obedience Eliot demands: there is a single order of value, making context irrelevant. But

Eliot's essay could be used to provide a kind of logic to chronological study, a logic that was more compelling than that provided by the likes of Austin Dobson.

Another important but radically different influence on literary study developed in this period was the work of IA Richards. Richards is identified with 'practical criticism', evaluation of a text through close reading. Richards had attended Clifton College and then went to Cambridge, where he studied moral sciences before being appointed to teach in the newly created school of English immediately after the end of the First World War. His major publications, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) and *Practical Criticism* (1929), were highly influential because they were – or seemed to be – the first works to outline a teachable method of reading literature that was not strictly historical. Practical criticism aimed to develop students' ability to discern good from bad, the great from the merely sentimental, teaching and testing by using texts whose author's name was not disclosed.

In some respects, of course, this reflects a return to the notion of the intrinsic value of texts, but Richards' methods were informed by the new discipline of psychology, and had the particular advantage of being brilliantly suited to examination. Again, though, we can see a lack of setting out of the relationship between the intellectual basis of an argument (that students should be able to discern great literature from the banal) and the pedagogical methods such a belief seemed to presume (*how* was this to be done?). In fact, because the most admired scholarship is just that – based on research – the work of implementing a teaching program usually comes *after* ideas have become orthodox. As a modern example, after 'theory' hit in the 1970s and 1980s, institutions tended to respond by developing 'theory subjects' which taught a different school of criticism each week, rather than rethinking the premises of each subject along theoretical lines. We might more logically look to institutional and cultural conditions to explain the emergence and popularity of Richard's ideas, and indeed, they can be seen as responding to quite specific and urgent needs: to establish and maintain the cultural authority of English texts by developing a rigorous testing regime which could operate on a mass scale.

Richards' influence was particularly strong in the United States, in part because of the success of his student William Empson, in part because Richards himself took up a position at Harvard in 1931, remaining there until 1963. Along with Empson, American critics associated with New Criticism such as Cleanth Brookes, Robert Penn Warren, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate and WK Wimsatt, as well as Richards himself, were widely read and taught in Australia. The terms of the new critical vocabulary became the coins in the Christmas pudding that was the literary text: students searched for 'irony', 'ambiguity', 'metaphor' and 'metonymy', and were amply rewarded for finding it.[2] Among key concepts are 'the intentional fallacy' – the belief that it is possible to answer questions about meaning by uncovering the author's intention – and 'the pathetic fallacy',

the view that literary characters can be judged as living beings (see Wimsatt and Beardsley). The influences of practical criticism and of the New Critics were especially appropriate to the teaching of poetry because, as has often been observed, it takes about an hour of 'close reading' to 'do' a short but complex poem in a tutorial, identifying and explaining the effect of particular rhetorical devices. To that one can add that this focus on the formal elements of a text to the exclusion of questions of context has the considerable advantage for teachers in requiring minimal preparation.

In his early and influential writings on literature, criticism, education and culture FR Leavis drew heavily from Eliot's work; he is also often identified with New Criticism (a later development). In his most famous works of criticism, books like *The Common Pursuit, The Great Tradition* and *Revaluation*, Leavis boldly sought to reconfigure the English canon, and his views were consolidated by supporters who contributed to an essay series published in *Scrutiny* under the deliberately provocative title 'Revaluations'. The task was to sort the great from the merely good, or worse, the great from the fraud. And certainly the influence was widespread in Australia. I like to imagine that there was a real frisson opening the new issue of the Leavis flagship, the journal *Scrutiny*: what if your favourite author, featured in your honours subject, had suddenly lost favour? If someone you had denounced as a fraud were declared a great? Surely this must have happened, for every Australian university teaching in the period the journal was published, except New South Wales (then a university of technology), hold complete sets. The National Library in Canberra purchased the 1963 reprint; a further reprint was issued in 2008, a measure not just of historical significance but of ongoing influence.

For Leavis and his associates the concern was not so much with creative writing (as it was for TS Eliot), nor with tools for judgement (as for Richards) or interpretation (as for the New Critics), however important these things could come to be for teachers who embraced the Leavisite approach. Although Leavis was regarded almost universally as a brilliant reader of literary texts, and a subscription to *Scrutiny* de rigueur for any self-respecting young Turk, it was perhaps primarily in the area of curriculum and pedagogy that Leavis and his followers were to have the greatest influence. Leavis was distinctive in his interest in schools and teacher training (see for example his *Education and the University*), echoing the concern with worker education and the extension movement that had been so important to Green, and to early generations of tertiary teachers of English. Thus Leavisism also had a strong impact in high schools and in what were then called teachers' colleges.

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2 Reference works of the period, targetting students, often seem to mix this new vocabulary with classical rhetorical terms: see for example MH Abrams' *A Glossary of Literary Terms*.

Like almost every critical movement – we can recall Murdoch's laconic reformulation of idealism as 'le vrai, le beau, & le bien' – Leavisite criticism is fairly easily condensed and simplified, whether by admirers or by antagonists. While only a handful of critics in Australia chose to attack Leavis directly, most dipped their lid to the leader before expressing hostility towards followers, who were generally characterised as simplistic evangelists who had forgotten the imperatives of scholarship because of their obsession with moral development. Nevertheless, it was not least this capacity to be simplified that made Leavisite criticism the single most influential force in the discipline of English in the twentieth century. More than any other intellectual mode it offered its adherents a rationale that could span both pedagogy and criticism; it gave clarity, force and high moral purpose to the work of teaching English; and perhaps for that reason, it was attractive to intense personalities who in turn devoted their lives to ensuring its success. For Leavis believed that the universities – both of them – had a central role to play in preserving and maintaining culture.[3] Cambridge, like Oxford, was

> a symbol of cultural tradition – of cultural tradition still perceived as a directing force, representing a wisdom older than modern civilization and having an authority that should check and control the blind drive onward of material and mechanical development. (*Education and the University*, 16)

For Leavis and for Leavisites, teachers of English had a special responsibility to revivify an idealised Elizabethan England, a cultural 'option' available to a particular class who could be defined not by inheritance but by education. As Alan Sinfield explains, the Leavises had insisted that 'literary appreciation was not a class accomplishment but an individual attainment'; consequently, a literary text was 'presented as a universal culture, detached from the class faction that had produced and sponsored it, and [mastery of which was] then used as a criterion for entry to a different faction (Literature, 55).

Leavisite criticism seemed to offer social mobility for lower middle-class and colonial students; in the view of Hans Gadamer in *Wahrheit und Methode*, the rise of 'taste' as an ideal in Europe was entwined with a loss of faith in and influence of not only the aristocracy, but the classics.

> Taste is not just the ideal that a new society establishes … Members of the 'good society' no longer recognize one another and legitimate themselves by birth and rank. Fundamentally, this is now achieved by nothing other

3 The joke is stolen from Sir Humphrey Appleby, who makes it in *Yes Prime Minister*; Sir Humphrey attended 'Ballie' [Balliol] College, an Oxford institution of which (in one episode) he is keen to become Master.

> than their shared judgements or, better, by the fact that they alone knew how to elevate themselves above the narrow-mindedness of interests and the privateness of preferences and lay claim to true judgment. (quoted in Berghahn, 39)

The Leavisite revolution was not to *invent* the moral dimension of the study of literature, as is sometimes claimed, but to re-present that moral mission within narratives about class mobility and personal transformation that made sense not only to policy makers and administrators, but to students, particularly those seeking tertiary education for the first time in their family. These narratives drive literature itself, including plays like *Educating Rita* – in this kind of story, Rita must be studying English literature; the plot, which revolves around personal transformation, does not work if she is studying mathematics. The genius of the Leavises lay in making the appreciation of literature and the transformation of personal taste the foundation of pedagogy and testing, in a way that one senses the followers of Green had struggled to do. Crucially, this mission was articulated as a national one. In his 'Retrospect' on the journal *Scrutiny*, Leavis modestly noted that those who worked in the journal recognised

> that we belonged to a common civilization and a positive culture. That culture was for us pre-eminently represented by English literature. We believed there was an English literature – that one had, if intelligently interested in it, to conceive English literature as something more than an aggregate of individual works. We recognized, then, that like the culture it represented it must, in so far as living and real, have its life in the present – and that life is growth. That is, we were concerned for conservation and continuity, but were radically anti-academic. (*Scrutiny*, 5)

Leavis' claim to have been 'radically anti-academic' is code for Oxford – although he presents the enterprise as antagonistic to the Cambridge hierarchy – but ironically it might also be understood as invoking the Oxford revolution of the mid-nineteenth century which was regarded at the time as 'radically anti-academic'. Both movements aimed to give a moral mission to humanities, and sought, above all, to insert graduates into educational institutions where they might cultivate believers.

Like Jowett's own pedagogy, the Leavisite mission was intensely imperialist, and curiously sexualised. There is a constant emphasis on virility, on the 'manliness' and 'muscularity' of chosen writers' work, at odds with the demand for readers to be 'sensitive' – the contradiction evident in AA Phillips' description of Ian Maxwell. The emphasis on masculinity helped to obscure the degree to which reading itself could be implicitly feminising; there was also an overt antagonism to the homosocial worlds exemplified by Bloomsbury and the earlier Aesthetes

(Sinfield, *Literature*, 79). That Leavisite criticism was a crusade against Wilde, Woolf and others was emphasised, albeit euphemistically, by Lionel Trilling, in his essay 'Dr Leavis and the Moral Tradition':

> one feels that it is not the actual qualities of Congreve, Sterne, Dickens, and Meredith that Dr. Leavis is responding to when he dismisses them but rather the simulacra of those qualities as they have been used in, say, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* [which foregrounds gender switching] and as they there suggest the social qualities he dislikes. (*A Gathering of Fugitives*, 106)[4]

Leavisite criticism provided a rationale for the study of English that could easily be fitted to flourishing pronouncements on policy – the rhetoric of standards, the valorisation of the text, and veneration of the teacher as arbiter of taste. It also destroyed the reputation of some creative writers. More neutral, but less often remarked upon, is that it brought a specific literary form, the novel, not merely to prominence but to pre-eminence. A measure of the moment's simplicity and self-confidence is that the basic tenets of Leavisite thought meshed perfectly with patriotic sentiment, unlike the critical idealism, the classicism, and the cosmopolitanism (in intellectual and literary tastes) which it so dramatically challenged. This is why critics like AT Strong, passionate imperialists but classical scholars to their toenails, were less than enthusiastic about the nationalist push in the teaching of English that followed the end of the First World War. This push was most clearly manifested in the publication of the 'Newbolt Report' on *The Teaching of English in England* and George Sampson's *English for the English*, both of which strongly advocated the teaching of English to encourage nationalism. Leavisite criticism, as has often been said, worked to answer the challenge raised by these two books.

In colonial environments, the authority of the Leavises and their colleagues was *textual*: few in Australia had worked with or even met them. In these circumstances the authors and their work were more able to retain their textual magic, theirs the authority of the printed word. Equally, the legibility of Leavisite critics within specifically English debates about relations between literature, culture, and the nation was almost certainly diminished for readers who were not in Eng-

4 In passing, it should be noted that Trilling's own work offered an inspiration for critics in Australia seeking to formulate a cultural nationalist approach to reading that was also cognisant of recent developments in literary and critical theory. For a brief discussion of Trilling's role in giving 'literature a role … that was among the most important on earth: to represent and thus preserve human consciousness' and allowing 'the fulfillment of the faculties described in Kant's third critique, the critique of aesthetic judgment' see Newfield (*Ivy and Industry*, 151).

land. The colonial student/academic could read essays and reviews in *Scrutiny*, and Leavisite criticism, generally not in terms of their place within a debate in England about the uses of the national literature, but as evidence of the universal value of that literature. Of all those who subsequently held chairs of English in Australia only Allan Edwards, head of English at the University of Western Australia, had encountered the decidedly marginal Leavis of the interwar period, thence can be identified with the 'dissident' movement that Leavis claimed to have inaugurated. Later disciples who went to England in the 1950s encountered him as the patriarch of English studies.

PERTH TO MELBOURNE

After the retirement of Walter Murdoch, Edwards held the chair of English at UWA from 1941 to 1974. It is likely that the opinion of Alec King, Murdoch's son-in-law, who was also an admirer of Leavis, was important in the decision to appoint him.[5] David Bradley, in an obituary, suggested that after his arrival Edwards turned Murdoch's 'Oxford' department into a 'Cambridge' one, but it is a measure of the speed with which literature came to dominate language study that Bradley could regard Murdoch's curriculum, which was sometimes thought lightweight (see Alexander, and discussion above), as unduly scholastic. Born in 1909 in England, Edwards died in Perth in 1995, having come to Western Australia from Cape Town. He was reputedly 'a stunning student at Cambridge; a pupil of IA Richards and of FR Leavis [who] thought him the brightest student he had ever taught' (David Bradley).

The astonishing self-confidence which characterises Leavisite criticism is evident in Edwards' early work, in particular – although by no means are other kinds of scholarship necessarily inclined to modesty. The arrogance that is a product of method and milieu is crucial to authority, as Paige Porter has argued:

> the air of truth and tradition that is conveyed … ensures that for the most part we do not ordinarily question whether these assumptions really are the best or indeed the only way to understand the world. (3)[6]

In Edwards' reviews, written when he was still in his mid twenties, almost every

5 It is an indication of a congruity in approach that King and Martin Ketley's *The Control of Language* was favourably reviewed in *Scrutiny* prior to Edwards taking up his appointment in Perth (see TR Barnes).

6 It is instructive to compare the tone and certainty of Edwards' reviews with the observations by the heart-breakingly eloquent 'Anon' in her essay on 'Not Making It' [in academia, because of her gender].

sentence pronounces a judgement on the adequacy of the creative writer's enterprise.

The certainty is evident in his essay on John Webster that was the very first of the *Scrutiny* 'Revaluations'. Edwards attempted to move Webster several steps down the literary league ladder, beginning his essay with the kind of uncompromising declaration of taste that marked so many contributions to *Scrutiny*:

> the effervescent enthusiasm of Romantic critics for Elizabethan drama is suspect to-day just as most Romantic poetry is suspect. Lamb and Swinburne and their imitators have been responsible for a great deal of cant and nonsense. In praise and dispraise they are fulsome, hyperbolical, often hysterical. (12)

This certainty could be regarded as a failure of scholarship, but Leavis and his followers believed it was precisely such uncompromising expressions of opinion that would energise English as a discipline – a view proven correct.

Allan Edwards' presence in the west prompted debates about the teaching of English, conducted in the departmental journal *Westerly*. The first shot, in print at least, was fired by a moral philosopher, Julius Kovesi (whose brother Paul was a member of the English department). Kovesi called for dialogue between English and philosophy, and attacked the work of IA Richards. His essay was answered by two stern letters, one from Edwards and one from Frank Gibbon, both accusing Kovesi of ignorance of literary criticism; Edwards also defended the work of Eliot and Leavis, notwithstanding Kovesi's focus on Richards. Gibbon wrote defending criticism *per se*, and in the same issue of *Westerly* he and colleague Tom Gibbons produced what amounted to a New Critical manifesto in an essay with the title 'A Critical Time'. A brief reply by Alec King, 'A Too Too Critical Time', appeared in the following issue of *Westerly*. King defended the idea of evaluation, from a perspective that was generally humanistic rather than specifically Leavisite. This relatively narrow debate is symptomatic of the approaches to literature that students could encounter at Western Australia, modes described by Jim Wieland as often 'naïve, text-centred, and a-historical. Any text we read had an autonomous, autotelic existence in which we were to find a universal and authoritative meaning. The New Criticism was rampant, although no-one admitted to it' (169–70). John Hay likewise suggests 'lectures, tutorials, coffee-room conversations', and even staff-meetings, 'had in fact only one [albeit hidden] agenda item: the maintenance of the Britishness of English literature' (18).

I also suspect that the shift of these debates from private feelings and conversations into print says more about tensions within and between departments and/or individuals than it does about deep intellectual differences, as Edwards' mixing of Richards with Leavis and Eliot, and the criticism of Leavisism by Alec King, would suggest. In practice, things do tend to get mixed up. As a first-year

student at the University of Western Australia in 1980, I was badly thrown by the first assignment which asked me to write a 'practical criticism' (Richards' term). My very nice college tutor was unable to disguise her disbelief when I explained I did not know what 'practical criticism' was, but in discussion we realised that what was 'practical criticism' in Western Australia was 'language' in New South Wales (where I had gone to school). The only books of criticism in my state school library were by FR Leavis, but the ideas taught in class as preparation for the state matriculation exam owed most to New Criticism. At UWA Leavis was never mentioned; tutorials used a mix of new critical techniques while most lecturers, with a useful lack of consistency, tended to present an overview of historical and critical ideas about texts. While disputants might make a great deal of differences in the *Westerly* debate, their methods were suspiciously similar in practice, in part because a little more ecumenical than either Wieland or Hay concede.

Although it was some time before Edwards' presence was felt in the rest of the country, it is a measure of his eventual influence in Australia that, as Bradley notes, at least ten members of the UWA department who worked with him went on to hold chairs in other universities. Thus Perth became a conduit of Leavisism, a mode which has been associated most closely with the universities of Melbourne, Monash and La Trobe. The movement of academics from Perth to the city of Melbourne is a marked trend: Bradley, along with King and Jean Tweedie (Jean Bradley) moved to Monash, where King held a chair from 1966 to 1969, and Bradley likewise from 1972 to 1989. Derick Marsh, a South African who spent time teaching at Natal and Sydney, was foundation professor at La Trobe from 1966 to 1977. After a three-year period in the chair at Western Australia, Marsh returned to La Trobe for a further decade, during which time he was one of the participants in the 'La Trobe debate'. This controversy was prompted by an American member of the department of English, Lucy Frost, who had argued that social and historical questions needed to be considered in the reading and teaching of literature – anathema to a New Critic. Frost's essay, although not openly directed towards her colleagues, constituted a thoughtful critique of new criticism, and predictably, attracted a hostile response (for an account of the debate, see Healy). Marsh's successor, Richard Freadman, came to La Trobe from UWA, and can be identified with a small group of critics arguing for a reconfigured Leavisism that centralises moral/ethical questions (see for example Freadman and Miller).

The claims made in this chapter about the broader influence of Leavisite criticism on educational philosophy, pedagogy and teacher education can be more easily seen in the work of another academic in Australia who, like Edwards, was connected with both Leavis and IA Richards. In his essay 'Australian Literature and the Universities', Bruce Bennett has drawn attention to the work of Ernest Biaggini, calling it a forgotten aspect of literary studies in Australia. Bennett con-

cludes that Biaggini's work implicitly constituted an argument for the study of Australian literature. Although both Bennett and Ian Hunter have made claims about Biaggini's obscurity, in fact he was a well-known teacher and extension lecturer in Adelaide, who published a number of books on literature and education. Four of these were favourably reviewed in *Scrutiny* (see Edwards; Birrell; Chapman [2]); Biaggini also produced an autobiography, *You Can't Say That*.

The first and the most extended of the *Scrutiny* reviews was written by Allan Edwards. In considering Biaggini's *English in Australia*, Edwards argues that Leavisism must be elitist if it is to be workable:

> Most people are unlikely to benefit from any intensive study of literature; they simply lack sensibility. *To attempt mass education in literature is to make trouble*; it merely results in widespread dislike of literature … Mr. Biaggini writes as a moralist from a deep sense of social responsibility. It is a pleasure to pay tribute to his honesty, his courage, and his resourcefulness. (Ideals and Facts, 99; my emphasis)

Whilst there is a startling conservatism in Edwards' claim, Biaggini's own work was in mass education. His research was close in scope and method to that of IA Richards, but owed its moral energy to Leavis. Specifically, it reflected the belief that literary education should be used to combat the dehumanisation caused by industrialisation, and the materialism implied by popular culture, two central goals of the Leavisite program (see Mulhern 101). Biaggini suggested that 'what we want is not a visiting Leavis, not even a Leavis as principal of a teachers' college, but a Leavis in charge of every teachers' college in Australia. Then we would have a bloodless revolution in a generation and our culture might be saved' (*You Can't Say That*, 141–42). But things could not always be saved, and *Scrutiny* ceased publication. In 1956 four young lecturers at Adelaide, bristling with initials and indignation, wrote to *Essays in Criticism* to lament its demise (see Davies et al.).

It was through pedagogy that Leavisite criticism had its most lasting impact in Australia, but it is difficult to convey just what was required of an outstanding student who adopted the Leavisite method. This requires a separate study in itself, but comparison of two tertiary examination papers from Melbourne University give some idea. A paper for a third-year examination in English in 1928, preserved in the Gouldthorpe papers, focuses mainly on the work of Matthew Arnold, although there are other options. Students are asked to determine Arnold's finest poem and explain the reasons for their choice; to outline Arnold's main contribution to literary criticism; or to describe and illustrate his attitude to nature. In Part B of the paper, they could compare the craftsmanship of Tennyson and Browning; contrast Carlyle and Newman as prose writers; discuss the work of three living poets; or describe, from their reading, the main charac-

teristics of nineteenth-century English literature.

By 1956, in questions set for honours (fourth-year) students, there is a visible 'intensification' in the kinds of responses required, and a shift from analysis of the work of critics and essayists to a kind of criticism of the emotions. It is a subtle change, one that reflects the influence of Leavisism, and it is helpful to consider the paper in detail to try and demonstrate the precise nature of what was expected. Students were required to answer three questions from Section A, and two from Section B:

Section A.

1. 'Poetry should surprise by a fine excess'. Discuss Hopkins' poetry in the light of this statement, with special reference to a few passages or poems, *or*, 'The interplay of conflicting emotions gives dramatic intensity to Hopkins' greatest poetry'. Test the truth of this statement by considering any suitable poem or poems.

2. 'The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative"; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events, which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion'. T.S. Eliot. Examine any *two* of the following poems in the light of this statement: 'Journey of the Magi', 'Marina', 'Sweeney among the Nightingales', 'Ash Wednesday III', 'Gerontion'. (You may if you wish discuss a part or parts of 'The Waste Land' instead.) *or* 'Eliot's weakness as a poet is his unwillingness to create sustained beauty'. Discuss this statement with reference to selected examples.

3. Francis Meres wrote in 1598 of 'mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare' and of his 'sugared Sonnets'. How much of the essence of Shakespeare's sonnets do you think this description catches?

4. A gifted student once said that Burns' poems, although very good in their way, were of course not 'poetry', as Eliot's 'La Figlia Che Piange' was. Examine some of Burns' best poems, and give your opinion of the judgement mentioned above and of the standards that it implies, *or*, 'Burns' writing may be uneven, but he almost always puts a poem together well'. Discuss with reference to a few selected examples.

5. 'Meredith is a prose Browning, and so is Browning. He used poetry as a medium for writing in prose'. (Oscar Wilde.) Ignoring Meredith, what do you make of this comment on Browning? *or*, Give your estimate of Browning's achievement in *Pompilia* (Book vii of *The Ring and the Book*).

Section B.

6. 'The *Oedipus Rex* is a magnificent indictment of the ways of the gods to men'. Do you consider this an adequate comment on the play? *or*, 'An action like the action of the *Antigone* of Sophocles, which turns upon the conflict between the heroine's duty to her brother's corpse and

that to the laws of her country, is no longer one in which it is possible that one should feel a deep interest'. (Matthew Arnold.) Do you agree with this judgement? *or*, 'As a drama, the *Oedipus Coloneus* is admittedly defective, but it is impressive as the expression of a poetic vision of life'. Discuss.

7. '*Everyman* is a genuinely dramatic play, but it is the development of ideas, not action, that makes it so'. Discuss.

8. 'It is largely through its variety that *Hamlet* is the most fascinating of tragedies; but what it gains in interest it loses in concentrated tragic power'. Do you think this true of *Hamlet* in comparison with any other of the great Shakespearian tragedies, or with the *Oedipus Rex*.

9. Ibsen has been called a 'classical' dramatist. What evidence do you find for and against this view in *Ghosts*.[7]

There are two recurring elements in these questions, 'standards' and sensibility. Rather than instructions like describe or compare, students in 1956 are asked to comment upon 'fine excess', 'dramatic intensity', 'sustained beauty', the 'poetic vision of life', 'concentrated tragic power' and 'the essence of Shakespeare'. Although Eliot is present in several forms in the 1956 examination, specifically with the question on the objective correlative, the main intellectual influences are clearly Leavis and Arnold, and what is most highly rewarded is a confident judgement of value (à la 'Revaluations'). The questions invite assurance, something modelled in the reference to the 'gifted student' in question four. The 1956 examination is slightly more prescriptive in terms of texts and aesthetics, while the 1928 paper places more emphasis on literary history. In terms of genre there is a discernible shift away from prose towards drama, although poetry is the dominant form in both. Although the 1956 paper could be taken as recalling Green's emphasis on searching for moral examples, it seems far more important to make judgements about literary quality, although the degree to which reflection on the terms of that preference (as Green called on his colleagues to do) is required is unclear.

Educated differently, I struggle to understand the meaning of the key terms in this examination, which seem to reference emotion rather than critical interpretation or scholarship, but it seems fair to allow Melbourne's most famous Leavisite, SL Goldberg, to offer comment on likely reasons for my failure:

It may well come from a deep and quite sincere lack of moral curiosity, for

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It may well come from a deep and quite sincere lack of moral curiosity, for instance; or from a wholly authentic incapacity to *see* differences of quality … Then again it may come from the kind of political zeal that regards any form of discrimination as 'elitist' … [or] from the warm, foggy 'pluralism' which supposes … every approach to be just as good as any other. (*Agents and Lives*, 5)

> instance; or from a wholly authentic incapacity to *see* differences of quality … Then again it may come from the kind of political zeal that regards any form of discrimination as 'elitist' … [or] from the warm, foggy 'pluralism' which supposes … every approach to be just as good as any other. (*Agents and Lives*, 5)

The passage is from a posthumously published work in which Goldberg argues for restoring the moral purpose of literary study; the work of William Shakespeare, and of George Eliot, is featured.

Leavisism at Melbourne strengthened during the next two decades, mainly through the influence of Vincent Buckley, Goldberg, and their followers. Born in 1925 and 1926 respectively, Buckley and Goldberg had both returned to Melbourne after study in England, Goldberg having taken a BLitt at Oxford, while Buckley wrote the book *Poetry and Morality* during his time at Cambridge. Leavisite criticism at Melbourne reached its high water mark, measured in terms of postgraduate research, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, by which time Maxwell had retired and his two former students both held chairs. Goldberg obtained the Robert Wallace chair of English in 1966 while Buckley was awarded a personal chair two years later.

A former student of Buckley's, who became a teacher of literature in a Melbourne university, commented to me that 'his lectures were like religious experiences'. The religious simile is particularly apt. Born in the Victorian country town of Romsey, Buckley traced his descent mainly from Irish Catholic forebears, although later in life he became more concerned with the 'Irish' than the 'Catholic' part of his ancestry. Educated at a Jesuit college and involved with religious politics and culture early in his career, Buckley has chronicled his life in the autobiography *Cutting Green Hay*, and is the subject of a biography by John McLaren. In the late 1950s Buckley was involved with *Prospect*, a journal in which contributors aimed to formulate Catholic social criticism. He was also a member of a group called the Apostolate, which took as its mission 'the reconciliation of … Church and University' (Buckley, *The Incarnation*, 19). In 'The World Awaiting Redemption', from a volume of essays he himself edited, Buckley argued that the missionary enterprise rested on the transformation of the apostle himself – the mission was a resolutely male one – and not simply on attempts to introduce Christianity to Melbourne University (*The Incarnation*, 35).

The aim of Buckley's *Poetry and Morality* is to develop interpretations of the work of Arnold, Eliot and Leavis that can be used to underpin a criticism, based on (Christian) ethics, that is applicable not just to the novel but to poetry. His three critics are those influential in the middle part of the twentieth century, but it is a puzzle why he did not choose also to write on one of the idealists, such as Green, Ker or Caird, whose work is more pertinent to his central problem. In the book, Buckley is emphatic, though, that he is not interested in philosophical

methods or questions, a measure of the ways in which scholars and teachers of English now focused on a 'national' history in ways that writers like Arnold, Eliot and their contemporaries quite literally would not have understood. The broader imperial thrust of the book is clear: Arnold is chosen because he is distinctively English, a point which seems to simplify Arnold's own views as well as to blur the meanings of that term to the advantage of the discipline.

Buckley begins the first of his two chapters on Leavis by suggesting that Leavis was acutely attuned to the institutional politics of literary education, something that would also be reflected in Buckley's career and criticism. Perhaps overly influenced by his own religiosity, the following statement provides the clearest possible distillation of Leavis' ideas as they were deployed in Buckley's own criticism:

> what [Leavis'] criticism has … come to point to with increasing authority, is the fact of great literature as transcending a merely individual consciousness, even while it remains firmly rooted in such a consciousness. The universal character of literature is seen to be of a nearly religious kind. (*Poetry and Morality*, 196)

Responses to *Poetry and Morality* were mixed. Raymond Williams, a student of Leavis, declared that while the chapters on Arnold were unenlightening, those on Leavis were useful, and the section on Eliot brilliant. Gustav Cross was enthusiastic in *Quadrant* about the study of the 'three greatest critics of the past hundred years' and reviewed the book again for the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Another sympathetic reader was GKW Johnston. But it is hard to argue that the book influenced academic criticism in Australia, although there is evidence that these kinds of views inform areas like secondary teaching (especially in Victoria) and the literary media; it is still routine to evaluate literature in terms that relate to moral purpose and universal value. More generally, the entwining of personalities and institutions from Perth to Melbourne show a Leavisism at once diffuse and passionately expressed, in the teaching of English literature in the middle of the twentieth century. Passions were to rise at institutions other than UWA and La Trobe, though, as Leavisism found strong opposition north of the Murray River.

MUSICAL CHAIRS: SYDNEY

Goldberg spent a relatively brief period in Sydney in the Challis chair of English literature. Unusually, all three chairs of English at the university were vacant: the McCaughey chair in early English language and literature, the Challis chair in English literature, and a newly created chair of Australian literature. The McCaughey professor had been AG Mitchell, who although he did considerable

research on old English literature, is probably best known for his publications on spoken English in Australia and who became foundation vice-chancellor at Macquarie University. The former Challis professor (English literature) was Wesley Milgate, a specialist in the work of John Donne, who had taken up a senior position at the ANU.

The first professorial appointment made was of George Harrison Russell, then an associate professor at Sydney, to the McCaughey chair. After graduating from Victoria in New Zealand and writing a PhD thesis on 'The Prose of the English Recusants 1558–1603' at Cambridge, Russell taught at Victoria University College, at King's College, London, and Sydney. His first professorial position was at Queensland, where he stayed from 1953 to 1957, but he felt that many colleagues at that institution were 'poorly qualified' (Buckley, George Russell, 4). He reinvigorated the library and was regarded as an outstanding scholar, although his publication record was sparser than that of colleagues whose scholarship was less well regarded.[8] After leaving Sydney in 1966, Russell held senior positions at the ANU, and at Melbourne.[9] In his tribute, Buckley described Russell as coming from a background similar to his own, albeit in New Zealand rather than Australia: 'Catholic, rural, colonial, Irish-Antipodean, provincial, poor and high-minded' (1). The appointment of Russell having been made, a decision was taken that the Challis chair would be decided before the Australian one, ostensibly because two candidates were shortlisted for both. 'Short short-lists' of three and two were made, and copies of published work were called for.[10] As a result of these proceedings, Goldberg was appointed to the Challis chair, and GA Wilkes, a graduate of Sydney and Oxford, to the chair in Australian literature. Further appointments were then made, including those of a number of academics from Melbourne who were close associates of Goldberg. This was a measure not only of the new professor's influence, but of the expansion of universities, as well as the success of the discipline. Such was the rate of increase that the number of academic staff in English at Sydney more than doubled in three years.

Samuel Louis Goldberg was born in Melbourne and educated at Coburg and University high schools. Ian Maxwell considered Goldberg the most talented and

8 The information regarding Russell's contribution to the library is from Spencer Routh, personal communication.

9 Russell's appointment to the ANU was unusual since it followed on from his attendance of the first meeting of the selection committee as the external member. Correspondence suggests that all were alert to the sensitivities of the situation, which seems to have arisen in part because of reluctance to appoint one of (or to choose between) two internal candidates.

10 This information, including names of those on the shortlists, is in a letter from Gustav Cross to Clem Christesen, 5 February 1962, Gustav Cross File, *Meanjin* Archive, University of Melbourne.

erudite teacher of literature in the country, and as his head of department worried constantly about 'how to keep him' whilst asserting it was essential he have a chair as soon as possible. In early 1962 Goldberg became the first appointee to a chair of English at Sydney who was not a Sydney graduate; after a relatively short stay he took up research positions at the ANU, first in the history of ideas unit and, in the final few years of his career, in philosophy. He is the only example I can find of an academic in English who managed to obtain such a position, although all his major publications, excepting the posthumous *Agents and Lives*, predate his fifteen years of full-time research.

Goldberg and his followers published their work in the *Melbourne Critical Review*, later retitled the *Critical Review*. The first issue appeared in 1958, edited by Goldberg and Jennifer Dallimore (later Gribble), and the journal was an important outlet for Goldberg throughout his career, as he published essays emphasising the importance of moral judgement in criticism. The first editorial published in the journal works to naturalise the Leavisite approach, as the *Melbourne Critical Review* is positioned above partisanship, whilst in the centre of debate. The writers declare that 'literature is not really an academic "subject" at all, nor are the issues it raises the concern only of teachers or passing groups of students' (i). There is a social need for 'alert, responsible criticism that promotes "an easy commerce with the old and new", the vital sense of the past that is the condition of present growth' (i). All of the contributions, it seems, fulfil this requirement, but their unanimity is merely a propitious congruity that implies the rightness of the method: 'we have no other policy than to welcome critical writings of interest and quality on any literary subject (old or new) from anyone … from anywhere … and to publish as much discussion as we can for as many people as we can' (i–ii). The clearest preference seems to have been for firm opinion. Early contributors to the journal included Leonie Kramer, who had essays published in 1959 and 1960, and AD Hope, who wrote on the decline of satire. Hope's contribution to the first issue is also its most ferocious, as he attributes the degeneration of the genre to the 'general decline in public taste' (1). He rails against the 'systematic degradation of public taste, the slow and persistent perversion of judgement, [and] the steady operation of moronic intelligence to produce a world safe and profitable for morons', a world in which 'nine tenths … have the tastes of morons' (3; 5).

Goldberg's equally uncompromising approach was signalled by his announcement at Sydney, made soon after his arrival, that students were being badly taught and, as a consequence, none would receive first-class honours that year – and they didn't. Relations between Wilkes and Goldberg deteriorated, and when he returned from study leave in late 1964, George Russell found the situation, in his own words, 'horrendous'. As the dispute reached its most public crisis point at the beginning of 1966, with separate 'A' and 'B' offerings in English for undergraduates, and academics handing out flyers to students, Russell unsur-

prisingly left for the ANU; Goldberg was appointed to the Robert Wallace chair at Melbourne. Thus the separate courses began with Goldberg's departure imminent. (This ultimately brought relief to Sydney but not to Melbourne, where tensions between Goldberg's followers and those of Buckley quickly escalated.) John Docker describes the situation at Sydney with verve:

> The older Sydney lot felt aggrieved at the confidence of the new group [from Melbourne] and how, as they saw it, it was dominating key areas of teaching and making them marginal. They also felt that the Sydney English department had its own tradition, descending from former giants like Sir Mungo MacCallum and le Gay Brereton and Waldock, in 17th century English studies and in Australian literature, which shouldn't be scorned. (*In a Critical*, 7)

Gavin Souter's column in the *Sydney Morning Herald* presented the dispute between Wilkes and Goldberg as a stand-off between a dry-witted gunslinger and a devilish cherub, and notes the pettiness that hostilities had brought the participants to:

> Professor Goldberg – round-faced, soft-voiced and reputedly 'difficult' – would not comment yesterday. We asked Professor Wilkes – tall, slowspeaking – what he thought of the outlook for Course A [in the light of Goldberg's appointment to Melbourne]. 'I'm only competent to talk about course B', he said. (Exit Professor)

In his account of the conflicts published in *The Bulletin* – titled 'Professor under Siege' – Buckley, like other commentators, drew attention to the fact that the Sydney English Department was 'famous for the amount of bad blood it seemed able to pump up', a response (by a Melbournian …) that did little in the way of explanation (21). But I do concur with Buckley's assessment that the disputes cannot simply be read as reflecting a gulf between critical approaches as they were espoused and practised by Wilkes and Goldberg; much greater differences had been accommodated in other departments without such schisms. Perhaps it is significant that the other disputes discussed above, at La Trobe and UWA, and which were in important ways connected to this one, have never been monumentalised in the press or memoir like 'the Sydney split' – although it is also worth noting that a cleavage also occurred in Philosophy at Sydney, leading eventually to the formation of two separate departments.

The contest can be read in another way, a reading suggested by Jonathan Dollimore. Dollimore argues that what is most bitterly contested is that which is radically proximate, the 'other' in which we can see our self. Although John Docker emphasises the theoretical differences between participants and implies

that this is the basis for the dispute, an incident in the late 1940s suggests just how close some critics at Sydney, whose self-identifications might place them as implacable opponents of Leavis, really were to his approach. It also demonstrates just how intense was their fascination with and anxiety about his criticism and his authority. First, however, it is necessary to introduce Brereton's successor at Sydney, AJA Waldock.

When Brereton died suddenly in February 1933, he was replaced in the chair by Arthur John Alfred Waldock, who would likewise die suddenly in his early fifties. Like Holme, Waldock was the son of a minister, and a devotee of English culture – one of his obituaries claims that he had planned to retire early and move to England. He held the Challis chair from 1934 to 1950, during which time he completed book-length studies of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Sophocles, and contemporary novelists, including Henry James and James Joyce. Like his teacher MacCallum he is remembered by a memorial issue of *Southerly* (Howarth), a journal in which he published regularly.

One senses that, as with MacCallum, Waldock's tendency was to embrace idealism whilst retreating from its 'critical' dimension. The main argument in the study of *Hamlet*, for example, is that the play has become so 'thickly encrusted' by criticisms that it is difficult to read the text in its own right, although it is the task of the critic to uncover the real meaning. This claim marks Waldock as an exegetical critic, that is, one who believes in a single meaning which holds across different cultures and historical periods.

Waldock spends some time refuting the reading of *Hamlet* offered by Ernest Jones in his *Essays in Applied Psycho-Analysis*, clearly offended by the contention that some elements of the play might have been created unconsciously. He likewise rejects out of hand Jones' suggestion that Shakespeare and/or Hamlet had incestuous desires, on the basis that such desires, or the expression of them, would constitute an offence against the exemplary morality that great art embodies and transmits – the same 'defence' that TG Tucker used in his discussion of Sappho. As we would expect, Waldock is concerned instead to discover the 'real' motivations for Hamlet's various actions. In fact, he prefers to interpret Hamlet as a Christian idealist, indeed, as a Christian idealist critic. He argues that the main impression readers have of the Danish prince is of his

> freedom and openness … largemindedness … deep integrity … idealism manifesting itself in a passionate appreciation of the beautiful, an equally passionate adoration of the good … intellectual genius, appearing not in this or that specialised gift, but pervasively in all his responses and expressions. (Waldock, *Hamlet*, 16)

Taking his arguments from character to author, Waldock suggests that, with his hyper-developed sensibility, Hamlet was simply 'a reflection of his creator, the

fullest, no doubt, that we have' (Waldock, *Hamlet*, 17). But Waldock's criticism is also marked by considerable self-confidence, a characteristic we might associate with Leavisite criticism rather than the 'disinterested scholarship' supposedly prioritised at Sydney's English department.

As Docker suggests, Waldock's Paradise Lost *and its Critics* was considered one of the major works of scholarship produced at Sydney, alongside MacCallum's book on Shakespeare's Roman plays. But it received a condescending review in the *Times Literary Supplement*, which ended by rebuking the book's author for amateurism (The New Miltonians). Three weeks later, a letter came defending the book:

> I write because I am shocked by a treatment that seems to me unworthy of the best traditions of *The Times Literary Supplement* … I have read *Paradise Lost and its Critics* twice and am convinced that any candid reader must find it remarkable for its modesty, its patent disinterestedness and the quietly challenging force of its argument. Whether or not one agrees with Mr Waldock is another matter; I myself have some differences to register. But I feel bound to express my conviction that he has written a distinguished book which no one interested in Milton ought to miss. I had better, perhaps, add that I have never met Mr. Waldock and know nothing about him.

The letter was signed FR Leavis.

In the first issue of *Southerly* published in 1948 Waldock, apparently stung more by this defence (or perhaps its last sentence) than by the negative review, replied with a bitter attack on Leavis' reading of *Hard Times* (The Status). At the same time, Leavis followed up the encounter with 'Mr Waldock' by heavily revising his essay 'In Defence of Milton', first published in *Scrutiny*, as a chapter of his major work *The Common Pursuit* (33–43), where it stands as a sustained but very respectful critique of Waldock's book. Paradise Lost *and its Critics* is now declared the best on Milton that Leavis has read (*The Common Pursuit*, 20); after one reference, 'Mr Waldock' becomes 'Professor Waldock'. Thus John Peters' essay on 'the Milton controversy', published in *Scrutiny*, places Waldock *alongside Leavis* in what he describes as the battle between the critics and the scholars.

Notwithstanding their own sense of Sydney as a place in which scholarship predominated over criticism, then, Waldock is read in England by followers of Leavis, and indeed by Leavis himself, as one of their own. The key dimension of this debate is audience: Leavis speaking to what he regarded as the very centre of English studies, whilst Waldock's polemic is published in *Southerly*, a journal not distributed in England at the time. Waldock is clearly more concerned with maintaining his reputation in Sydney, and surely was mortified that Leavis did not know he was an academic; conversely, Leavis attemptsto take up a discus-

sion with the hitherto unknown critic in a respectful way. 'Mr Waldock' 'replies', in a local forum, knowing he cannot be heard. The incident exposes the inequality that arises from geography, as it also exposes the fragility and the force of reputation. We can also note here Katharine Cooke's comments on AC Bradley, replying to his critics (in England) during his inaugural lecture at Glasgow, 'conducting his own defence in a place where unfortunately it is unlikely to be heard' (47). And notwithstanding Sydney's self-characterisation as 'scholarly' (Oxford) rather than 'Leavisite' (Cambridge), at least one student from the 1940s claimed that during this period, for students at Sydney 'F.R. Leavis was The Light, Leavis was God' (Moore, 90).

PROFESSING AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE

Previous histories have given particular attention, in discussions of debates about the teaching of Australian literature, to the establishment of the chair of Australian literature at Sydney. Within the climate there it is remarkable that the position was established at all, but the symbolic weight of Sydney as an institution means that this position is too often made homologous for the field as a whole, and indeed is regarded as a marker of the health of writing and publishing. The symbolic significance of the chair, and its fragility within the institution, are revealed in the disclosure by former holder Elizabeth Webby that she had considered 'going public' about threats to the future of the position after her retirement; her reluctance to do so at the time the chair was under threat demonstrates the wariness of many academics about revealing intra-university conflict in the manner done so destructively at Sydney in the mid sixties (Neill). More broadly, debates about Australian literature show both the influence of the ideology of guardianship, and the ambivalence of many of those in the discipline towards local writing. There are several notable differences between the terms of these debates and those about teaching English literature: both use polarities of provincialism and universalism, but those which occur in Australia are less marked by concern about gender and feminisation, and more inclined to cite standards of scholarship.

The attention given to the chair at Sydney often obscures the fact that a professor of Australian literature had already been appointed at an Australian university before Wilkes was appointed to Sydney. After George Russell left Queensland it was some years before the professorial position was filled, suggesting that the initial field had been disappointing to those in charge of making the appointment.[11] Arthur Clare Cawley, a language specialist, finally came to

11 AK Thomson seems to have applied for the position, and if he did, this might explain Routh's remarks (below).

Queensland from Leeds to take the Darnell chair in 1959, but resigned in May 1965 to return to Leeds. While Cawley was still at Queensland an advertisement was published for a second chair. Unusually the advertisement was not placed in the *Times Literary Supplement*, although two lectureships in English in the same department were advertised there at around the same time. This placement would seem to indicate that there was a desire to secure an Australian to occupy the professorial position; this selective positioning, along with sometimes unusual combinations of criteria and short deadlines for applications, are tactics still used to thin the field when a known candidate has front running.

The conditions of appointment specified that 'Applicants should hold a higher degree in English Literature, should have taught and done administrative work in a senior University position, and should possess special qualifications for teaching and supervising in the field of Australian literature'.[12] Early in 1960 AD Hope wrote to Vincent Buckley suggesting that he apply – other potential candidates he mentioned were Brian Elliott, Wilkes, and Russel Ward. Whether or not Buckley did apply is unclear, but as Hope noted in his letter, a senior member of the department at Queensland who closely matched the terms of the advertisement was likely to be preferred. AK Thomson was a graduate of Queensland and his publications were almost exclusively in Australian literature, although he had also produced numerous school texts.

Andrew Kilpatrick Thomson was born in Scotland in 1901, but came to Australia with his family and completed his schooling in Ipswich, near Brisbane. After becoming a teacher he undertook parttime study and for his final year went full time, in 1929 becoming the first student to graduate with first-class honours in English language and literature from Queensland. He took his MA, with a thesis on 'The Mind of Shelley: Social Background and Ideas', in 1933. At this stage, his hopes of an academic career could well have been thwarted by the longevity of his teachers at Queensland, JJ Stable and FW Robinson. But after teaching at leading private schools in three states and becoming president of the state teachers' union, Thomson was seconded to the university in 1939 and to the English Department in 1941.[13] During the war he published several brief items on Australian literature in *Meanjin*, the journal then being based in Brisbane, his first academic essay probably 'The Greatness of Joseph Furphy'.

Thomson remained at Queensland through the 1940s and 1950s, eventually being promoted to reader, and acting as professor after Russell had left. During

12 The University of Queensland, Conditions of Appointment to the Position of Second Professor of English, Andrew Kilpatrick Thomson, UQA S135 Staff files, 1911–, University of Queensland Archives.

13 The information on Thomson is drawn largely from his 1959 application for the Chair of English, Andrew Kilpatrick Thomson, UQA S135 Staff files, 1911–, University of Queensland Archives.

the 1950s he edited collections of critical essays on the poetry of Kenneth Slessor and of Judith Wright, along with several anthologies of poetry. The university's reputation for studies in Australian literature dates from this period, and was facilitated by the activities of Brisbane publishers such as UQP and Jacaranda in producing educational and literary texts. Another important role for Thomson was as convenor of the Commonwealth Literary Fund lectures in Brisbane (1956–1959) which, through Wright's eminence and scholarship, became major occasions for the discussion and celebration of Australian literature. There is little sign of contact with academics in Australia in Thomson's staff file, but abundant evidence of connections with school-based educators.

Thomson's students included David Malouf and Spencer Routh, the latter writing Thomson's obituary for *Arts News*. After noting Thomson's leading role in the teaching of English in Queensland, Routh describes him as

> a teacher par excellence … Though undergraduates he taught would have dismissed any such assertion, most of us had an unspoken assumption that great lyric poetry was to be read with a slight Scottish accent. Some of his lectures live in the memory still …. Sadly, it rubbed a very raw spot with Andy that his teaching and his inspiration of other educators did not bring him a chair, or at least, not till 1960, and this at times exacerbated his relations with senior academic colleagues.

Thomson did not retire until 13 January 1971, and after some delay, was awarded the title of professor emeritus; he died in 1989. Thomson's influence seems to have been localised, albeit highly significant in laying a foundation for the university's subsequent reputation in the field of Australian literature. Nevertheless, Thomson's work and position continue to be ignored in accounts of the development of the teaching of Australian literature, in favour of the focus on Sydney.

It was no doubt important, politically, that the committee formed to raise money to fund the position at Sydney was headed by Wesley Milgate, by then holder of the Challis chair. At the time of this campaign there were two quite different kinds of arguments made for having a professorial position devoted to the teaching and scholarship of Australian literature. One was that a professor was needed to oversee research in the subject, a view that reflected a conscious attempt to reclaim Australian literature from those working outside universities or in disciplines other than English, notably history and sociology (a villainous combination rather too inclined to radicalism). This task might have seemed more urgent in a period when 'non-academics' were publishing most in the area, and had been responsible, along with writers themselves, for developing the profile of Australian literature in academic circles. Advocates of academic research – among them Wilkes, AD Hope and James McAuley – argued that there was a need for textual scholarship, editing, bibliographies, and perhaps even biogra-

phies of Australian writers, and that such work was best done under professorial supervision.

The other argument for the creation of a chair of Australian Literature was very different: it was that the subject deserved its own senior university position because it was Australian, and that intellectuals had a responsibility to nurture local forms of cultural production. Although this was not the view that held sway within the university, it was the argument that had the greatest purchase for writers and for the reading public (as now), and among education policy makers (as now).[14] Donations to allow for the establishment of the position were received from individuals as well as a variety of organisations, including unions.[15] However the claim that a professor of Australian literature had a responsibility to act as an advocate for Australian culture clearly caused the first two holders of the Sydney chair some discomfort, in large part because they saw their role differently.

At the time of the campaign for public subscriptions the 'prime movers' on the committee were the secretary, Colin Roderick, and the chair, Milgate. But in spite of their activities and widespread community support, the appeal fell well short of the amount needed to support a full professorial salary from interest. According to a press item in the *Meanjin* archive, £21,000 had been raised, but the sum needed was more like £80,000. Milgate, in a letter to Roderick, proposed a solution that would lay the foundation for the splitting of English subjects ten years later:

> I suggest that I compound one of my senior positions with the income from the Fund: the combined total being little, if any, short of a Professor's salary. This is not being noble: there's enough work in Aus. Lit. to occupy a member of my Dept anyway: indeed (the Senate ought to fall for this) this is one large argument for having the Chair that we put forward in the first place. Further, there is a feeling that it would be good for the Professor to do a bit of lecturing in Eng. Lit, *to keep his perspective right* and to keep in touch with our study of modern literature.[16]

As Milgate's comments make clear, the task of the occupant of the chair was to bring to bear on Australian literature scholarly approaches used to discuss English literature, rather than to do anything so creative as to rethink the premises of

14 This was evident in debates in 2008–09 about the need for a 'national' chair in Australian literature, awarded to the University of Western Australia and taken up by Philip Mead, both a writer (poet) and critic.

15 Ian Syson, personal communication.

16 Letter from Milgate to Colin Roderick, 19 November 1957, Series 4, Volume 6, Colin Roderick Papers, MS 1578, National Library of Australia, emphasis added.

literary study. What are more difficult to discern are Milgate's tone and intention here: was he 'going through motions' with the committee, and in fact determined to ensure that the position would not be an autonomous one? Or was he genuinely committed to the idea, seeing this compromise as the only viable way forward?

Had the chair been limited to specialists in Australian literature there would have been few applicants. One possible candidate, Roderick himself, was hardly eligible given his role in fundraising, although subsequent events suggest he did see himself as well suited to the position at the time. He took several degrees from Queensland and in 1954 was awarded a PhD in Australian literature, possibly the country's and the subject's first, for a study of the work of Rosa Praed.[17] Roderick spent twenty years working as education editor at Angus and Robertson during which time and after his research was focused on Henry Lawson. He published widely, particularly on writers of the nineteenth century, and was a vigorous advocate of the study of Australian books (especially if they were published by A&R). Roderick did eventually obtain a chair, but was in his mid fifties when he took up a professorial position at James Cook University in Townsville, where he stayed for just over a decade.

A swifter path to the professoriate was taken by the first occupant of the chair of Australian literature at Sydney, Gerald Alfred Wilkes. Wilkes attended Canterbury Boys' High and then Sydney, completing his Master of Arts thesis on the poetry of Christopher Brennan, this thesis and its ensuing publications – five essays in *Southerly* republished as a monograph – establishing his reputation as a scholar. After some years lecturing, and completing his Oxford DPhil in 1956, Wilkes was appointed senior lecturer in 1957. He became the foundation professor of Australian literature in 1962 and Challis professor of English literature in 1966. Wilkes' tenure in the Australian chair was brief but his connection with Australian literature has been maintained through the journals *Southerly*, in which he has more than fifty publications, and *Australian Literary Studies*. Another important work was Wilkes' *The Stockyard and the Croquet Lawn: Literary Evidence for Australia's Cultural Development*, the subtitle of which uses the trope of maturation prevalent in many early academic studies of Australian literature.

In his inaugural lecture, *The University and Australian Literature*, delivered in 1964, Wilkes struggles to balance the Anglocentric values associated with 'scholarship' with the commitment to the national literature implied in his position. He accepts the 'junior' status of Australian literature and makes no claim for its value 'simply because it is the native literature' (6) – a view that many critics,

17 Roderick enrolled for the degree in August 1954 and was awarded it on 1 October 1954. I am grateful to the staff of the Queensland Archives for this information. A bound but unmarked and undated copy of the thesis, a version of Roderick's *Mrs Campbell Praed* (1948), is in the library of the University of Queensland.

perhaps even MacCallum, would not have accepted. He felt that the 'standards' applied to the literatures of England and Europe should 'be applied no less rigorously': 'at a University there cannot be any "special standard" for local writing' (19–20). Thus, RD FitzGerald and Hope are praised for writing a poetry 'that is distinctive and yet in no way provincial'. The dreaded epithet, 'provincial', haunts the institutional position that Wilkes occupies.

In terms of sentiment and approach, there is little that would offend a Leavisite critic: the history of Australian writing represents 'a line of steady progress', towards a literature that was, in 1964, 'distinctive and mature' (9). The most significant statement in the lecture, one that reveals Wilkes trapped between the obligations of his appointment and the need to appeal to the 'traditions' of the discipline, is the assertion that 'it is only because a man fears for his national image that he takes … a defensive position. *If he did not identify himself with local culture, he would have nothing to worry about*' (6; emphasis added). It is this position of detachment that Wilkes himself can be seen to have taken, but there is a strange reversal here: it is the local that is strange and alien; it is the universalised culture of Anglo-European scholarship that makes the newly appointed professor of Australian literature feel 'at home'.

In an essay on the 1890s published some years before he was appointed to the chair, Wilkes demonstrated the impact that his dismissive attitude to cultural context could have on the reading and evaluation of particular kinds of literature. 'Literature in the Eighteen Nineties in Australia' attempts to diminish the reputation of the popular Australian writers of that period, and its subsequent inclusion in GKW Johnston's collection *Australian Literary Criticism* was a gesture against literary nationalism. One aim of the essay is to demonstrate that there is a substantial amount of writing from this period that does not immediately declare its national identity, but the main aim is to put the case that the writing of Henry Lawson, Banjo Paterson and others from the 1890s had 'achieved a literary reputation out of proportion to its merit'. This argument is all but proven by the fact that such literature was popular: 'their work was aimed always at the meridian of popular taste: they wrote the sort of literature that did not need to be interpreted' (33). Because Wilkes wanted to reclaim Furphy's *Such is Life* for 'the canon', however, he was forced to declare that Furphy's own famous description of the novel – 'temper democratic, bias offensively Australian' – is itself a furphy:

> these are surface features, inessential to its permanent literary worth … *Such is Life* is not memorable as showing a stage in the evolution of the Australian democratic ideal, but as an exploration of the abiding problems of destiny and freewill, moral responsibility, and the operation of chance in the universal scheme–problems which have engaged writers not of Furphy's period only, but of all periods, and which are still in no imminent

danger of solution. (39)

Again the preference is for opacity, but the problem is that such an argument cannot account for Furphy's demotic politics, his setting, nor the specificity of his literary, political and social references. To read only the themes identified above is to give a universalist account of the book. In the same manner, and for the same reasons, Wilkes' successor in the chair, Leonie Kramer, rejected David Campbell's claim that his own poetry represented 'an attempt to couple the bush ballad and my early memories with the traditional ballad and early English lyrics'. 'That statement', says Kramer, 'does not … do justice to the delicacy with which Campbell reactivates the past, and brings it into present experience' (A Sense of the Past 26). For Wilkes and many of his contemporaries, Australian literature was most productively read within the context of a more 'mature' British or European tradition, a method exemplified in his work on Brennan. This method demands wide reading and intensive scholarship, but it tends to see history in purely literary terms – to understand 'influence' in terms of one text acting upon another – rather than considering other contexts which affect writing and reading. And more stylistically eccentric and overtly left-wing writers, like Christina Stead, are difficult to fit into the picture.

This trend can be seen in criticism by Kramer, whose publishing career began (as Leonie Gibson) with *Henry Handel Richardson: Some of Her Sources*. Dame Professor Emeritus Leonie Judith Kramer was born in Melbourne in 1924, and attended the Presbyterian Ladies' College in that city (see Jobling and Runcie). She graduated with a BA from Melbourne and a DPhil from Oxford, and she taught at Canberra College (with AD Hope) in the mid fifties, and at the University of New South Wales (1959–69) before the appointment to the Sydney Chair.[18] Over the course of her career, Kramer combined publication in the field of Australian literature with an even more extensive range of publications and addresses to general and educational organisations. After leaving the chair in 1989 she became Sydney's chancellor; her departure from that position in 2001 was uncharacteristically controversial. She has also been unusual in having had a career in the corporate world, as director of several large companies and organisations: chair of the board of the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC), the

18 Sydney University Senate minutes from 4 March 1968 note she 'is the author of 5 books or monographs and 17 articles and editor of two books'. I have not seen Kramer's application, but the '5 books or monographs' were probably *Henry Handel Richardson and Some of Her Sources; James McCauley [sic]: Tradition in Australian Poetry* CLF Lecture 1957; *A Companion to Australia Felix; Myself When Laura and Henry Handel Richardson*, the longest of which is the first on Richardson, at 56 pages; the two edited books were probably *Australian Poetry 1961* and *Coast to Coast 1963–1964*.

National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) and *Quadrant*, and a member of the St Vincent's Hospital, NRMA, and NSW Secondary School Studies boards. Ian Maxwell regarded Kramer as second only to Goldberg in brilliance as a scholar, and used her as a benchmark in writing references for others.

Kramer's career is a fascinating one for the way in which it demonstrates the capacity to leverage authority from one cultural arena to another: in sharp contrast to Walter Murdoch, it seems to be her work in the public sphere that has cemented Kramer's academic reputation; her gender makes her even more anomalous and this achievement more notable. Against this reading, Kramer herself has long insisted that she occupies a position outside of ideology, and it is entirely consistent with her views that she should lend her voice to a group calling itself 'Leadership above Politics', formed to campaign for the retention of the monarchy in Australia. As a long-time president of the Australia–Britain Society and of the Australian Council for Educational Standards, Kramer's public reiteration of the need to maintain cultural ties with Britain and to uphold 'standards' (the two are connected) increased in frequency and intensity over the course of her long career. Despite this position, however, Kramer's own teaching has at times reflected a more catholic approach. A press item by Andreas Carr noted that Kramer's Australian literature subjects at the University of New South Wales offered students key texts in history and sociology read alongside creative writing, although this approach and indeed Australian literary studies more generally appear to have received minimal support from the institution. In the same way, several of Kramer's former students have stressed to me the innovative and challenging place occupied by her teaching of Australian literature in the English curriculum at Sydney in the 1960s and 1970s.

Kramer, like a number of other senior academics in the field, has suggested that her reading experiences at high school and university profoundly shaped her understanding of the role of literature. In her essay 'Living Two Lives', for a collection which examines cultural ties between Australia and Britain, she suggests that

> At the centre of my memories of a literary schooling in Australia are Palgrave's *Golden Treasury, The Pilgrim's Progress* (found on the library shelves), and the range of texts read in the higher years of school – Shakespeare, Hardy, Chaucer, Milton, the Romantics, Scott, Tennyson, Browning. There were Australian poems and stories one read, but I do not recall studying them … England was not said to be home, but it and Scotland were highly recommended as home away from home. [When I arrived in England] the literary images were powerful, and the first sight of hedgerows, thatched cottages and old stone was like returning to the familiar, as though from exile. (158)

Kramer's words, and her gently self-deprecating tone, are echoed by Ian Donaldson, also a graduate of Melbourne and Oxford, who was professor of English at the Australian National University from 1969 to 1990.[19] Donaldson suggests that

> imaginatively … through the songs that we sang, and the stories we were read, an idea of England was already beginning to emerge … My idea of England was extended and elaborated over the years chiefly by the books I read in and out of school … and by almost the entire corpus of the English syllabus that I confronted as an undergraduate at Melbourne University in the 1950s. (Centres and Circumferences, 195)

We might reasonably expect senior members of the profession to demonstrate a deep commitment to the subject of English literature, but there is a kind of entrapment in a culture and landscape, an intimacy and a nostalgia, that conversely obscure the local, or perhaps more accurately, empty it of the significance we associate with 'culture'. Through the study of a canon dominated by English writers, England is constructed as text and therefore inviolable; Australia is context, and therefore ultimately anomalous for scholars, the authority of the literary text and the institution working in concert. And the reverse effect, the exclusion of their own country from the landscape of the imagination, has been so complete that, for many Australian readers, when 'a physically known place graduated to the rank of a book-mentioned place it was almost as if an old family friend had been knighted' (Phillips, Cultural Nationalism, 131).

Kramer, herself 'knighted', has always promoted herself as a rigid adherent to tradition, and insisted, at least in public, that her gender was irrelevant to her profession. In an interview with Richard Freadman, Kramer replied dismissively to his request for a comment on the 'role and prominence of women in Australian English departments': 'English departments on the whole tend to have more women than many other departments, but I don't think that's particularly important. I don't get myself worked up about it, I must say' (Freadman, *Literature* 18). In the same year Kramer made news with her remark, offered in an address to mark the centenary of the graduation of the first woman from Melbourne University, that she hoped that 'the campaign for women's participation in academic life will not be too successful': 'the most important academic procedures – selection and promotion – are in intention and overwhelmingly in operation, scrupulously equitable' (Hawker). It was a view she was prepared to reiterate a year later:

> When people enter occupations they do not represent anything. They are

19 Donaldson was named as the preferred candidate in the Minutes of the Standing Committee of 13 Dec. 1968. ANUA 199, Box 3, Minutes, Item 17, p18. He was Foundation Director of the Humanities Research Centre from 1974 to 1990.

> not elected representatives of their racial, religious or sex group. Their numbers are determined by their aptitude, level of education and training, skills and personal choices. (Kramer, Feminism's Fantasies)

There is a great honesty at work here: it is quite correct to say that the discipline of English, from the 1930s to the early 1970s, did not *see* difference. But unlike Matthew Arnold, to whom she regularly refers in her work, Kramer's argument seeks to put the case that 'standards' exist above and beyond the sites of their creation and maintenance. Indeed, for Kramer, the integrity of the critic rests on taking this position above literature and society, in an argument that in some aspects echoes that of William Paton Ker.

The effect of deploying this dichotomy between universal value and local interest can be seen in Kramer's criticism of writers such as Martin Boyd, who, like Henry Handel Richardson, is favoured because of his concern with people caught between England and Australia. In a discussion of his novel *Lucinda Brayford*, Kramer notes that

> In her Australian childhood Lucinda hears Melba sing at a garden party in … Toorak; and her eye is accustomed to the imitative classical styles of Melbourne's public buildings. She leaves Australia with virtually no intellectual or cultural baggage, and arrives in London with everything to learn. (Literature in Education, 3)

Melba singing is not part of culture, nor is Melbourne architecture.

In an essay on 'Literary Criticism in Australia', Kramer more fully explains her views of the relationships between criticism, literature and culture, beginning by suggesting that, far from being negligent about Australian literature, critics are confused by nationalism:

> Much of the confusion which still clouds our critical perspective dates back to the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of this century; to the period, in fact, when *for various reasons which cannot be discussed here*, our literature found its direction in an expression of growing nationalistic sentiment … Now these criticisms and arguments were important in their day … I would go further and say that A.G. Stephens' critical bias and Furphy's offensive Australianism were entirely necessary at that moment in our literary history … [but] nationalistic criticism and literary practice have had to face a developing and increasingly cosmopolitan public … But one could do worse, I think, than refer to Matthew Arnold's dictum that it is the business of criticism 'simply to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and by in turn making this known, to create a current of fresh and true ideas' … I have tried to suggest that criticism

> cannot fulfil its proper function if it rests on a narrow basis of nationalistic fervour or provincial self-consciousness … And I might add, neither can it flourish as a significant activity unless it resists pressures from cliques. (26–27; my emphasis)

There are contradictions here, especially in relation to social and historical context, but more to the point, I think Kramer is wrong. Many critics of the 1890s and after *were* open to Australian literature. Indeed, in this period, writers as much as academics travelled to London for recognition, and Australian and academic culture were cosmopolitan, in terms of their reading at least, something made clear in the recent scholarship of Veronica Kelly. It was advocates of Australian literature among the postwar generation who took up the literature of the 1890s in order to make cultural nationalist arguments, working in explicit opposition to the critical methods exemplified by Kramer and many of her colleagues. In short, this is not a simple identification of truth, but a taking of a position in a debate about a version of the past that can be used to buttress the authority of a specific critical method.

The range of organisations with which she was involved, and particularly her time at the ABC, gave Kramer the highest public profile of any teacher of literature in the country in the second half of the twentieth century, as she assumed the prominence accorded earlier generations of academics. Using the platform provided by the profile established beyond academia, she participated in public debate and did so with great success. Despite this prominence, Kramer's work was not generally well received in the academy itself.[20] Widespread hostility to Kramer's aesthetic can be seen in reviews of the *Oxford History of Australian Literature*, which appeared in *The Age* and *The Australian* newspapers (Phillips; Brady), *Australian Book Review* (Barnes), *Australian Literary Studies* (Croft; Elliott), *The Bulletin* (Dutton), *Meanjin* (Pierce), *New Literature Review* (Alan Lawson) and the *National Times* (Green).

The project had been proposed by GKW Johnston but was ultimately edited by Kramer, who also wrote the introduction. Whether they were responding to the book or to public perceptions of Kramer, reviewers insistently drew attention to the *History*'s sustained efforts at canon-making, in which it imitated Johnston's *Australian Literary Criticism*.

> In an enterprise so conceived, novelists are treated like wines to be judged: briefly sampled, routinely described, then stored for some future use that is unlikely to be festive … Some stocks are high: Richardson is treated at respectful length. Stead – always a hard case – is dodged … and she becomes

20 Dorothy Green, for example, is strongly critical of Kramer, particularly in footnotes, in her *Ulysses Bound: Henry Handel Richardson and Her Fiction*.

> a way of introducing by comparison one of the few stars of the show, Martin Boyd. (Pierce, 369)

It was significant, as Peter Pierce notes, that 'Kramer's team has eschewed footnotes, thereby increasing the impression that Australian literature has been created in a vacuum, without reference to other literatures or to literary theory' (371). But reviews of both the *History* and Johnston's *Anthology* drew attention to the ways in which a certain degree of mateyness was evident. The most caustic critic of the latter was Ken Goodwin: 'Well over half this book is made up of an excellent selection of material. The rest displays an air of randomness, cosiness, and – in the worst sense – mateship. The book needed more care and less prejudice' (Prejudices, 30).

The careers and criticism of Wilkes and Kramer have parallels: both completed their doctorates at Oxford on subjects unrelated to Australian literature, Kramer on 'Formal Satire in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century 1600–1650' (1953) and Wilkes on 'The Poetry of Moral Reflection at the Turn of the Sixteenth Century' (1956). These qualifications, and their mantra of objectivity and disinterest, gave both critics the credibility, the intellectual capital, to enable them to 'invest' in Australian literature without risking charges of parochialism. The values underpinning their approach led to praise for writers like Christopher Brennan and Henry Handel Richardson, as well as Joseph Furphy, AD Hope, Patrick White and Martin Boyd, whose work could be situated, in terms of theme or style, within British and European traditions. There is, in fact, a noticeable similarity in the role that the studies of Richardson and Brennan played in the early careers of Kramer and Wilkes respectively, and it is significant that these should be cited, in a 1956 article on the moves to establish the chair, as evidence of the respectability of Australian literature (Why a Chair).[21] Australian literature was potentially canonical insofar as it could be read as an offshoot of the literature and culture of England, a fresh young branch on the tree, an adolescent member of the family. The work of equally prolific and influential critics like Nettie Palmer, or Dorothy Green, or AA Phillips, is obscured by such accounts.

Wilkes and Kramer saw the incorporation of Australian literature into English literature as a desirable strategy. They and many of their generation were self-conscious guardians of a tradition, like those disciples of Leavis, who himself believed that the

> minority capable not only of appreciating Dante, Shakespeare, Donne,

21 This is particularly the case because the essay was written by the then head of department at Sydney, Wesley Milgate. The article is unsigned, but attributed to Milgate by Alan Lawson on the basis of personal communication with Milgate.

> Baudelaire, Hardy [were responsible for] recognising [that] their latest successors *constitute the consciousness of the race* (or of a branch of it) at a given time. Upon this minority depends our power of profiting by the finest human experience of the past; they keep alive the subtlest and most perishable parts of the tradition. Upon them depend the implicit standards that order the finer living of an age, the sense that this is worth more than that, this rather than that is the direction in which to go, *that the centre is here rather than there*. (Leavis, quoted in Baldick, *The Social Mission*, 164–65; my emphasis)

The mission of Leavisite criticism was to mount a sustained and deliberate campaign to reshape the literary canon: great literature presented timeless and universal moral problems, in texts which offered formal and ethical closure. These ways of speaking about literature are evident in much twentieth-century literary criticism in Australia, and in teaching. An examination of titles in the *Union List of High Degree Theses* suggests that, notwithstanding its 1930s beginnings in England, Leavisism was at its strongest in Australia in the early 1970s. During this period Australian literature was virtually abandoned by postgraduate students at Melbourne, while the contents of the Leavisite canon were under close scrutiny: theses were given titles like 'Spontaneity versus Immorality: A Comparison of the Paul and Miriam Section of *Sons and Lovers* with the Relationship of Anna and Will in *The Rainbow*'. Within the academy, it was possible to cultivate a sense of being under siege, not from modern culture, as we might expect (and as was the case for Leavis), but from provincialism. Academics like Kramer, Buckley, Johnston, Oliver and Wilkes, who took an interest in Australian literature, were able to experience 'their uninterrupted historical continuity and their special qualification [and] thus put themselves forward as autonomous and independent of the dominant social group' (Gramsci 7). Ernst de Chickera and DJ Enright suggest, in their Introduction to an anthology of criticism for undergraduates, that 'taste' is 'the habit of naturally and actively enjoying [the genuine] and rejecting [the fake]. The word *naturally* should be stressed, for there is nothing conscious or pretentious about a formed good taste' (x).[22] Formed, yet natural; this is Bourdieu's 'spontaneity without consciousness', what he calls '*habitus*'.

In the study and teaching of literature, development of expertise is part of a process by which a tiny minority of student readers are selected for socialisation into the profession. This, *habitus*, is 'Produced by the work of inculcation and appropriation that is needed in order for objective structures … to be repro-

22 Enright was, like Allan Edwards, a contributor to *Scrutiny* early in his career, and he and De Chickera were colleagues at Singapore University at the time of writing. Both subsequently held positions in Australia, De Chickera as professor at La Trobe from 1972 to 1979.

duced in the form of the durable, adjusted dispositions that are the condition of their functioning' (Bourdieu, *Logic* 57). Individuals 'partake of the history objectified in institutions' and thereby 'keep them in activity, continuously pulling them from the state of dead letters': 'Property appropriates its owner, embodying itself in the form of a structure generating practices perfectly conforming [to] its logic and its demands' (57). What Bourdieu is describing is 'the purely social and quasi-magical process of socialization … with all its corresponding privileges and obligations, and which is prolonged, strengthened and confirmed by social treatments that tend to transform instituted difference into natural distinction' (58). And this *naturalising* of distinction has 'quite real effects, durably inscribed in the body and in belief' (58). There is a kind of cultural tautology to scholarly inquiry guided by 'disinterest': it values what is valuable because it is known to be valuable; the expression of value constitutes and marks the critic as a believer in, an upholder of, literary values. The postwar scholars, educated in the 1940s and 1950s, came to power in the 1960s as the youthful guardians of culture. And of this generation, it is Kramer who has carried this 'durable inscription' of 'natural distinction' most effectively beyond the academic community, into the media and political arenas.

Elsewhere in the English-speaking world and in Australian universities, there were developments in fields like linguistics and anthropology (notably structuralism), philosophy, psychoanalysis and psychology, sociology and Marxism in the twenties and thirties which would later have a profound effect on English studies. For example, Freud's works had been translated into English and published by the Hogarth Press in the early twenties, while Marxist literary studies were published by Australian critics working outside the academy such Jack Lindsay and Jack Beasley. Although a few individuals were familiar with these ideas – Allan Edwards was a proponent of Freud's thought, and writer critics like Katharine Susannah Prichard and Judith Wright were also aware of these intellectual movements – Marxist and Freudian approaches were usually dismissed in a discipline determined to resist dilution. Strange as it may seem, the emphasis on 'scholarship' can seem oddly anti-academic, although not in the sense that FR Leavis used the term; criticism in this period was abruptly closed to cross-fertilisation. There was a widespread and uneasy consensus in the discipline in the postwar period that criticism might contribute in some way towards shaping trends – for some, 'standards' – in creative writing, but this was generally overwhelmed by a sense of leading scholars withdrawing from cultural organisations and contacts with writers and turning instead to educational or scholarly ones.

Debates about the introduction of *English* literature to English universities were in some ways leavened in their intensity (and diluted in their logic) by the jostling between parallel disciplines like classics and modern languages; English was the upstart, the pragmatist, the intruder. In contrast, opposition to Australian literature *within* English took a much simpler rhetorical form: for opponents, this

body of texts was newer, smaller, and not as good, and therefore deserved neither a place in the curriculum nor the attention of scholars. Nevertheless, we should be alert to the fact that the meanings, or rather the connotations, of 'Australian' were different for different participants in this debate. In contrast to prevailing sentiments in the academy in the last three decades, when the increasing influence of identity politics focused on race, gender and cultural background, as well as class and sexuality, made 'nation' a category to contest or critique, the framing of local writing by the category of 'nation' was seen as an obvious conceptual and political tool with which to manoeuvre it into the academy – although this was not the only one available, as we shall see in the next chapter. Put another way, what might have been seen simply as a geographical designation was marked, in an expression of what Phillips called 'the cultural cringe', as writing which, by virtue of its national identity, was not worthy of academic study (*Australian Tradition*).

The effects of Anglophile sentiment and Anglo-American theory, understood as movements like 'Leavisism', 'new criticism' and 'practical criticism', were felt in the academy through to the 1970s, and long after in some places; very few academics specialised in Australian literature, and those who did were often regarded as fools, something that emerges very strongly in private correspondence. But crucially, many whose training and teaching were mainly in English literature were active as reviewers of contemporary Australian writing; research remains to be done in considering the impacts of these reviews on reputations of writers, in terms of the form and the reception of their work. In contrast to this interest in the judgement of Australian literature, critical theory received little scrutiny from members of the professoriate, the notable exception being Buckley's *Poetry and Morality*. There are no sustained analyses of how or why Anglo-American approaches are those best suited to Australian contexts, no-one who took up Franklin's call for a rethinking of critical expectations. By the time that challenge came, in the 1980s and 1990s, broader political changes and changes to the academic environment meant that nation became an intellectually, even an ethically, unworkable category of analysis for literary scholars. The next chapter will consider in detail the ways in which critical perspectives affected debates about the teaching and criticism of Australian literature in the academy from the late nineteenth century on.

7

THE UNEASY CHAIR: AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE

In the context of considering influential figures, formations and institutions I have argued that some people, places or ideas develop a disproportionate authority as others – just as disproportionately – lose authority. In the interwar period, English institutions like Oxford began fundamentally to transform themselves from national to international institutions, and to increase the emphasis given to research. This change involved a kind of broadening of horizons, and placed new pressures on disciplines to answer questions that might seem almost painfully exposing: for example, what would 'research' in English literature look like? How might one teach and test this subject at postgraduate level?

In one sense, this reconfiguring, along with later twentieth-century debates about a 'crisis' in the discipline, reflect a failure to grasp a large nettle: to state, to believe in, and to institute teaching and testing practices which reflect the sheer difficulty of textual interpretation as a practice; and to state, to believe in, and to institute teaching and testing practices which identify cognate areas of knowledge which validly underpin that research and teaching. While it might seem obvious that proponents of English could reasonably declare it 'a training in the capacity to read complex texts', more often critics have sought what seems like moral shelter in neighbouring disciplines, philosophy and foreign languages being the most favoured sources of 'rigour'. Unsurprisingly, then, just as there were heated debates in England about the teaching of English, there have been heated debates in Australia about teaching Australian literature, debates in which collective anxiety about intellectual credentials is palpable.

This chapter considers the early history of the teaching of Australian literature in Australian universities. But we might keep in mind the earlier chapters, and implicitly compare the respective fates of two national literatures, in an attempt to understand why it could be thought that while teaching one group of texts, Australian, was an act of barbarism, *not* teaching another group (English) equally was thought the mark of an impoverished culture. The chapter will then move on to consider the careers of a collection of those often termed poets and professors, AD Hope, Vincent Buckley and James McAuley, before conclud-

ing with a discussion of Commonwealth, later postcolonial literature, into which Australian literature has been and is usually subsumed, particularly when taught overseas.

'DANGEROUS WORK': THE MEANJIN *DEBATE*

Into the 1970s, and perhaps later in some places, an interest in Australian literature was more or less perceived as the equivalent to having a 'tragic flaw', as AC Bradley would argue of Shakespeare's heroes of the tragedies. Outstanding students in the second half of the twentieth century were generally directed into work that mattered, like Shakespeare studies, or later, theory: fields in which a high-tensile masculine mind could be stretched to its limit. In fact, research in Australian literature had long been conducted: George Barton's history of the literature of New South Wales was published in 1868 when Barton was on the staff at Sydney, as noted. But it is notable that Brian Kiernan reaches page thirty-seven of his forty-seven-page history of criticism of Australian literature before discussing any other work written by an academic working in an English department. On the other hand, continued insistence that Australian literature has been excluded from the academy has meant that the history of the debate about its entrance to the universities has been obscured. This section begins by reinserting that early history, which helps to position participants in debates about the teaching of the subject that occurred in the 1950s and 1960s, debates that have received more attention.

In most cases, advocates of the study of Australian literature in the academy were either students or junior members of staff, like Murdoch at Melbourne, whose lack of control over curriculum and higher subjects restricted the field's development. Some formal study of Australian literature might have been done overseas, repeating the pattern of English literature. In 1934 the professor of English Language and Literature at Bonn, Gustav Hübener (a former student of Edmund Husserl), travelled to Australia. George Mackaness, in his essay on Australian literature in *The Age*, says that the journey was to make contact with writers, and to buy books for the course of lectures in Australian and Canadian literatures he had established. Another source suggests that Hübener was planning to write a book about 'empire literature' – that of Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand and South Africa – with Jean Hamilton, his co-researcher and co-teacher at Bonn (Simmonds, Series 3). It may be that this interest was generated by Hamilton (who married Hübener in 1938). A West Australian, she had taken a first-class degree in languages at UWA in 1926, and a PhD from Bonn in 1931, going on to have a distinguished academic career teaching German in the north America after the couple had sought refuge there in the late 1930s (Simmonds, Biographical Sketch).

Nettie Palmer notes that during his week in Melbourne Hübener joined her for a discussion of Australian literature on the radio (*Her Private Journal*, 135–36); Vance Palmer, in his *Age* essay, claimed that Hübener was the only academic to attend the unveiling of a memorial to Joseph Furphy held around the same time. But the negative pressures of the academy seem to have been considerable: in a letter to the American critic Hartley Grattan, Miles Franklin claimed that after just one week in the hands of the staff at Sydney, Hübener 'had thrown over his own point of view and echoed the tepid and general anaemia of the University crowd' (Roe, 315). Whether Hübener really had changed his opinions in the course of seven days or was merely trying to be polite is unclear; I have not been able to find other evidence of his interest in the field, and he died suddenly in 1940. It would seem that Jean Hamilton did not pursue her research in comparative literature, instead pursuing a project on academic responses to Nazism that was never completed.

Although a number of people claim to have pioneered the study and teaching of Australian and Commonwealth literature in the period after the Second World War, the subject established by Hamilton and Hübener would have been the first official one if it were ever taught. That said, it is also evident that FW Robinson at Queensland, Enid Derham at Melbourne, Brian Elliott at Adelaide, Brereton and HM Green at Sydney, and Joyce Eyre at Tasmania all taught at least some Australian literature in universities in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. It is likely that during this period, these and other academics supervised honours theses in the field, although Deirdre Moore recalls being told by a disbelieving AJA Waldock that there was 'so little there' that her intellectual capacities would be wasted if she were to write a thesis on Australian literature (92). The contours of honours study, although central to academic training, are difficult to trace as there are few details of subjects and theses are often not kept except by supervisors – a disaster for historians. Nevertheless, the evidence that does survive suggests that a more flexible, unit-based curriculum, in conjunction with the option for research on a topic chosen by the student, facilitated concentration on Australian subjects at that level – evidence that student interest could respond to local concerns in defiance of the protocols of the discipline.

Frederick Walter Robinson was largely responsible for the development of research and teaching of Australian literature at Queensland. Robinson joined the university in 1923 as a lecturer, after having been unsuccessful in his application for the chair advertised at that time. He was one of a handful of scholars of his era to complete a PhD but evidently found it difficult to obtain a permanent academic position (Robinson). As with others at the time, his appointment to Queensland came after an intervention from a senior politician, who recommended Robinson on the basis of his service in the First World War. And like AK Thomson, late in his career Robinson seems to have felt disappointment with the lack of recognition given to his seniority in the university.

Robinson's work included the creation and expansion of the library of Australian literature named after Denis Fryer, a former soldier and English honours student who died early in 1923.[1] And again like AK Thomson, Robinson was highly regarded as a teacher of Australian literature; one former student remarked that many of his lectures demonstrated his fascination with Aboriginal bora rings.[2] During 1946 he gave lectures in Australian literature at Sydney and New England, and in 1948 applied for study leave to complete a massive research project on 'Australian literature to 1850'. He planned to 'deal especially with the growth of "Australian" ideas, and of writings pertaining to Australia beginning from the theories of Antipodeanism held by Greek geographers'.[3] Robinson's application evinces some urgency and hints at an awareness of a 'rival' project being undertaken, probably HM Green's *History of Australian Literature* – although this was to cover very different ground, being a reference work.

Although Robinson looked to antiquity in investigating the *idea* of the antipodes, in his application for research leave he emphasised the need for detailed study of the history and culture of Australia and stressed the significance of colonisation:

> Currents of knowledge, thought and feeling, some age-old, were brought to Australia with the earliest settlement, while the writings in Australia before 1850 and the Gold Era reflect a national and social evolution, ignorance of which deprives us as Australians of a large body of *stabilising self-knowledge*. There is often moreover in these early writings more literary quality than is generally assumed.

Robinson planned a series of publications: a book on Australian literary history 1788–1850; a companion anthology covering the same period; reprints, with critical introductions and notes, of the work of Alexander Harris (including his *Convicts and Settlers*), Barron Field, Charles Tompson and Charles Harpur (complete works), as well as studies of early magazines and of 'Imagined Voyages to Terra Australis Incognita'. The application was approved but no publications ever appeared – and indeed, it is hard to imagine how the projects could have been completed without years of full time work. Only in the late 1980s did a range of publications on nineteenth-century Australian writing began to appear that match

1 It is generally said that Fryer died of the after-effects of gas, but Mark Cryle argues it was more likely to have been tuberculosis; I thank him for sending me his essay '"A very small acorn": tracing the origins of the Fryer Library'.

2 Alma Hartshorn, personal communication.

3 FW Robinson, 'Project for Research in the Fields of Australian Literature and Social Science of Associate Professor F.W. Robinson', UQA S135 Staff file, 1911–, University of Queensland Archives.

Robinson's ambition.[4]

Scholarship in Australian literature was strong at Sydney during Brereton's tenure in the Challis chair (1922–33); librarian HM Green was the leading historian of the subject, although it would be decades before his *History* was published. Both Brereton and Green delivered lectures on the subject to undergraduates, Wesley Milgate recalling Brereton's lectures on the poetry of Brennan (Riddell). 'A letter from Kylie Tennant's husband, LC Rodd, describes attending a series of lectures by Green on Australian literature as part of the English courses in 1930, and it is hardly likely that this was a single instance' (Green and Burchill, 65).[5] However Australian literature was not listed in the university's calendar, and no textbooks are listed before 1940. At this point it comprised a section of the first-year subject, and so lectures might have preceded the setting of texts by many years. It is possible that these were not a formal part of the syllabus but were the Commonwealth Literary Fund (CLF) lectures, discussed briefly below.[6] At Tasmania the study of Australian literature was begun by Joyce Eyre, who was appointed to the university in the mid 1940s (see Spaulding). A press clipping from the *Sun* in 1946 noted that Eyre had visited Melbourne in order to buy books, and to arrange for visitors to give CLF lectures in Hobart (Visitor Here).

In Adelaide, Brian Elliott was designated lecturer in Australian Literature in 1940, and thus had the first specialist academic position in the subject. Elliott established a section on Australian literature in the first-year subject, which had a general introduction and then dealt with fiction, literary journalism and Australian language, as well as poetry; a similar pattern was followed at other universities. A decade before, though, at Melbourne in the early 1930s, two Australian texts appear on a course list for English II: Vance Palmer's novel *The Passage* and Percival Serle's *An Australian Anthology*.[7] It is likely that, as at Sydney, some Australian literature was studied even earlier than this, but lecture notes for English II from the late 1920s on the *Oxford Book of Australasian Verse* also suggest that those who taught it in this period – Enid Derham and (later)

4 They have been associated particularly with the third occupant of the chair at Sydney, Elizabeth Webby, and her students, bringing colonial literature and literary culture into sharper focus. Among these students has been Robert Dixon, who succeeded Webby in the chair.

5 The following year Dorothy Green referred to 'Green's course in Australian literature in the 1920s and 30s', perhaps on the basis of this letter, in her A Lively History: The Institutionalizing of Literary Studies.

6 Ian Maxwell makes this claim in interview, where he suggests that it was an unsatisfactory arrangement and that honours was the appropriate place for study of Australian literature, in conjunction with other literatures.

7 Student Lecture Notes, English, Book for English II, Box 1, Colin J Horne Papers, University of Melbourne Archives.

HG Seccombe – were at best ambivalent about its worth. The unknown lecturer quoted by Alexandra Gouldthorpe was prepared to offer some bold hypotheses about why Australian writers had achieved so little:

> It is very doubtful whether we can yet speak of Australian poetry … When you have read a good deal of Australian poetry, you may say: 'If not good, it is sincere'. Two factors have worked against it, poverty and imperfect education … There is also traceable the sinister influence of the bottle. So many of our Australian poets have been drunkards![8]

Apart from poverty, ignorance and dipsomania, the lecture notes refer to the 'problem' that many writers lacked a classical education and an audience that was 'cultivated and sympathetic'; an additional impediment was nature, which had to be struggled against. However, the lecturer was prepared to suggest that Australian literature was important because it was an expression of the local culture and landscape.

The particular sensitivities and insecurities which surrounded the teaching of Australian literature at universities surfaced perhaps most fully in a forum run by the journal *Meanjin* some two decades after *The Age* debate. It is a marker of other kinds of changes, notably the expansion of the universities and perhaps the increasing prominence of the opposition between creative writing and academic criticism, that the topic should be the rather more specific 'Australian literature and the Universities'. The main contributors were all professors of English, and heads of their respective departments. The participants in this debate registered the same unease about the subject that marks the work of the first holders of the chair at Sydney. And like George Cowling they avoided the issue of teaching, although they differed from him in seeming to think it impossible to take issue with the proposal that Australian literature should be taught. They deflected questions about the implications of such study for pedagogy and criticism by taking up the ostensibly bureaucratic question of where in the degree such a subject should fit.

The question of introducing a separate subject in Australian literature had been raised by Bruce Sutherland in 1950, in a brief essay that gave details of his course in 'Dominions Literature' at Pennsylvania State University. Sutherland cautiously advocated the study of Australian literature: like Hübener and Hamilton before him, he was in the position of teaching a literature that was not a formal subject of study in its own country. Sutherland reiterated his argument in 1952, like so many attempting to steer between the Scylla of standards and the Charybdis of local relevance. His second essay concluded with the suggestion that universities should receive extra funding to develop subjects, a suggestion

8 Lecture Notes, Student Notes Society, English III, Group 3/4, File 1, Alexandra Daisy Gouldthorpe Papers, University of Melbourne Archives.

never likely to be unpopular however devilish the detail of where and by whom those subjects should be taught.

In the intervening year Geoffrey Serle had published a brief note that described the amount of Australian literature being studied at the universities. Although Serle claimed that some Australian texts were being taught in all Australian universities except New South Wales, he was perhaps misled by his informants. In fact most of the 'courses' trotted out were the CLF lectures thinly disguised, although attendance at them was compulsory for students in some institutions. Even the most serious commitment to Australian literature was strictly limited: at Tasmania it was an option in third year; at Queensland, poetry was a special subject in English I. Only Melbourne was unapologetic about its lack of interest: 'a few Australian novels and poems are included in one of the four pass subjects, though only incidentally'. The comment is significant because it demonstrates that the inclusion of Australian texts cannot be taken as a sign of institutional 'success' in research and teaching of the subject, a point that was made at the time (see Hutchinson, 20). In the same way, having a separate course in a particular field can be counter-productive if it is positioned institutionally so as to exclude particular groups of students.

Sutherland's arguments about Australian literature were taken up by Allan Edwards, who around this time travelled to the United States to lecture on Australian literature.[9] Reflecting a classically Leavisite alertness to educational policy and pedagogy, Edwards drew attention to the way in which essays, examinations and secondary school curricula could be positively influenced by proponents of Australian literature, as well as describing the way in which the CLF lectures had been integrated into the regular coursework of English students at Western Australia. Clem Christesen urged further consideration of the ideas discussed by Edwards in his editorial in the same issue, being critical of what he saw as ignorance of and even active hostility towards Australian literature. Like Franklin and Edwards, Christesen understood that proposals for teaching the local literature raised questions about the methods and purpose of literary study:

> I am well aware that syllabuses are over-crowded. My point is that if there existed *a different attitude of mind* towards our literature by heads of English departments, means would undoubtedly be found to provide increased accommodation for Australian courses; and teaching staff would be encouraged to publish critical work … An extract from Edmund Wilson's *Memoirs of Hecate Country* [on the situation in the United States] is pertinent in this regard: 'In those days the English department stopped short with the Victorian age, and did not admit the importance of any American

9 'Australian Literature.' *The Bulletin*, 16 March 1938: 2.

> writers at all. You were given to understand that Hazlitt and Lamb were worth studying, but never told to read Thoreau; you were allowed to believe that the opium consumed by De Quincey and Coleridge was the legitimate food of genius, whereas Poe, with his laudanum and brandy, had been a shabby and dubious character who would not have been elected to a college club or received at a faculty tea; and you heard Cowper referred to respectfully by professors who made fun of Walt Whitman'. (188–89; my emphasis)

Christesen, along with Miles Franklin one of the most passionate, persistent and articulate advocates for the teaching and criticism of Australian literature, repeatedly wrote privately to academics expressing these kinds of views, berating them for neglecting Australian literature (see Strahan; Armstrong).

When Christesen decided to have a forum and wrote to solicit contributions from heads of department in January 1954, Edwards was more reluctant to express his views. He replied suggesting that Christesen ask a proponent of the study of Australian literature to outline the case against the universities, or failing this, for the *Meanjin* editor himself to formulate a set of questions that contributors could answer. Edwards claimed that at UWA 'we've grown used to the idea of Australian literature as a subject of study', but admitted that the subject had a low profile. This problem he attributed to 'the dullness and mediocrity of most Australian writing', particularly when compared to contemporary work from the United States and England.[10] However he was obviously keen to see the subject discussed and about three weeks later wrote to Christesen again, suggesting a means of generating debate:

> I've just had a letter from Inglis Moore telling me that at CUC … they are contemplating the provision of a degree-course in Australian Literature and that he has been asked by his V-C to submit a report on it and on how other universities handle Australian Literature. Won't this report … be exactly what *Meanjin* needs as the red rag to make critics' bulls snort and charge? … If [he] … believes it might be a good thing for undergraduates to spend most of their time on Australian literature I for one will write him down as an imbecile.[11]

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10 Letter from Allan Edwards to Clem Christesen, 19 February 1954, Allan Edwards File, *Meanjin* Archive, Melbourne University.

11 Letter from Allan Edwards to Clem Christesen, 9 March 1954, Allan Edwards File, *Meanjin* Archive. It is possible that Edwards was confusing 'course', meaning a single subject, with 'course', meaning degree (e.g. BA). The curriculum at CUC at this time included English Language and Literature I, II and III; English I, II and III; and English Literature III. The level of the course in Australian Literature is

In the end, contributions were made without this 'red rag', but the remark gives an indication of the low status of Canberra University College and perhaps also of Inglis Moore, who, for the purposes of staffing, was to be designated 'Senior Lecturer in Australian Literature'.

As professor and head of the department at CUC, the institution at which the subject in Australian literature was being proposed, it was logical that the first contribution to the forum would be made by AD Hope. Hope stated his agreement with those who have 'a vague feeling that Australian literature is not good enough or that it is not well enough established as a separate branch of literature, or again, that there is not yet enough of it to justify its having a course to itself' (166). He did not directly take issue with Edwards, nor even mention his contribution, simply stating that Australian literature should be studied, as an adjunct to English literature. It should only be available to those students who had already studied or were studying 'one of the major world literatures, preferably that of England' (169). Hope summarily dismissed the possibility of establishing a major in Australian literature: 'the man who graduates BA honours (Aust. Lit.), would be like a doctor setting out to practise medicine after having dissected the knee and the liver' (167). A letter to the registrar at Melbourne reveals Hope's concern that the teaching of Australian literature not 'go too far' on his watch:

> On the one hand I am glad to recommend the recognition of Aust. Lit. as an Arts subject; on the other, I think that it should never make one part of a major in English. (However one groups it with our other subjects, the arrangement is not satisfactory, and the course in English literature is absurdly truncated.) I foresee that, if we allow Aust. Lit. and one part of English as a submajor, we shall have persuasive pleas from those who wish to convert it into a major; and this is one reason why I should like you to keep an eye on the implications of anything I propose.[12]

Although the letter is unsigned, the reference to 'our subjects' is one of several indications that it is from Hope.

The most significant aspect of this letter is the point that the subject in Australian writing should 'never make one part of a major in English': students could not gain credit for its study as literature in English. A letter written about a decade later, shortly after Inglis Moore retired, offers further insight into Hope's views and confirms his reluctance about the subject of teaching Australian literature:

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not given. Canberra University College Annual Reports and Accounts, 1930–1960, Bound Copy, ANU Archives, Menzies Library, ANU, Canberra.

12 Letter to the Registrar, Melbourne University, [15?] April 1954, English Department Files 1945–76, Box 1, Canberra Correspondence File, University of Melbourne Archives.

> In fact, as you know, *I have always found it rather embarrassing to have a separate post of this sort* and always meant to have Australian literature incorporated into the ordinary courses when Tom retired. For this reason we made the associate professorship a personal promotion and were careful to state that it was not attached to the subject; but I should prefer [to appoint] someone who could share the lecturing with others and take part in other aspects of English teaching. However that may depend on who is available.[13]

Unsurprisingly, the eventual 'replacement' for Inglis Moore was not a specialist in Australian literature – far from it. George Russell's field was early English literature and language. When the question arose of the designation of Hope's own chair, Hope indicated that 'I should prefer *Chair of Modern English Literature*', the duties to include 'general oversight of English literature from the Renaissance onwards, including other branches such as Australian and American literature.' Far from being a strong institutional supporter of the subject, then, as is so often claimed, this evidence suggests that Hope exerted strict control over the development of the study of Australian literature, first at CUC and then at the ANU. He moved to quarantine the subject from English literature in the degree structure and, ten years later, to assimilate Australian texts into courses on English literature without comment, and to do away with the specialist teaching position.

In the following issue of *Meanjin*, AN Jeffares (Adelaide) and Wesley Milgate (Sydney) replied to Hope's comments. Both began their essays by pointing out at some length that their own departments were active in the study of Australian literature, and both noted that they had recently moved 'the section on Australian literature' (i.e. the CLF lectures) from the first-year course to the third-year one, on the grounds that it was best matched with nineteenth- and twentieth-century English literature. Milgate explained his rationale for this change in more detail:

> The idea was to place Australian writing unselfconsciously among the best writing in England, Ireland and America in this century; and it was clear that students found that to read Slessor alongside Yeats and Eliot, or Furphy alongside Hemingway [!] and Joyce and Huxley, was to perceive more justly the stature of Australian writing, to enjoy it more intelligently, and to see its characteristic quality by comparative study. (430–31)

Like Hope, Milgate was concerned about the potentially damaging effects of studying Australian literature and believed it was essential for students to become familiar with English literature first: 'I do not think, as some critics of universities

13 Letter AD Hope to Herbert Burton, AD Hope staff file 4511, ANU Archives, Menzies Library, ANU, Canberra, emphasis added.

seem to think, that this can be regarded as an un-Australian activity'.

There was unanimity between Hope, Milgate and Jeffares on the point that knowledge of English literature was an essential prerequisite to study of any other literature in English, on the grounds that it was 'parent'. However, Milgate and Jeffares clearly disagreed with Hope about the difficulties of including Australian literature in the existing English courses, although only Jeffares took up the argument explicitly. He claimed that Hope's objections to including Australian literature in current courses were neither 'valid [nor] even realistic', but at the same time suggested that the most appropriate place for the extended study of Australian literature was *outside* universities completely (434). The universities should be left to the task of fostering 'a greater historical sense, a stronger understanding of the continuous process of transmission and conservation so necessary to the growth and development of a culture' (435). This approach is grounded in a radical separation of criticism from literature: literature worthy of study is by definition that which lies at a distance. (Temporal distance underpins respectability – old literature is reliable – whereas geographical distance underpins a lack of respectability.) Jeffares' view was that undergraduate courses should include 'a minimum of Australian literature, for stimulus purposes'. Remarkably, given these arguments, Jeffares then concluded with the assertion that Australian studies were 'bound to become an integral part of English studies in this country in the future', entirely contradicting the rest of his essay. He also drew attention to Hope's error in claiming that the ANU was the first university to offer Australian literature, although he did not correct Hope's other mistake, that the course had been offered not by the ANU, but by CUC.

There was no formal contribution to the *Meanjin* forum from George Russell at Queensland. Although willing to contribute, Russell was cautious about putting his ideas about the Queensland department so early on in his tenure as professor. But his views are expressed in a letter to Colin Roderick written around the same time which outlines 'arrangements for teaching Australian Literature'. He notes that at Queensland the subject was being taught at first- and third-year levels, mainly the former:

> At this level the Australian literature is read in its own right i.e. without *specific* reference to English Literature produced in other countries and in other periods. In third year, selected authors are studied both in their own right and against the background of their contemporaries abroad. This does not form a large part of the course but we try to treat about three significant Australian authors at third year level. Many – if not most – of our fourth-year students write their theses on Australian topics and we do, in fact, encourage this. Normally we allow other subjects only when a good case can be made out. A good many of our Masters theses, too, are devoted to Australian literature.[14]

There was also said to be an attempt to give students a sense of the history of Australian literature. In these respects, the approaches at Queensland were quite different and far more positive. This might be explained by the fact that whereas at other universities there had occasionally been individuals interested in the field, at Queensland there was continuity. Interest in Commonwealth literature and comparative approaches were fostered by Russell's successor AC Cawley, as well as by the holding of the 1968 ACLALS conference for which a reading group in Commonwealth literature was convened.[15]

The final, brief contributions to the *Meanjin* debate were made by Vance Palmer and E Morris Miller, neither of whom was an academic in the field although both had made significant contributions to it. Palmer 'admitted', though with some hint of sarcasm, that it would not be possible to reduce the current offerings – 'English literature, with its abundance, its comprehensiveness, its Gothic atmosphere is a world in itself' (591). In defiance of all but Jeffares he proposed that literature be established as part of an Australian studies major, so that it could be considered in relation to its social and historical context. (Such a proposal confirmed the worst fears academic critics had about the incompetence of advocates from outside the university, who did not understand the dangers of the distractions offered by studies of history and society.) Allan Edwards, writing to Christesen to explain his failure to contribute to the later forum, made the following comments that sum up views in the academy about the teaching of Australian literature on any significant scale:

> My feeling was that a good deal of official humbug was being printed; and at the practical level two difficulties were consistently overlooked by Inglis Moore a) where can large numbers of students find enough copies of the texts, and if they can't, do we really approve survey courses full of second-hand judgements and dominated by cultural sociology, history of ideas, and so on; and 2) [sic] if prolonged specialisation in A.Lit. produces [five well-known critics] do we really want to turn out lots more students in their image? … though post-graduate work in A. Lit should be done and done well, *it's dangerous work* and might best be carried out in a city where the arts in general are cultivated and where it's therefore easier to keep a level head than in a provincial corner like Perth.[16]

In reply, Christesen agreed that some of those Edwards mentioned 'just are not

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14 Letter from GH Russell to Colin Roderick, 13 September 1955, Series 4, Volume 1, Colin Roderick Papers, MS 1578, National Library of Australia.

15 Helen Tiffin, personal communication.

16 Letter from Allan Edwards to Clem Christesen, 7 March 1956, Allan Edwards File, *Meanjin* Archive, Melbourne University, emphasis added.

critics: dull, semi-literate clots'. He argued, though, that the academy should take the blame for this:

> The scholar-critics have done a very poor job by Australia. Apart from peeing on our emergent national literature – an occupational disease among most English staff – they haven't published much non-Australian stuff of distinction. For the most part they don't publish period.[17]

Forced, in a public forum, to demonstrate commitment to Australian literature, contributors of essays to the *Meanjin* debate produced arguments riddled with contradictions, which arose because of the conflict between a genuine desire to act on the neglect of Australian literature (or, at least, to be *seen* to be doing so), and a widely shared belief that the study of the literature of England was and should remain the exclusive concern of the discipline. In terms of degree structures, the choice was seen as being between complete exclusion; confining the study of Australian literature to the postgraduate level; developing a separate subject that might or might not be part of Australian Studies; and including some Australian texts within English literature without any comment. None of the participants in this symposium answered Christesen's challenge to rethink the discipline in the light of Australian cultural and intellectual conditions. There was lip-service paid to the idea that Australian literature should be studied in Australian universities because it was 'the chief record of our culture', as Milgate put it, but all contributors clearly felt that *English* literature had to be studied because it was the best available. No contributor seriously raised the possibility that the literature of England might, like that of Australia, be grounded in its own history and need to be read and taught in that context, although Vance Palmer's comment (quoted above) could be read in that way. Those best equipped to think through the issues of locality and theory, Allan Edwards and Vincent Buckley, produced no sustained interrogation. An intellectually easier route was taken: the work of historians ('sociologists') was deplored for missing the theoretical boat, the walls around the English component of the curriculum were fortified against the barbarians, and advocates of Australian literature faced an unhappy choice between exile or assimilation.

AD HOPE IN CANBERRA

Being seen to have participated or driven the inaugurating moment of a field or even a discipline is an important means to academic authority, one that in turn

17 Letter from Clem Christesen to Allan Edwards, 9 March 1956, Allan Edwards File, *Meanjin* Archive, Melbourne University.

authorises presence at other important forums, other inaugurating moments. In relation to Australian literature, the conventional belief that 'A.D. Hope began AusLit' validated his presence at the inaugural conference of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature (ASAL), where he delivered the keynote address. Hope also delivered the first address as founding President of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE) in 1967, the first Annual Lecture of the Australian Academy of the Humanities in 1970, and the first Annual James McAuley Memorial Lecture in 1979.[18]

Alec Derwent Hope was born in Cooma, New South Wales. After spending part of his childhood in Tasmania he attended Leslie House School in Bathurst, and the selective Sydney public high school Fort Street (where James McAuley would later be school captain). He obtained his BA from Sydney as a student of ER Holme and John le Gay Brereton. There he won two university medals, in English and in philosophy, as well as the James King of Irrawang travelling scholarship, which funded his time at Oxford's University College. Hope returned to Australia in the midst of the Depression and was unemployed, but then spent time as a high school teacher, and worked as a psychologist in the Department of Labour and Industry.[19] His first appointment in a tertiary institution was as a lecturer in English and education at Sydney Teachers' College, a position he held from 1937 to 1945. He was then senior lecturer in English at Melbourne, until becoming foundation professor of English at Canberra University College in 1950. On the 'merger' of CUC and the ANU in September 1960, he moved to the ANU.[20] Hope received a number of honorary LittDs, as well as an AC and an OBE; he published widely as a poet and critic, and was heard on ABC radio as 'Anthony Inkwell' in the children's series *The Argonauts*. Hope's memoirs, *Chance Encounters*, were published in 1992 (see also RF Brissenden, Art).

Former students and colleagues of Hope's have sought to monumentalise his life and work; others have implicitly challenged these accounts. The battle over his reputation began as early as 1964, at a seminar on Australian literature held at the University of New England, when former *Angry Penguins* editor Max Harris proposed that the influence and credibility of Hope as a critic and academic would be a proper subject for enquiry. Harris commented at some length on

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18 In a press item reporting both Hope's election and his absence the Rev. JC Tyrrel, president of the Canberra and District branch, commented that Hope would be representing the AATE at several conferences overseas. Press clipping, 'Professor in the Know', *The Australian*, 19 November 1964, AD Hope staff file, ANU Archives. Hope was the inaugural president of the AATE but was away from Australia in the first year of its operation.

19 Details of Hope's career are outlined in his application for the Chair at CUC, which is preserved in his staff file, held at the ANU Archives, Menzies Library, Canberra.

20 AD Hope Staff file, ANU Archives, Menzies Library, ANU, Canberra.

Hope's work, suggesting that he was 'a far more complicated and unsatisfactory kettle of fish' than his colleague McAuley:

> Hope's judgements have had a very profound influence on the literary reputation in the Australian scene, if only for the uncritical acceptance they have been accorded by a legion of impressionable university followers. Yet I believe that a careful analysis of his various judgements would be to reveal him to be an impoverished and bigoted literary critic; that is, in terms of assessing the works of his contemporaries. (30–31)

If Harris' opinion needs to be placed in the context of Hope's vicious reviews of his own work, he is nevertheless not alone in his evaluation. In his doctoral thesis, Alan Lawson has been critical of various aspects of Hope's work, arguing that Hope's power 'depended upon the congruence of his magisterial rhetoric with the publicly perceived need for criticism that was mature, sophisticated, serious, discriminating', rather than on any single and sustained piece of writing that demonstrated those qualities (125). The foci in my discussion of Hope's work are his essay 'Standards in Australian Literature', his inaugural lecture delivered at CUC, and what is perhaps his best-known poem, 'Australia'. First, however, it is worth noting in a little more detail the circumstances in which Hope came to be associated with the national literature and the national university.

Hope was one of a group of four appointees to chairs at CUC, then a somewhat struggling offshoot of Melbourne. The nature of the agreement between Melbourne and the college forced the latter to go cap in hand every year or two to seek renewal of its agreement to award degrees; academics at the northern outpost were not permitted to offer their own subjects, nor to set exams.[21] Hope, then at Melbourne, was in a prime position to obtain the chair not least because of his familiarity with the workings and syllabus of the 'parent' institution. Until then the teaching of English had been led by Leslie Allen, who had come so close to the chair at Sydney awarded to Brereton. Allen had been joined by Tom Inglis Moore, who moved from teaching in Pacific studies to English. Allen retired at the end of 1950 and Hope's appointment to the chair became effective the following day.[22]

When AD Hope had applied for the chair of English at CUC in 1949 his referee was Ian Maxwell. Maxwell wrote a long letter summing up his view of the applicants; as head at Melbourne his view was likely to carry particular or even decisive weight. In his customarily authoritative fashion, Maxwell writes of one candidate that he (Maxwell) had heard that a second-class result from Oxford had

21 Canberra University College Annual Reports and Accounts, 1930–1960.

22 Canberra University College Annual Reports and Accounts, 1930–1960.

meant he was out of favour in his own institution.[23] In contrast, Hope's own result at Oxford – a third – is at once explained and taken out of the equation. Maxwell merely notes that Hope had walked out of an exam in Gothic. It is an interesting detail, which in one sense seems like a historical fact (although at this distance we cannot know whether or not the claim is true, even if Hope himself has also made it). But if there is a selectivity in thinking about the 'origins' of the discipline which leaves languages and literatures like Latin and Old Norse venerated, while 'barbarian' [Catholic], 'emotional' or 'feminine' literary ancestors like the Celts are ignored or derided, then both walking out of a paper in Gothic, and dismissing the significance of doing so, become not (or not only) truth claims, but symptoms of critical sensibility. In this moment at least, the action does not matter in the way that walking out of a Latin exam might.

In his letter, Maxwell is adamant that Hope was the most impressive academic of his acquaintance. That was to change with Kramer and Goldberg coming onto the scene, but the endorsement of Hope is so forceful that by the time Maxwell comes to suggest that Hope would be no more than barely competent as an administrator, and probably would not publish much, these seem merely addenda (teaching is not addressed).[24] On the matter of publications, Hope himself had been offhand:

> There is hardly anything worth mentioning under this head. I have contributed a few critical articles and reviews to literary magazines such as *Meanjin* and *Southerly* and a couple of critical and research articles to the *Australasian Journal of Psychology and Philosophy*.[25]

Hope's rival, as far as Maxwell was concerned, was a Melbourne colleague, of whom Maxwell wrote that 'His knowledge, modesty and integrity are part and parcel of his work. He is at his best with classes, as distinct from audiences – a good teacher rather than an impressive lecturer.' This presentation of William Scott as a modest and shy man is at odds with the views of Boyce Gibson, professor of philosophy, who likewise wrote for Hope and for Scott, but who described Scott as 'younger, breezy, immensely energetic, very good company, versatile, to a degree (he is a good actor and has a first rate knowledge of music), he has poise and address, handles people sympathetically and adroitly and would develop into an excellent administrator and organizer.'[26] The most obvious explanation for

23 Ian Maxwell, Letter to the Registrar [Mr Owen], 11 September 1950, AD Hope staff file, ANU Archives.

24 A former student claimed to me that Hope favoured the 'Oxford method', in which students are asked a question and silence prevails until an answer is forthcoming.

25 Undated Application for Chair [at CUC], AD Hope staff file, ANU Archives.

26 Boyce Gibson, Confidential Letter to the Registrar [Mr Owen], 11 September 1950,

this difference of view is just that – difference of view – but it would seem that whereas Hope's reticence was a virtue, Scott's was a handicap. A third reference for Hope – shorter, strong, but restrained – came from RM Crawford, who notes that Hope was in the year behind him at Sydney and at Oxford.[27]

Hope's rise to the chair was by no means rapid, but being appointed to what was then a small and modest institution was to prove fortuitous. In the postwar period Canberra had a peculiar situation in which the undergraduate-only CUC co-existed with the Australian National University (ANU), an institution whose founders dreamed that its research would drive federal policy as public servants took PhDs and then moved back into administration (see Foster and Varghese). It was one of only a handful of institutions in the world to limit its student body to postgraduates – indeed the aim was to have only doctoral students. It might be thought that in these unusual circumstances – one institution in the relatively small national capital not taking undergraduates, the other not taking postgraduates – a proposed amalgamation would make sense. But it was not sense but sensitivities that seem to have run high, for the different cultures and aims of the two institutions, not to mention differences in funding levels, meant that there were differing and strongly held views about mission and status. Those working at the university were determined to protect their position (and their money); those at the college were alert to insinuations that their research and teaching were of a lower standard. Certainly there were vast differences in function and size: just over 150 CUC staff, compared to nearly 700 at the ANU, although the university had 111 PhD students (that is, around six staff per student!) whilst the college had 665 students (almost the reverse ratio). Only 133 of the CUC students were full time, but the large proportion of part-time students was, to critics, proof that the college lacked the quality that was the raison d'être of the national university (Foster and Varghese).

In January 1958 the CUC principal, Herbert ('Joe') Burton, had told Hope it was unlikely that a merger would proceed.[28] Against this prediction, 1959 saw a shotgun wedding. Thus Hope and his counterpart in history, Manning Clark – who had also come from a senior lectureship at Melbourne – were transferred to chairs at the ANU. The college remained isolated within the ANU as the 'School of General Studies' – not, perhaps, a name that suggested reverence or scholarly seriousness. That an awareness of the different histories died hard at the ANU is suggested by a letter from TM Owen, then registrar, to a journalist who, in 1990, erroneously reported that AD Hope had been a staff member at the ANU since

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AD Hope staff file, ANU Archives.

27 RM Crawford, 25 October 1950, AD Hope staff file, ANU Archives. In fact both took their Oxford degrees in 1930, although Crawford took a first (Balliol).

28 Herbert Burton to AD Hope, 20 January 1958, AD Hope staff file, ANU Archives, Menzies Library, ANU, Canberra.

1950.

> You will note that during the first 11 of his 18 years as a Professor he had no official connection with the ANU, that there was no department of English there until September 1960 and that there was no Faculty of English until September 1980 when the School of General Studies became The Faculties.[29]

The ticking off is concluded with the peeved remark that this is not the first time the registrar has had to send such a reminder, making it somewhat ironic that the plaque on the AD Hope Building at the ANU gives his years of work at the university as 1951 to 1968.

Although the influence of various colleagues in literature was clearly important for Hope's career, notably Maxwell, perhaps it is Burton who played the key role at CUC and at the ANU. Hope's staff file indicates a close friendship: Burton approves numerous requests for travel and leave, often made close to the departure date (usually the day before); he writes in strong support of some unusual requests, including the extension of a twelve-month study leave period to nearly fifteen months, and he ticks off the then registrar (Owen!) for daring to specify the date of return from that leave. This extension, the granting of which contravened the university's regulations, was done in order that Hope be an 'academic delegate' to a conference that Burton himself was attending in Canada. When Hope's initial five-year appointment at CUC was due for renewal, Burton wrote to the registrar endorsing Hope 'in the strongest possible terms'. Whilst noting the presence of others, he claimed that 'Hope's own work has been mainly responsible for the high standing of the English Department at the present time', the professor having 'worked untiringly and unremittingly' for the department and the college: there was 'no member of staff whose permanent appointment I would support more readily and wholeheartedly'.[30] There is no evidence, in the file, that any other view was sought, and presumably as principal the decision was Burton's alone.

Among academics, perhaps the most coveted aspect of working in a university is study leave, during which one is relieved of teaching and administration and expected to focus on research. Access to study leave, in turn, underpins publication, the latter the main measure of academic achievement, as JJ Stable indicated in his application for the chair at Queensland. Preparing to apply for

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29 Letter from TM Owen to Mr Peter Cotton, Editor, *ANU Reporter*, 2 October 1990, AD Hope staff file, ANU Archives.

30 Memorandum for the Registrar, Re-appointment of Professor Hope to the Chair of English, 31 May 1955, AD Hope staff file, ANU Archives. Again, we see the very tangible importance of the non-specialist in forming academic reputation.

study leave in April 1956 soon after his tenure had been renewed (a leave later deferred), Hope wrote to the CUC registrar that 'Dr Todd's recent and very thorough report on English teaching in British and American universities relieves me of the obligation I should otherwise have felt to investigate this subject' whilst on leave, implying that a different project would be developed in any future application.[31] But the following year Hope took a different tack after he had been awarded a Carnegie Fellowship, his application for which had been warmly supported by Burton. He wrote to the registrar to inform him that the Fellowship was

> to study the organisation and methods of the academic study of American Literature in the main universities concerned with this subject. In view of the course in Australian Literature established at the College I think that this would be a useful investigation and it would follow on a similar investigation of the study of Canadian universities which I have arranged to carry out during my visit there. I would propose to make my findings available to other Australian universities interested in establishing courses in Australian Literature, particularly as my Canadian visit is sponsored by the Australian Humanities Research Council of which I am a member.[32]

Todd's 'recent and very thorough report' was forgotten, and the fact that it was Tom Inglis Moore, not Hope, who was establishing the course not mentioned. Nevertheless, Hope received the extension to his leave in order to accommodate the journey to north America.

In the case of Hope's career, it is clear that standards that are invoked for other candidates, colleagues, and even students are set aside. We see that flexibility in the application of criteria, that subtle infiltration of personal preferences, which permeates Maxwell's long letter about the candidates for the original appointment to CUC, and which allows Burton to shift position from institutional enforcer to distributor of patronage. The effect of Burton's support is difficult to gauge, but his patronage was direct, assiduous, and effective, even after the move to the ANU. When Hope retired he was awarded a 'library fellowship' on an annual salary of £5000, only fractionally below his salary as a professor. This, in turn, helped to buttress Hope's authority and achievements within the field of Australian literary studies. And that both Hope and Goldberg were able to have such appointments at ANU signals the wealth of the institution, relative to Australian counterparts.

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31 Memorandum for the Registrar, 13 April 1956, Approved by Principal 16 April. AD Hope staff file, ANU Archives. Allan Edwards, too, had been in the US and contributed an essay on the same question to *Meanjin* just a couple of years earlier.

32 Agendum no. 57/1957, Attachment A, letter from AD Hope to Mr Owen, n.d. AD Hope staff file, ANU Archives.

In his inaugural lecture at Canberra Hope begins by expressing his intention to 'survey the nature of the subject for which the chair was established'; he goes on to describe problems in teaching, curricula and criticism. He claimed that English studies were 'in danger of becoming another Tower of Babel', and suggests that it is necessary to reintegrate the study of the English language with English literature. Although he parodied the methods and concerns of language study, Hope seems to conclude that 'no student at University … can be said to have studied English literature unless he has been taught something of the history of the English language' (*The Study of English*, 6). But it is difficult to pin Hope down about values as opinions are forcefully stated and then undercut and/or contradicted. What is defined is the ideal student – one whose 'own writing shows something of the grace and mastery of prose, the elastic force of fine syntax and that delicate perception of the range and value of words, which have allegedly been his concern in the course of his studies' (7) – and the ideal teacher, clearly a poet: 'One cannot teach imaginative insight to the student of English any more than one can teach creative imagination to the artists and the poet. One can only display it and hope that it will catch by a sort of contagion' (8). And bodies on display were clearly on Hope's mind: the most consistent feature of the lecture is its boorishly jocular sexism.

Probably the most important publication by Hope, measured in terms of the institutional authority that is the main concern of this book, is his article 'Standards in Australian Literature'. The essay was first published in the *Current Awareness Bulletin* in 1956, then revised and reprinted as the lead essay in Grahame Johnston's *Australian Literary Criticism*. Amidst generally hostile reviews of the collection, Hope was usually spared: AA Phillips offered a clear-sighted critique that drew attention to the anthology's narrow agenda, but says that Hope's essay exhibits his 'usual intelligence and unpretentious lucidity' (22). For John Barnes and WM Maidment, Hope's essay is uncontroversial. The consensus among reviewers seems to be that Hope had said nothing that was not common sense, nor even commonplace, but had said it well. A former colleague was critical of the essay, but years later (see Green, A Lively History).

In the longer version of the 'Standards' essay, Hope describes the purpose of literary study as having been 'to transplant a tradition and to encourage it to take root here, to promote closer ties with the homeland. In other words, it was a sort of missionary enterprise' (14). But while the metaphor seems to recall Leavisite thinking, Hope also claims that there is 'very little in the way of a coherent body of literary theory by which we may judge books, and no set of rules by which their composition may be judged' (1). Like many of his contemporaries, Hope is careful to differentiate between the work of Leavis (of which he approves) and that of his followers (of which he does not), and there are specific debts to Leavis and his thinking in the 'Standards' essay. For example, Hope argues that universities are the crucial force in constructing (controlling) literary tradition: they are

places where 'scholars devote themselves to the continual reassessment and discussion of the classics of native literature and keep the traditions alive by forming the taste of the reading class who come to them to study the masterpieces' (2).

The conflict that Hope so often attempts to resolve in his work is not that between England and Australia, although recuperation of English and classical cultures is ostensibly an important part of his intellectual endeavour. Rather, it is a conflict between the authority of the spatial (place, landscape, locality, creative writing) and the authority of the temporal (history, tradition, and the university as guardian of these things). In his 'Standards' essay he is critical of the obsession with place in Australian writing, arguing that to speak of what is universally 'human' one must transcend the local. But the essay ends with an image from the Australian landscape to explain his understanding of the value of the 'truly' 'great' writer: there is a description of the summit of Mount Buller rising above the surrounding mountains into the sunlight, into 'another and altogether different world', a view that produces 'an effect of unforgettable majesty and beauty' (15). Hope is drawn to the landscape to produce a memorable metaphor for literary achievement.

Hope's feelings about the Australian landscape are clearly complex, and can be explained in part through reference to his affection for classical literature. The spare Mediterranean climate and landscape of some parts of the country brought to mind, for some, the belief that antipodean culture might be made classical in temper. Hope, like Charles Jury, was imbued with a sense of the authority of 'the classics', and his best-known poem, 'Australia', which has been repeatedly anthologised since the 1950s, can be read as expressing that distinctive version of utopian vision that is informed by nostalgia for classical cultures. The last two verses are frequently quoted or referred to as evidence of Hope's intellectual, sentimental and aesthetic commitment to Australia itself, Geoffrey Serle taking the title of his study of culture in Australia from the last line of the penultimate verse:

> Yet there are some like me turn gladly home
> From the lush jungle of modern thought, to find
> The Arabian desert of the human mind,
> Hoping, if still from the deserts the prophets come,
>
> Such savage and scarlet as no green hills dare
> Springs in that waste, some spirit which escapes
> The learned doubt, the chatter of cultured apes
> Which is called civilization over there. (*Collected Poems*, 13)

To read these lines as an endorsement of Australia society and culture is to forget the earlier references in the poem to 'drab green and desolate grey', 'the last of lands, the emptiest', 'the rivers of her immense stupidity', 'monotonous tribes', 'five cities, like five teeming sores', populated by 'second-hand Europeans' who

are 'without songs, architecture, history'. 'Australia' can be read as a rejection not of the 'European civilization' of the *past*, but of its contemporary incarnation, the 'lush jungle of modern thought'. Australia is preferable only because the possibility remains that it will inspire and cause to evolve a culture that is biblical in austerity and grandeur, classical in temper.

The metaphor of Mount Buller, the poem 'Australia', and indeed the 'Standards' essay itself, reflect the tension between the demands of the local, and those of tradition:

> There is something in a masterpiece – native, indigenous and speaking the untranslatable language of a specific civilization – by which the writers of that country can measure themselves and feel the force of their own talents in a way which they can rarely do with the masterpieces of other lands. It is for this reason that Australia must wait for the final requirement in standards on which a fully formed literary tradition is based. (Hope, Standards, 14)

This final appeal to cultural specificity and to place is undone by the fact that Hope had already declared that 'the centre of civilization' lies in England; he gives no sense that civilisation could mean anything other than the culture of Britain and Europe.

There is ultimately a profound and even bitter sense of displacement reflected in Hope's critical attacks, and particularly in his reviews of the work of fellow creative writers. Hope's authority raises the question of how he overcame an inauspicious start to his academic career to lay claim to a central place in the study of Australian literature. The first and one of the most important elements is the cultural and social background into which one is born. In Hope's case, he was at pains to emphasise the value of the literary education gained in his father's library, and he has documented the importance of his immersion, as a child, in 'all the English poets'. He suggests that this formed a lasting element of his ideas and assumptions about culture and place, ideas developed 'on an island [Tasmania] thirteen thousand miles away from the sources of the tradition in which I had been educated' (Teaching, 160; see also his Meet Nurse!).

Bourdieu suggests that social capital also accrues through personal links and through a kind of cross-fertilisation. Not only does capital in one aspect of one's life – here, writing poetry – transfer to another – in this case, criticism – but a reputation in each enhances the other. Hope's status as a poet was not passively congruent with his role as an academic, and certainly it did not represent the disabling conflict between 'the poet' and 'the professor' that Hope presents it as being in his inaugural lecture. Rather, the reputation gathered in one role enhances the reputation in another, no matter how unrelated: thus his referee Boyce Gibson suggests that it is his 'eminence as a critic and a creative artist

which is Hope's strongest claim' to the chair at CUC, phrasing which merges the two fields of achievement.[33] Reputation is only brought into question by those with equivalent (or greater) expertise: most of us, most of the time, are forced or choose to take claims to competence at face value. And whereas deep knowledge often causes one to question underlying values or conclusions, relatively superficial knowledge often produces self-confidence. Social convention and the protocols of institutions make it all but impossible to assail the reputation of someone determined to make good without a moment of firm interrogation that is always read, by some or many, as a personal attack. Harris' comments quoted above could be read as doing that, as could James McAuley and Stewart's own trickery of Harris in the Ern Malley hoax (see below), or so it would turn out.

This effect, of exchange or cross-fertilisation in achievements in different spheres, and of the power of institutional authority, can be discerned in reviews of Hope's work: writers almost always refer to his status as a poet when reviewing his criticism, and to his status as a critic when reviewing his poetry. It is emphasised that Hope is not a 'typical' academic, in the most pejorative sense of the term.[34] While there is an open move to dissociate the poet from the professor by Hope *and* his reviewers, this has the effect of invoking the authority that is ostensibly being disclaimed. Judah Waten's introduction to his review of one of Hope's collections of criticism, *The Pack of Autolycus*, is typical:

> For over 30 years A.D. Hope has been one of Australia's most esteemed poets and a great literary figure. As in England and France, poets in Australia have sometimes held university chairs of literature. A.D. Hope is one of those poets. He was Professor of English at the Australian National University from 1951 until 1968 and during that time he also published a collection of essays and several collections of poems which won for him national and international fame … A brilliant intelligence emerges in all his work, witty and incisive in his criticism of literature and life. There is nothing of the stodgy academic about him. (24)

Like Hope himself, Waten is caught in the tensions or collisions between taken-for-granted ways of speaking about literature and the academy. There is the imperative that applauds work that is 'both original and scholarly', and in which the position of 'professor' at 'the Australian National University' is one of pres-

33 Boyce Gibson, Confidential Letter to the Registrar [Mr Owen], 11 September 1950, AD Hope staff file, ANU Archives.

34 Vincent Buckley drew attention to and was critical of this tendency of Australian academics to 'busily dissociat[e]' themselves from the 'intelligentsia', and was brave enough to suggested that the role of the intellectual may be 'an honourable one' – albeit 'less honourable than that of poet' – in his essay on 'Intellectuals'.

tige. There is the rhetoric of value that operates *outside* the academy, which devalues academics as 'stodgy'. Similarly, there is the appeal to national value – in the first sentence, and in the reference to the 'Australian National' university – and the appeal to international precedents which signify quality: poets have held chairs of English in England and France; Waten also notes that Hope's work has been translated into twelve languages.

As the title of his collection implies, Hope's reputation also rested on his reputation for savagery, leading me to wonder whether any students or writers were ever afraid of AD Hope.[35] Even today, discussions almost breathlessly record as fact the claim that one of his reviews was so critical as to cause the author to commit suicide. Such rumours, if they are true – and if a writer did indeed kill themselves after having a book reviewed by Hope, is it likely there were no other factors at work? – become part of a celebration of the will to power. No such myth circulates about the academic whose rival was said to have hanged himself in the study of the colleague appointed to the chair of English. Why is one story public, the other private; one constitutive of reputation as a critic, the other suppressed in formal and informal histories?

As with the discussion of Ian Maxwell, this section on Hope interrogates reputation, an interrogation that runs counter to the many works which respect and honour academics and their careers. Maxwell was honoured with a Festschrift, a collection of essays generally written by present or former colleagues and students, edited by Gabriel Turville-Petre and John Stanley Martin, and opening with a poem by 'A.D.H.' (in the contents, AD Hope). EOG Turville-Petre, more usually Gabriel, was at the time professor of Old Icelandic at Oxford. I have made the argument, in this chapter, that it was largely through the work of patrons such as Maxwell and Burton that Hope's third-class degree was massaged from handicap into qualification, enabling him to obtain a professorial position, thence to become an icon of Australian literature. My argument could be taken to imply that it would have been impossible for a student with that result to obtain a senior academic position at a more prestigious institution than CUC. It is worth noting, then, that listed among Hope's classmates who obtained a third-class pass degree in English in 1931 was EOG Turville-Petre. The point is not that achievements such as honours grades determine careers, although they often do; it is rather that, at specific times and in specific ways, there can be flexibility in the way they might or might not be invoked as measures of academic merit.

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35 In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Autolycus is torn to death by his own dogs after he had been changed into a deer, although Hope's use of the pseudonym to signify savagery in reviewing is not original. *The West Australian*, for example, published reviews by 'Autolycus': (see 'Mainly about Books', *The West Australian*, 6 December 1930: 4.

MCAULEY, COMMUNISM AND QUADRANT

James McAuley is perhaps most famous today either as a Cold Warrior or as half of 'Ern Malley', a hoax in which poems by a 'deceased garage mechanic' were submitted to *Angry Penguins*, edited by a young Max Harris. The aim of the hoax was to demonstrate that critics who were aficionados of modernism could be fooled into lauding nonsense, and from their own point of view McAuley and Stewart succeeded for a time as Harris published the poems with a splash, and then bore the brunt of first public ridicule (which was the intended outcome) and a trial for obscenity (which was not).

In contrast to Hope, who was ostensibly apolitical – although internal university correspondence shows a sharp institutional mind at work – McAuley was an openly and avowedly political figure. Later views of McAuley have differed. Stuart Macintyre concludes that

> Coleman's biography suggests that [McAuley's] political involvement was reluctant and episodic, that of a poet driven by his sense of duty to do that for which he had little stomach. Vincent Buckley's memoir *[Cutting Green Hay*] … makes the point that McAuley 'was not a poet who dabbled in politics, he was a dogmatically based intellectual politician who attacked and was attacked on a political basis' (177). Even within the Church, his politics were marked by fierce factional intrigue against the bureaucrats and betrayers, those who would not join his crusade. He sought no quarter and gave none. (23)

Susan McKernan has stressed the profound impact that his experience as a lecturer in government at the Australian School of Pacific Administration (1946–60), combined with his frequent trips to New Guinea, had on McAuley's idea of the relationships between colonialism, politics, culture, and education (70–95). McAuley's biographer, Peter Coleman, likewise stresses the interrelationship between his subject's colonial experience, his poetry, and his political beliefs. These are characterised by what Coleman describes as a sense of

> the value of primitive art, the importance of liturgical art, the vindication of the normal in art, the interrelation of beauty, usefulness, and meaning, the achievements of eastern metaphysics, the need for a consensual, intellectual vision in society, the erosive effect of mindless economic growth on the quality of life, the destructive nature of the West, a sense of catastrophe, [and] a pervasive pessimism. (37)

The echo of idealism can be heard in this summary, although one notes that truth and goodness are replaced by usefulness and meaning.

James Phillip McAuley grew up in Sydney and attended Fort Street High, winning a scholarship to Sydney (McKernan, 70). On completing his masters degree, McAuley was not offered the university position that McKernan suggests he had expected, and he became a school teacher. In 1943 McAuley became a member of the Army Directorate of Research of Civil Affairs headed by Alf Conlon. Afterwards he obtained a position at Australia's 'Colonial Office', the School of Pacific Administration, set up to train Australians to work in Papua and New Guinea. In an essay tellingly entitled 'My New Guinea', McAuley outlined his explanation for the failure of the 'great enterprise of European colonialism':

> Perhaps the simple answer is: the white woman. While European men went out to Asia and Africa and the Pacific without wife and family, they entered into a different sort of relationship, socially and sexually, with the people. When the white wife came out all was inevitably different … No, the white woman is perhaps the real ruin of empires. If New Guinea had become a mulatto society it would be a slatternly, but more colourful and easy-going society, with the minor vices of concubinage and sloth, rather than the major respectable vices of cold-heartedness and hypocrisy. (32)[36]

The view that being able to establish sexual relations with indigenous women was one of the most effective means by which colonial rule could be established and maintained attributes political agency to (those few?) women who gave consent, while erasing the violence which so often has accompanied conflict and occupation (against which widely held view, see Strobel, 1–16; Callaway, 3–29). That McAuley should offer such an argument belies his reputation as a brilliant thinker.

Another aspect of these assumptions about former colonies and those who inhabit them is McAuley's belief that education too, corrupts, and that even (and perhaps especially) colonised elites were unable to cope constructively with the devolution of political authority. In his essay 'Liberals and Anti-Colonialism', McAuley claims that 'Asia and Africa knew nothing of nationalism until their westernized intellectuals learnt about it in Western schools and universities and began to use it as a weapon against their masters' (169). It is a claim contradicted by Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, which argues that the nation is not a distinctly European political form at all, but arises from the conditions of anti-colonialism. McAuley's views were structured by his obsession with opposing communism, which led him to believe that movements for independence were not responses antagonistic to occupation, but part of the communist menace. In McAuley's

36 For a more sympathetic analysis of McAuley's views on colonialism than that offered here, see Dixon.

view, this threat was not appreciated by liberal intellectuals who were 'conditioned to an exaggerated guilt-feeling', a 'pathological' guilt, 'induced in us by Communist propaganda' (170).

Notwithstanding what many claim was a strong commitment to the colonial mission, McAuley wanted to leave the school and at the end of the 1950s 'applied to his academic friends' for help in obtaining a university position (McKernan, 90). Although McKernan does not name them, one of these was almost certainly Hope, as the two men were long-time friends and correspondents, and the professor and head of department at Tasmania where McAuley gained his position was a former and junior colleague of Hope's at the ANU, FM Todd. In defiance of the bans on academic appointments to Tasmania that were part of the fallout over the dismissal of Sydney Orr, McAuley accepted a poetry fellowship at the level of associate professor in 1960 – a rare kind of appointment, at the time perhaps the only one in Australia for a creative writer.[37] It was also unusual for anyone to enter the university system at such a senior level, but McAuley's rapid rise did not end there. Todd died at the end of that year, and at a time when Tasmania was finding it all but impossible to fill academic positions, the new poetry fellow was appointed to the chair and became head of department, thereby moving from lecturer at a small training college to professor in less than two years. During this period McAuley also became chair of the academic board, a position of considerable institutional power; it is a rise of astonishing swiftness, unparalleled in the discipline to date.

In his inaugural lecture at Tasmania McAuley engaged in a 'revaluation' of the work of Edmund Spenser, whose poetry he compared to the novels of George Eliot – Spenser had been moved down the literary league ladder by Leavis, and McAuley referred directly and indirectly to Leavis at various points during the lecture. But he began by reiterating a version of Eliot's 'tradition and the individual talent', suggesting that 'it belongs to a full human culture to extend our awareness of the past, as well as to have regard to the future' (1). A central theme in the lecture was the idea or ideal of a pure moment of encounter in which the text itself becomes fully 'realised' or 'immanent':

> I am inclined to the view that the essential academic component in literary studies is not the pretension of shedding the white light of final critical judgements, but the obligation to make the work as fully present as possible by interpretation and analysis. To put it very formally: it is chiefly as hermaneutics [sic] and exegesis that literary study becomes an academic discipline. (20)

37 The Lockie Bequest at Melbourne has been used to fund an academic position, but usually at a lower level.

These (contradictory) methods are set aside, for McAuley ultimately endorses a curious passivity: 'we cannot know unless we are docile; we cannot understand unless we are willing to let works of art first speak to us on their own terms' (21). This idealist view also emerges in a lecture to English teachers:

> We are concerned with language acquisition and development and with efficient use of English. But we never thought our vocation stopped there. We have all believed in the didactic theory of literature, humanely understood: i.e., in the idea that a good book offered a value-charged experience worthy to be contemplated and *received into one's being*. (Textbooks and Morals, 10; my emphasis)

The approach is somewhat reminiscent of Arnold, specifically his assertion that the critic must stand aside and simply allow the text to be, but it is somewhat at odds with McAuley's approach in other fields. For students it was known that certain kinds of literature were valued over others: a former honours student at Tasmania remarked to me that 'everyone knew that you could not get a first if you wrote on a twentieth-century writer' when McAuley was professor in charge of English.[38]

In 1955, on the suggestion of Hope, McAuley was offered the editorship of *Quadrant*, Australia's best-known conservative journal. *Quadrant* was established with the specific intention of countering *Meanjin*, regarded by some of the more fervent Cold Warriors as the mouthpiece of communism, a charge which helped to exacerbate the constant difficulties over funding and credibility experienced by the then editor Clem Christesen. The other and more explicit opponent was *Overland*, which unlike *Meanjin* had and still has an explicitly leftwing brief. The first issue of *Quadrant* was published under McAuley's direction in December 1956, in an era of intense Cold-War conflict – *Overland* had begun publication in 1954. Peter Coleman notes with satisfaction that 'All the poems [in *Quadrant*] were in metre and rhymed', continuing the campaign against modernism that had been conducted successfully for decades (72). However McAuley, and the journal, were damaged after it was revealed that the Congress for Cultural Freedom, which had supported the journal financially, was funded by the United States' Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).[39]

McAuley's vision of an undergraduate education in English was outlined

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38 Carol Hetherington, personal communication.

39 Debates over the journal, its funding, and affliations to communism continue, although they have shifted to *Overland*, a more logical opponent of *Quadrant* than *Meanjin*, paranoia about which might have been inspired or heightened by the fact that Christesen's wife, Nina Christesen, was a Russian refugee, who began the teaching of Russian at Melbourne.

in an editorial in *Quadrant* in 1975, under his regular heading 'Commentary'. The argument manifests precisely the anxiety about the methods and scholarly reputation of English studies that idealism prompted in earlier generations, and McAuley suggested that changes would be needed to turn what he termed a 'mush subject' into 'a genuine study'. These reforms were not 'a matter of arbitrary demand, reactionary or snobbish views, or elitism: they simply exist as inescapable':

> Undergraduate study of English literature should concentrate on the period between Chaucer and lets [sic] say, George Eliot … The central area of English literature is Latin-based and heavily influenced by literary culture in the Romance-languages, especially Italian and French. The student needs to have done some Latin and French or Italian, and to continue to develop his knowledge in these fields. He needs some knowledge of the better-known parts of the Bible. He needs to have done some British and European history and to continue to read in it … He does *not* need any advanced modern linguistics or political science or sociology or psychology. (Commentary, 13)

The plan calls to mind the kinds of studies in modern languages conducted nearly a century before at Sydney and Melbourne. The terror of faddism conceals just how recent the study of English was, while McAuley's constant efforts to 'stiffen' study with language come to seem almost comical. The notable absences are philosophy and psychoanalysis, which had done, and would subsequently do, so much to influence literary study in English.

One of the more instructive documents on McAuley's ideas about the study of literature is his essay 'Textbooks and Morals', delivered as a presidential address at a national conference of the AATE, quoted above. In this lecture, McAuley reveals his commitment to the idea of an unyielding core culture, and looks back with nostalgia at those European societies which, he claims, had once had

> a public system of loyalties, and [in which] it was assumed that the health and indeed the very continuance of these societies depended on the enforcement of this public system of loyalties … Individuals might and did commit acts of treason, civil disobedience, blasphemy, abortion, sodomy, adultery and fornication, but these varieties of conduct were not regarded as equal options in the forum of public policy … in the past few decades … [there has been] such a collapse of confidence on the part of public authority that no-one today seems to be quite sure what reason can any longer be offered against the advocacy in secondary schools of treason, sodomy, abortion, fornication or ungodliness. (6–7)

McAuley believed that English teachers had a particular responsibility to combat 'treason, sodomy, abortion, fornication or ungodliness', the advocates for which were, he feared, over-running high schools. Elsewhere he suggests that moral and intellectual perversion were rampant in the universities: many academics were

> much given to scepticism and indecisiveness; they have undermined certainty in knowledge, and generated a distrust of the very instrument of knowledge, the intellect; they have relativized all values, denied the rationality of all ends of action. (On Being an Intellectual, 147)

These views led McAuley to become involved in the formation of organisations such as Peace with Freedom, which aimed to combat 'the politicisation of teaching, of staff appointments, and of post-graduate patronage', and 'defend and develop the principles of traditional education against the education radicals and demagogues, and to resist the politicisation of universities, colleges and schools' (Coleman, 106). Peace with Freedom, whose members were usually academics or students, was formed 'to prepare plans to make war [sic] on the Left in the universities and colleges, for elections, for the press, and for meetings' (Coleman, 106). At about this time McAuley found that he had cancer, but after recovering from an operation, he returned to the fray,

> bringing together academics and intellectuals who were ready to make war [again!] on the Left, encouraging the formation of undergraduate political organisations and magazines, attacking the Moratorium (that is, anti-South Vietnam) marches by academics and students, criticising the New Left in newspapers, public lectures and learned articles, and defending the educational integrity of universities, colleges, and schools. (Coleman, 114)

For McAuley and the members of Peace with Freedom the 'continuing danger was the politicisation of teaching', and what they saw as the threat posed by the Whitlam government's plans for the 'egalitarian transformation of Australian society by eliminating from schools any inegalitarian [sic] emphasis on excellence and standards', a program, in McAuley's view, 'for undermining the free society' (Coleman, 115).

What makes McAuley important to this history is that he illustrates a particular, often unspoken dimension of debates about criticism: the charge that critics operating outside the universities, or in disciplines other than English, had a covert leftist agenda. Some might see a sinister plot against legitimate authority in the fact that, at early conferences of ASAL, all delegates were addressed as 'professor', but it is difficult to discern a coherent leftist program in the work of critics of Australian writing, taken as a group. If there is a common thread that connects academics who have taught Australian literature, it is that, whatever the

ironies, many who had strong reservations about the value of Australian literature as an academic subject are closely associated with the development of the field. The work of an earlier and parallel generation of critics working outside the discipline and the universities – among them many women, like Zora Cross, Nettie Palmer, Miles Franklin, Marjorie Barnard, Flora Eldershaw and Judith Wright – has received less attention than it should have.

MAKING CANONS: VINCENT BUCKLEY

Although no critic really took up Clem Christesen's questions about methodology raised in the *Meanjin* forum, some of the issues were taken up by Vincent Buckley in his essay 'Towards an Australian Literature'. Here, Buckley claims that 'the trouble with this symposium was that it wasn't an exchange of views at all. Everyone politely agreed with Professor Hope [Jeffares had not]. The result was that some of the issues never became properly canvassed' (64).

Buckley's main contention is that the study of Australian literature suffers from the lack of a canon and effective criticism. Thus it is the responsibility of critics to establish at least a 'provisional' canon, 'if only to stop the swamping of our literature by sociological interests and criteria' (64). This concern reflected of the activity in the field of Australian literary and cultural studies in the previous two decades: Harry Heseltine documents more than twenty studies published in the years 1938 to 1958, and there are others he does not mention. Of the former, there were few that did not belong to the school of cultural nationalism: certainly Buckley's own *Essays in Poetry, Mainly Australian* (1957), and Wilkes' *New Perspectives on Brennan's Poetry* (1953) are exceptions, but almost no others would have passed muster as criticism as it was understood in university English departments at that time. And if Buckley's dismissive conflation of those who paid attention to Australian literature in its social and historical contexts and 'literary nationalists' is broadly accurate, it is also somewhat unfair, for this was a position taken up against the universalist rhetoric used by Anglocentric university critics. Among the cultural nationalist studies which he deplores, the ones Buckley was responding to directly were Vance Palmer's *The Legend of the Nineties* (1954) and AA Phillips' *The Australian Tradition* (1958). Importantly for Buckley, neither author was a university critic, although Cecil Hadgraft, who published *Australian Literature* in 1960, was. But perhaps the greatest threat to disciplinary integrity, as some critics saw it, was historian Russel Ward's *The Australian Legend* (1959), which in its title dipped its lid to Palmer, and remains an influential study. Ward's stereotype of the bushman was so compellingly sketched on his first page that many readers perhaps went no further.

As a Leavisite who was to some extent familiar with theoretical debates of the nineteenth century, Buckley rejects the assumption that the reasons for study-

ing Australian literature should be 'sociological' ones. He argues that it should be possible to steer a course between 'Australian studies' and simply including Australian texts in English literature courses without commenting on the nationality of their authors. The solution is to bring to Australian works the same critical rigour that had been applied to English texts. Clearly feeling that the *Meanjin* debate and incursions in the universities signalled an inevitability in the development of the field, Buckley is anxious to see that the 'right' kind of materials are selected for reading, and implicitly, the right kind of people selected for university teaching and the writing of criticism. His solution is at once quite conservative, and significantly radical: setting up a parallel but smaller collection of [fairly] 'great books' by Australian writers. The model is conservative because it accepts the Leavisite injunction to create a canon without rethinking canonicity, radical because it acknowledges that some Australian texts do deserve to be read and taught at universities.

It was this agenda, establishing an Australian canon, which was taken up in and by GKW Johnston's *Australian Literary Criticism* (1962), the first collection of essays on Australian literature by critics working in the discipline of English, clearly intended to function as a textbook and guide to great works as well as authoritative ways to read them. Johnston wrote to Clem Christesen on 7 May 1961 requesting permission to reprint some essays from *Meanjin* but Christesen seems to have refused, on the grounds that he planned to publish his own collection (although none appeared). On 6 June, Johnston wrote again, explaining the 'genesis of the book':

> in a review somewhere last year Vin Buckley remarked that while surveys of Australian literature such as Hadgraft's seemed easily to find a publisher, he doubted if genuine criticism would. Frank Eyre of the OUP noticed the remark, and invited Vin to make a collection of criticism. Vin, on reflection, decided that for him to do so would involve numerous difficulties – he had been active in controversy, and also he would be inclined to reprint his own work to an extent which might provoke unfavourable comment.[40]

Thus Buckley passed the task on to Johnston. Christesen himself claimed that he refused permission for the reprints on the grounds that Johnston cut the request to four essays without consulting him.[41] Whatever the reason for the absence of contributions from *Meanjin*, the selection of critics and writers in *Australian Literary Criticism* demonstrated a certain circularity: Judith Wright on John Shaw

40 Letter from Grahame Johnston to Clem Christesen, 6 June 1961, Grahame Johnston File, *Meanjin* Archive, Melbourne University.

41 Letter from Clem Christesen to GA Wilkes, 12 June 1963, GA Wilkes File, Folder 1, *Meanjin* Archive, Melbourne University.

Neilson, Alan Brissenden on Wright; Hope on 'Standards', McAuley on Hope, Buckley on McAuley, Buckley on Xavier Herbert and Patrick White, with six of the essays drawn from *Quadrant* (edited by McAuley) and Kramer, herself a contributor, reviewing the volume for *The Bulletin*.

In the first sentence of his introduction, Johnston asserted that he had collected what he regarded as 'the most rewarding Australian literary criticism now available' (vii); his aim was to bring this criticism to a wider readership. Essays had been selected on the basis that they avoided the 'defect' of 'literary nationalism', and demonstrated their authors' fine sensibilities: 'What is not widely enough known is that in recent years … serious appraisals of Australian writing have appeared in which *interpreters of intelligence and taste* have markedly advanced understanding and judgement' (vii; emphasis added). The second aim of the collection was 'to assist that common pursuit of true literary judgement which is necessary if we are to have a clear, well-founded notion of the relative worth of Australian poetry and fiction' (vii). The echo of Leavis, who in turn drew his title from Eliot, is no doubt intentional: *The Common Pursuit* was first published in 1952, and reissued the same year Johnston's anthology was published.

Ken Goodwin greeted the essays as demonstrating an attitude 'derived from Leavis crossed sometimes with the more theologicallyminded of the New Critics of the Chicago neo-Aristotelians' (314). Despite the book's own claims to a Leavisite agenda, however, John Barnes complained that none of the contributions showed 'that awareness of the particular work in relation to the larger whole, which is so admirably demonstrated in the criticism of someone like F.R. Leavis' (83). His review protested the exclusion of AA Phillips, just as Phillips, in *his* review, protested the exclusion of Vance Palmer, Douglas Stewart, Jack Lindsay and Tom Inglis Moore. In fact, *Australian Literary Criticism* attracted a wave of unsympathetic reviews, the longest and most analytical being WM Maidment's in *Southerly*, which ran to more than twenty pages. The titles are indicative of the prevalent tone: 'Counting the Swans' (Barnes), 'Charmed Circle' (Elliott), 'A Snuggle of Critics' (Martin) and 'Criticising the Critics' (Phillips) (for other reviews see King; Mair; Matthews; Sutherland). The book that was supposed to end arguments about the value of specific texts and approved methods of reading them increased the tempo of debate.

Perhaps the most lasting impact of *Australian Literary Criticism*, like that of Leavisism in general, has been in helping to perpetuate the belief that any respectable national literature should have its own agreed-upon list of 'great books'. It is worth noting, then, that *Australian Literary Criticism* established the following writers as canonical: Christopher Brennan, John Shaw Neilson, RD FitzGerald, Kenneth Slessor, Judith Wright, AD Hope, James McAuley, Henry Lawson, Joseph Furphy, Henry Handel Richardson, Martin Boyd, Xavier Herbert, and Patrick White. The emphasis on poetry is clear, as is the preference for male writers over female. A modern critic might protest the exclusion of Stead

and put a mild query over several of the male poets, but would be more inclined to question the premises of the exercise. The influence of the collection is difficult to measure precisely, but university calendars indicate that the contents of Australian literature courses taught in 1970 tend to parallel the preferences of the anthology, with just three regular additions: Marcus Clarke's *For the Term of His Natural Life*, Rolf Boldrewood's *Robbery under Arms*, and the then new work of Randolph Stow. But it would be drawing a long bow to suggest that the relationship was a causal one, for in many cases the critics 'making the canon' through their contributions to the anthology were the same people who had already drawn up the lists of texts. It is likely they would have written their best criticism on writers whose work they were teaching – teaching does influence research, although it is generally believed that influence operates in the other direction. At the same time, the narrowness of Johnston's collection was countered by Geoffrey Dutton's much larger and more eclectic collection *The Literature of Australia*, which itself became a widely used text.

Although the attempt to create a canon was taken up with fervour, twenty years later Buckley himself had altered his thinking on the nature of universal value and the role of English literature. By the late 1970s Vincent Buckley was not only a lapsed Catholic but a lapsed Leavisite as well. In 1982, he argued that Australians were 'more in danger from imperialism than from nationalism' when it came to literature, because 'the influence of English or American poetry on ours is not returned in kind, and Australian poetry is denied any parity of treatment – any possibility of parity – with English and American books on the international market' (A Later Note, 4). Elsewhere, he reflects on the problems with his earlier dismissal of literary nationalism:

> I rejected nationalism completely as an artistic doctrine … yet I felt Australian … I was in my sympathies a genuine internationalist; yet I entered a debate which had been framed specifically to exclude or pulverise people like me … I rejected Australian-ness as a criterion, yet very many of the essays which I wrote during the 1950s were themselves concerned with Australian-ness: true Australian-ness versus false, or so I would have seen it. (National and International, 150–51)

As Buckley himself asserts, the challenge posed by a dominant Anglophile universalism restricts advocates of Australian literature to facile questions about what is 'genuinely' Australian (for critique of which, see Hodge and Mishra). The terms of this debate obscure the problem and presence of the imperial power, while the discourse of universalism masks the Anglophile nature of its literary aesthetic. Buckley claims that the almost unassailable authority of England is entwined with an appropriation of tradition, and the operation of institutions like universities, but comments astutely that

> to speak of awe and submission is not to say that the English were adored, or even much liked; it is, however, to say that they had the inescapable authority of a source, in terms at once of genetics, or educational myths, and of political authority. (National and International, 146)

Buckley was the youngest of a trio of poet-professors who are closely identified with the academic study of Australian literature in the postwar decades, the other two being McAuley and Hope. Buckley was born in 1925 and died in 1988; McAuley was born in 1917 and died in 1976; both were outlived by the eldest of the three, Hope, who was born in 1907 and died in 2000. Perhaps in part because of his age and longevity it is Hope who is most persistently identified as the 'founder' of the study of Australian literature, although it is almost certainly Buckley who has made the more important intellectual contribution, and McAuley who had the most substantial political impact beyond literary studies. And all three, in a sense, were 'outplayed' in the public sphere by Kramer, who made a strong contribution to the public reputation of Hope and McAuley in particular through her scholarship and teaching.

This discussion of debates about the relationship of Australian literature, which I understand as being a field within the discipline of literary studies, demonstrates the fears that were held about letting Australian subjects into the academy. Allan Edwards' claim that it was 'dangerous work' seems pure hyperbole, but fairly represents the views of many at the time. The assertion raises the broader or perhaps the deeper question of what it was that academics so feared about teaching or writing about Australian literature. Although we might speculate on the extent to which writers of this time were presenting images that did not accord with prejudices about Australian culture, in the end the only plausible answer can be that thinking seriously about Australian writing meant not only calling into question some of the foundational tenets of Leavisism and New Criticism, not only reorganising curriculum and researching new lectures, but risking one's authority as a critic and teacher. Risking one's professional dignity to say: yes, this is valuable. Such a claim returns us to Bourdieu, although perhaps a more poignant and powerful example can be provided in a novel by Christos Tsiolkas, in a parable about taste and authority

> He loved U2. Had been there from the beginning. 'Gloria'. He had loved U2. Three years ago, three young people, students, on the train. He had not long been a worker. They were discussing U2. They were laughing at U2.
>
> Daggy.
>
> Boring.
>
> Pompous.
>
> People who liked U2 were into cock-rock, that's what they said. …
>
> He was not to know that these were adjectives they had learnt from

> the Rolling Stone. He was not to know that the three students were simply playing at snobbery, innocuous snobbery but, like all snobbery, meant to ruthlessly extinguish all opposition.
>
> … It did not make him stop listening to the band, to his music, but something changed for him, the belief in the integrity of his own opinions. If he had resisted the shame – because it was shameful, his belief that he was proven wrong – he could have laughed instead. He could have leant over and explained to the three young people that taste should never be the basis for an ethics or a politics. (Tsiolkas, 89–90)[42]

Much remains to be written about the ways in which popular music, like literature, shapes our sense of what is right, what is real and what is meaningful in our social and physical environment. But Tsiolkas' key point – that taste should never be the basis for an ethics or a politics – might be no bad credo for those who argue for the value or otherwise of any literary text, whether English, Australian, or uneasily both, or neither. It can be claimed this is a false analogy: what could be at stake in a casual conversation in a train? As Bourdieu is at pains to show, professional identities are shaped by social encounters, and the expression of taste in these encounters, whether in a casual setting or an institutional one – and at conferences, for example, the two can be impossible to separate – carries with it precisely that charge, that weight of careless but decisive judgement, that Tsiolkas is contesting.

COMMONWEALTH LITERATURE

So far I have represented the debate about the teaching of Australian literature in the academy in the terms by which it was usually understood by its participants.[43] There were, however, other paradigms through which creative writing by and about Australians might be read, notably (at this time and earlier), that of 'Commonwealth Literature'. Debates about what was, in its earliest stages mainly comparative criticism and teaching intersect and overlap with debates about Australian literature. It is useful here to define the term 'comparative literature', which in the United States, for example, refers to the study of European literatures (or in this book, modern languages). As it is used in Australia, comparative

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42 Gail Jones includes a similar moment in her novel *Five Bells*, as a character wakes from nightmare, wincing from a putdown directed at him at a party: 'surrealism is an adolescent taste', 103.

43 Some of these debates have been energised by terms of the Miles Franklin award, particularly following the controversies which developed over the 1995 short list and the 1996 winner.

literature can refer to the study of literatures from other English-speaking countries. In the eighties 'postcolonial' came to be preferred to the terms 'empire', 'Dominions' and 'Commonwealth' literature but is now challenged by advocates of Goethe's 'world literature'.

Literature from Canada, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia was first taught in the 1930s and 1940s overseas, but took off slowly in Australia: it is reported that one early survey on the teaching of the subject was filed in the rubbish bin by a dubious Harold Oliver, although one distributed in 1978 by Peter Pierce and others received more sympathetic treatment from other recipients. Commonwealth literature at this time was taught most frequently at Adelaide, Flinders, Macquarie, Monash, Murdoch, New England and Queensland universities (Pierce at al.). The absence of four of the five oldest institutions – Sydney, Melbourne, Tasmania and Western Australia – could be an indication of greater resistance to the new subject there.

In terms of institutional positioning, there are differences between Australian and Commonwealth literature: the chair of Australian literature at Sydney was established in 1962, but until the 1990s there was no chair in Australia (or any former Commonwealth country) in postcolonial or Commonwealth literature. Journals which regularly publish material on Australian literature, such as *Southerly* (1939), *Meanjin* (1940) and *Overland* (1954), predate those of Commonwealth literature such as *World Literature Written in English* (then the *WLWE Newsletter*, published by the World Literature Section of the MLA, 1961; now the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*) and the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* (*JCL*, 1965), although *Australian Literary Studies* (1963) is contemporaneous with these two. On the other hand, the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (ACLALS) was formed at a gathering in Leeds in 1964, whereas the inaugural conference for the Association for the Study of Australian Literature (ASAL) was not held until May 1978. The term 'Commonwealth literature' has been maintained through structures such as ACLALS and its various regional organisations, publication of conference proceedings, and *JCL* (see Chris Tiffin). The suggestion to found *JCL* seems to have come from BD Swami, who in a letter to AN Jeffares at the end of 1958 suggested that all Commonwealth countries 'should have a periodical magazine of English languages (Literature) so as to continue our touch with the world's language and its men of letters'.[44]

The leading figure in the teaching and research in development of Commonwealth literature is Alexander Norman ('Derry') Jeffares, who has been mentioned in several earlier chapters. Jeffares spent a relatively short period in

44 Letter from BD Swami to AN Jeffares, 3 December 1958, Box 34, AN Jeffares Papers, MS 4876, National Library of Australia. For a discussion of debates about terminology see Helen Tiffin.

Adelaide but had a lasting impact on the discipline in Australia and elsewhere, particularly as general editor (at various times) of *A Review of English Literature*, the Writers and Critics series, Writers and Their Work, Biography and Criticism, New Oxford English, Fountainwell Drama Texts, York Notes, York Handbooks, and then York Classics, York Insights, the Macmillan Histories of Literature, and the Macmillan Anthologies of English Literature (co-editor). This involvement meant that the connections with Australia were lasting, although Anna Rutherford – founding editor of *Kunapipi* – did much to maintain the momentum of Jeffares' initial work in Europe and Britain whilst teaching in Denmark.

When in Adelaide, Jeffares had proposed the foundation of an institute of Australian studies. The terms of his proposal were in accordance with the views expressed in the last sentence of his essay in *Meanjin*, but not with the sentiments of the rest of the contribution. The proposal reflected Jeffares' position that, if it had to be included in course offerings, then Australian literature should be studied at (contained to) postgraduate level. It could be that that idea came from TG Strehlow, as the same folder in the Adelaide Archives in which the copy of the proposal is kept contains an undated letter from Strehlow proposing the foundation of an Australian institute for anthropological and linguistic research. Jeffares' proposal, dated 6 October 1952, is more elaborate, suggesting that Brian Elliott, Douglas Pike and Strehlow all be promoted to the position of reader to staff the centre, which would provide advanced studies in a variety of disciplines. The rationale was that the centre would encourage study in Australian topics, rival Sydney and Melbourne, consolidate resources and facilities at Adelaide, and ultimately serve as a focal point for overseas students and academics who were at present being turned away. But Jeffares was clearly concerned about some aspects of the proposal:

> I foresee the ultimate possibility of an Honours degree being given in Australian Culture. This would need full pass courses in English, History and a foreign language as a minimum pre-requisite, to be followed by a thesis upon an Australian subject.[45]

But Jeffares returned to England, and the proposal lapsed. That said, Jeffares' interest in and promotion of Commonwealth literature was in many ways radical, in a career that is unparalleled in breadth and in energy. However, the arguments he made for Commonwealth literary studies were imperialist ones: some years before his formal involvement in advocacy of the kind quoted above, he had sug-

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The Leeds conference on Commonwealth literatures of 1964, which Jeffares convened, was said to mark the 'beginning' of Commonwealth literary studies, a claim that overlooks the long history of the teaching of Commonwealth literature and the important (albeit few) works of scholarship that had already been produced (see McLeod [1961]; John Matthews [1962]).[46] The Leeds gathering was envisaged as a carefully directed intervention into academic and literary culture that would 'clarify' approaches to Commonwealth literature, ambitions which parallel those of the Johnston anthology. The phrase 'our common culture' is used twice in Jeffares' opening address and recurs as 'our common heritage' and 'a common, yet infinitely diverse, culture', as well as being incorporated into the subtitle of the proceedings of the conference (xii, xviii, xiii, xvii). The event was sponsored by the British Council, the BBC, and the Congress for Cultural Freedom, active globally in this period.

What colonial literature provided to the metropolitan critic was energy: new texts, new perspectives, which would refresh rather than challenge the imperial centre. The 'language that is not renewed, that does not develop, can easily die' (xiii). But the vigilance of the metropolitan audience was essential to prevent the literature from becoming 'too local in interest … too unacceptable throughout the world' (xiii). Jeffares asserts that 'In the cold light of judgement one reads [Commonwealth writers] for the supranational qualities in their work … The standards of judgement are not national standards. Standards of the critic must be cosmopolitan; only the best should be praised' (xiv). The inspiration for this address is Macaulay:

> the famous minute written by Macaulay on Indian education in 1835 was dictated by an educational, indeed, a literary aim. A culture was to be transplanted, to promote progress, and so English became the possession– and also, as anyone who has taught in India will agree – the delight of educated Indians. (xv)

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Jeffares refers to Macaulay and his Minute again in his opening address to the Queensland ACLALS conference in 1968 (published in 1970), an address in which he envisions the study of Commonwealth literature as a means of forming an imperial cultural 'federation' within the discipline of English studies, for 'The real thought of a country – what it conserves from its past, what it makes of its present, what aims and ideals it forms for its future – is expressed in its literature' (xiii). The old ideology of imperial federation is reflected through Jeffares' writings on Commonwealth literary studies, to the extent that he later published an article in the *Round Table* on the dangers of 'Throwing the Nurse Out with the Bath Water', by which he meant replacing English literature with literatures in English. Here, he adopted the patronising tone that postcolonial intellectuals have railed against, designating English the parent, American literature a teenager and Commonwealth literature a mewling infant.

It would be some time before Commonwealth literary studies would break free of the critical modes that underpinned its foundation. But perhaps because it seemed less obviously a threat – apparently reinforcing imperial ties rather than calling them into question – debates over studying and teaching Commonwealth literature, as with debates over American literature, seem to have been conducted in a much more seemly fashion than those over Australian writing. Conceptually, the field was significant in offering a way of thinking about the cultural and historical specificities of literatures produced in English-speaking cultures that was not based specifically on nationalism, a fact that was clearly recognised by the group of younger academics associated with the foundation of the journal *new literature review*. Comparison was a crucial critical tool, particularly in this early stage, and some of the founding works operate on a comparative principle. Indicative of this trend, it is significant that unlike Australian literary studies, which critics attempted to inaugurate with a book, 'Commonwealth literature' was legitimated by a gathering together of scholars in the field, and the opening up of dialogue between national specialists. 'Place' itself would come to be a recurrent concern of this criticism.

The aim of this chapter has been to demonstrate that the institutionalisation of Australian literature is a complex and ongoing process, one that has been and remains responsive to local, institutional conditions. It is not and never was a single moment at which 'battles' could be declared to have been 'won'. The most successful short-term strategy for those working within universities was to argue for incorporation of the new subject into old frameworks, applying existing conceptual tools to new materials. Those frameworks did not immediately crack under the strain of this application; on the contrary, they showed a remarkable rigidity, or flexibility, or longevity, particularly in teaching, in 'accommodating' Australian texts, without acceding to demands for restructuring of existing conceptual categories of value. There was an obvious alternative to assimilation – isolation – and this strategy seems to have been chosen by those who wished

to be seen to accommodate Australian literature whilst leaving all other aspects of literary study unchanged. The long-term negative effects of this strategy can be clearly demonstrated in regard to the Commonwealth Literary Fund Lectures which were established in 1940.

It has been argued, correctly, that the CLF lectures did much to increase the status of Australian literature, and to make it more widely known. A combined audience of three thousand people heard lectures given by four different Queensland writers at Queensland in 1956, including 500 who attended Judith Wright's lecture on 'technical aspects of poetry in Australia'.[47] Similar-size audiences heard the annual lectures over the next three years. At Queensland it seems to have been customary to allocate at least some of the lectures to writers, but elsewhere this was less likely to have been the case. The trend of allocating the lectures to academics in preference to writers seems to have begun in the early 1950s; creative writers refer frequently to giving the lectures during the 1940s (see letters in Ferrier). Clearly, writers took the lectures both more and less seriously, by which I mean that they took Australian literature more seriously, and lecturing *less* seriously, than most academics. But as interest in Australian literature developed and the lectures gained a higher profile, the writers, for whom they often provided a welcome income as well as the chance to focus their reading and refresh contacts, were replaced, the lectureships seem to have been shared out among academics in English studies, who had less familiarity with and minimal regard for Australian writing. Harold Oliver was accused of 'snobbery' by Frank Dalby Davison, in an exchange of letters in *Meanjin*, while Alan Brissenden has described a well-known incident in which JIM Stewart lectured on Lawrence's *Kangaroo*, after having declared that there was no worthwhile Australian literature (Introduction, xi–xii).[48] Professors of literature could point to the existence of the CLF lectures as evidence of their commitment to Australian literature – as Edwards, Jeffares and Milgate did – without acknowledging that these courses had no place in the degree. They thereby avoided taking on the responsibilities that inclusion of Australian literature as a subject would have necessitated – the kind of rethinking advocated by Christesen. In practical terms, the establishment of the lectures *outside* of the regular curriculum of English departments, usually as work that was neither compulsory nor assessed, gave a clear message to students and staff that the study of Australian literature was of a different intellectual order to that which was the subject of formal study.

The 1950s and 1960s were a time in which the reputations of critics of Australian literature like Wilkes, Kramer, Hope, McAuley, Johnston and Buckley

47 *Courier-Mail*, 1 August 1956: 9. The same figures are given in AK Thomson's 1959 application for the Chair of English at Queensland.

48 Brissenden does note that Stewart was obviously jocular, and that the rest of the lectures were given by Brian Elliott (xii).

were made. The connections *between* these critics are also important for their careers, especially those between Hope, McAuley and Kramer. Hope played the mentoring role but there was frequent support: Hope and Kramer wrote introductions for each others' books, while Kramer wrote criticism of the poetry of both, and edited the volume on McAuley in UQP's Australian Authors series. Many of the frequent reprints of Hope's and McAuley's work have been in volumes edited by Kramer, such as the *Oxford Anthology of Australian Literature* and the two-volume *My Country*, both published in 1985. McAuley was instrumental in the foundation of the AATE as chair of the UNESCO committee that led to its establishment, and Hope, Kramer and McAuley (in that order) were the first three presidents (Pascoe). The reputations of those who are thought to be the first conquerors of the 'new territory' show an unassailability, because they act as magnets and mentors to students who remain loyal to those who have helped and guided them. At the same time as aspousing 'disinterest', the intensely personal dimension of reputation-making is shown in these careers.

Debates about Australian literature played out in decisions made by students about which topics they could productively research, bearing in mind the burgeoning numbers. The table over the page presents numbers of research MA theses in English literatures in the first seven decades of the twentieth century. That forty percent of theses completed at Sydney and a slight majority of those at Queensland in the 1960s should be on Australian literature, but five percent – one of twenty – at Melbourne in the 1970s reflects the local factors which saw the simultaneous rise of cultural nationalism and Leavisite criticism. By the first half of the 1970s, postgraduate research in Australian literature had all but halted.

The impact of the founding of the chair of Australian literature at Sydney on postgraduate research is visible but not marked – in fact, there is a decline in research activity in Australian literature at Sydney in the 1970s, as there was in all other universities except Tasmania, New England and Newcastle. But these three universities were not sites of great activity, as together they awarded only five research degrees for Australian literature during the decade. Research flourished briefly at Sydney in the 1960s: double the proportion of students there, compared to Melbourne, completed a thesis on Australian literature. Melbourne and UWA are the universities at which students were least likely to do work on an Australian topic, Sydney the most likely. These statistics give us another, competing measure of the health of the subject; so too would surveys of criticism or, even better, research into students' experiences. One wonders in what ways or even whether these students were aware of conflicts over, and the perceived dangers of studying a 'national' literature at the time they were conceiving and conducting their research.

Research Master of Arts Degrees in Literature in English[49]

	Syd	Mel	Ade	Tas	UWA	Qld	NSW	UNE	ANU	Mon	New
1910s					2						
1920s	2/**2**				3	2					
1930s	8/**1**		5/**1**		3	4					
1940s	6	9	4		1	1					
1950s	3/**4**	14/**3**	5/**3**	2/**1**	3/**1**	3		1			1
1960s	33/**22**	16/**6**	9/**2**	6/**2**	15/**4**	4/**5**	3/**1**	6/**2**	5/**3**	2/**1**	0/**1**
1970s	40/**13**	19/**1**	8/**2**	4/**2**	8/**1**	12/**4**	1	5/**2**	12/**2**	13/**5**	7/**1**
Total	92/**42**	58/**10**	31/**8**	12/**5**	35/**6**	26/**9**	4/**1**	11/**4**	17/**5**	15/**6**	7/**2**
Aust.	31%	15%	20%	29%	15%	26%	20%	25%	23%	29%	17%

Legend: Literature in English other than Australian / **Australian Literature**; Mon (Monash) and New (Newcastle).

49 Compiled from the Union List of Higher Degree Theses in Australian Libraries. Several MA degrees were completed at La Trobe in the early 1970s, one of which was in Australian literature. Comparative studies that include Australian literature have been listed under Australian, biasing these figures towards the subject. The Union list is not complete for all libraries; in the table, Mon is Monash and New is Newcastle University.

8
ENDINGS/FUTURES

> **profess** *vb* **1.** to affirm or announce (something such as faith); acknowledge: *to profess ignorance; to profess a belief in God*. **2.** (*tr*.) to claim (something, such as a feeling or skill, or to be or do something), often insincerely or falsely: *to profess to be a skilled driver*. **3.** to receive or be received into a religious order, as by taking vows.
>
> (*Collins English Dictionary*, Australian edition, ed. GA Wilkes)

> Social capital is above all a matter of personal relations.
>
> (Toril Moi, Appropriating Bourdieu)

The skeins of ideas and influence which run through this study do not divide neatly into lives, periods or places. Archibald Strong could be a passionate idealist and publicly denounce the intellectual influence of Germany in his middle age, when war made all things German repugnant. At a time when idealism was firmly in the ascendancy in the Australian academy, Walter Murdoch could laconically wonder, in a letter to a former prime minister, what was the point? Even over a single life, literature, criticism and teaching could have different meanings in different places and different times – perhaps that is why believing in an immanent meaning or a timeless text is so seductive for so many.

Cultural conditions for the 'rise of English' were set late in the nineteenth century, even as classics held sway in curriculum and cultural value. An extravagant and propagandist imperialism was expressed in all manner of ways in popular culture, as John MacKenzie and others have shown. It found its focus in three conveniently spaced military encounters, the first two on colonised ground and all three of which were joined by Australia. The war in the Sudan in 1885, the 'Boer War' in South Africa at the turn of the century, and the First 'World' War of 1914–18 each became rallying points for imperial sentiment, in which fervent patriotism was expressed. The formation of the Round Table was one manifesta-

tion of this sentiment, but the organisation and its affiliated political formation, imperial federation, reflect a kind of nationalism which presumed that political representation in London was desirable. The dream of imperial federation could also be, in some minds, an unashamed bid for white supremacy.

One argument to explain the intensity of the feelings about war and the glorification of participation has been made by Linda Dowling. Dowling describes a 'metaphysics of community', a transcendent sense of the polity at once classical and romantic,

> in which the survival of the polity as a whole, *its art and its thought* and its ordinary life of field and village, is reducible in an absolutely literal sense to the willingness of a relatively small number of males to die on behalf of those not able to participate. (7; my emphasis)

Dowling suggests that this 'underlying martial ethos' is something that 'Macaulay's account of Greek antiquity brilliantly captures, the sense in which the life of the entire community is reduced in moments of dire extremity to the body of the single warrior' (7). Virtue is the sublimation of private desires to the public good, but it is a good defined in terms of the preservation of national and racial unity. If Dowling is correct – and I think she is, at least in terms of the class fraction her analysis concentrates on – it explains why the reasons for going to war expressed in the universities were so different to those which seem to have inspired many Australian soldiers. Students took seriously the belief – and in many cases gave their lives to demonstrate – that the virtue of the community is embodied by those young men capable 'of discharging the martial obligation to the polis' (Dowling, 8). Participation in these wars was a test of integrity deeply felt by those steeped in classical thought, like Charles Jury.

That universities were focal points for cultivating and expressing what we might call race patriotism is demonstrated by the rapidity with which university regiments were formed, the high levels of enlistment by students and staff, and sometimes rabid expressions of hatred of Germany, that training ground of so many academics.

> Imperial idealism had a specific appeal to the tendencies of middle-class culture to place an emphasis on the ethical as well as, or in preference to, the material. It also had a larger rhetorical appeal in fantasies of the great harmonies of which Empire was the greatest. (Alomes, 326)[1]

In other words, the universities and the promoters of imperial federation had

1 I have reservations about the coupling of idealism and imperialism in quite this way, for each could take a variety of forms.

similar constituencies. Imperial ideology could mesh with quite different strains of idealist philosophy and with the Romantic nationalism which split, spread through and energised disciplines like philology, ethnography and literary studies, giving emotional and intellectual force to faith in the connection between land, 'blood' or 'race', and language, which made the growth of English seem not merely logical but essential.

In the first century of the discipline, the two most influential critical modes – idealism, then Leavisism – were those that were articulated as part of a clear and compelling rationale for life and for literature, which pushed to the background questions about method and focused on the development of the cultured individual. But cultural emissaries in new worlds often struggled against the impossibility of their own mission. And because he is not attuned to the political and cultural exchanges of Empire, Turner claims that nineteenth-century British Hellenism 'almost denied the existence of the nonrational, aggressive, and self-destructive impulses in humankind' (36). In the lived world of colonial violence, these aspects of human being were displaced onto local populations, not least through scholarship (by academics and others) which took 'savage' languages, cultures and religions as objects of study, and which referred constantly to warding off 'savagery' as a reason for literary study. The reification of culture was a conscious attempt to face the ever-present dangers of colonialist society: that the white population, in its attempts to 'settle' and ground itself in a usurped indigeneity, would renounce the values of the metropolitan centre. There is a fear that in having adopted local customs, one will become unrecognisable 'at home': in the 'settler' colony; 'here' was local and parochial, 'home' was learned and urbane. Metropolitan culture differentiates human beings by overcoming nature, that which is innate and common to human kind; 'custom', on the other hand, the term used for indigenous cultures, is merely a crude *elaboration* of nature, barbaric ritual. The most damaging epithet of condemnation was, therefore, 'provincial' – a word that derives from the Latin, meaning conquered territory. The struggle is to remain, as Judith Wright termed it, of the conquerors, rather than the conquered (*Born of the Conquerors*). On odd occasions the epithet could be turned back against the centre (or at least its women), as when McAuley declared Helen Gardner's *New Oxford Book of English Verse* 'rather stuffy and oddly provincial', but this was a rarity, and indicative of awareness of the power of the putdown.

The professionalising of English studies after the First World War, which was commensurate with attempts to shift the centre of gravity in postgraduate studies from Germany to Oxford and Cambridge, pared back the scope and terms of intellectual debates and for a time exposed these institutions' lack of capacity to nurture research. This might help to explain a palpable sense of disdain for other intellectual traditions, a disdain manifested mainly through silence. Silence is a powerful tool in academia, and one of the cruellest, but as England loomed

larger in the intellectual imaginary, ignorance of local or European intellectual traditions and languages was thought nothing to be ashamed of. Intriguingly, many if not most of the early academic proponents of Australian literature – from Murdoch and Enid Derham, both honours students of Tucker's, to FW Robinson, AN Jeffares, and Brian Elliott – were also, by education and/or preference, classicists rather than English literature specialists; Jean Hamilton took her degree in languages. They, like others of their training, tended to move in the literary and cultural communities and were perhaps more often and more forcefully exposed to the ideas of local writers. For example Bernard O'Dowd, socialist poet and thinker, was a friend of both Murdoch and AT Strong, who represented quite different positions in criticism and politics.

In the 1920s and 1930s, a second and third generation of graduates from English and Australian universities were appointed to chairs of English. By and large they did not bring with them a sense of the liveliness of debates about the uses of literature that were occurring in England, developing English degrees heavy with language studies. At Sydney, where none of Brereton, Holme, or Waldock had studied overseas, the diet of language and canonical literature was at its heaviest: first-year students in 1924 heard thirty lectures on Shakespeare from Brereton, thirty on Chaucer from Holme, and thirty on narrative poems from Waldock.[2] Of a total of 210 lectures across all years of the degree, fifty were on Shakespeare and a further twenty on Elizabethan drama, but the largest part of the course was taken up by early and middle English. In these interwar years it was writers, a few critics working outside the universities, as well as teachers' college educators, school teachers and tertiary students, who took up the fight for the introduction of Australian literature. In small and localised ways they succeeded, but such advocates did not gain access to the professoriate.

The critical and theoretical debates of the interwar period came to Australia in the decades after the Second World War: England's intellectual issues of the 1930s became hot topics in the 1960s. Perhaps because of this lag, debates in Australia were conducted in a curiously ungrounded way: the cultural specificities, their local terms of reference, were either unknown or ignored. Criticism often borrowed the peremptory tones, the negligent putdowns, and the snobbish insecurity of the worst kinds of Leavisite criticism, a rhetorical mode often finding its fullest expression in those who denied any interest in or influence of Leavis himself. Because the English nationalism that energised the discipline had been overwritten with a (hi)story of universal value, nationalist arguments for the study of Australian literature were easily discredited as self-evidently partisan, political and theoretically unsophisticated. The Anglophile sentiment that

2 Compiled from Departmental Files, Box 2, Mungo MacCallum Papers, Sydney University Archives. Other records indicate that Brereton was ill this year and Holme's lecturing load was equal to that of his two colleagues put together.

pervaded the academy helped to produce a narrative of resistance which, at times with almost equal relentlessness, sought to recuperate the mythic egalitarianism of white working-class men as the basis of national identity. What is brought into being as 'national identity' is not a set of cultural practices, a landscape, nor a different set of histories, but a single figure, the 'typical Australian', whose accent and emotions stand in for the population at large. The guardians of culture stood in opposition to what they saw as the intellectual, emotional and cultural poverty of this Philistine figure. They turned to England, an England created through the imagined world of literary texts and imbibed through study abroad. In general, they seem not to have seen that they were immersing themselves only in a different national tradition.

More worryingly, understanding literature as the embodiment of the racial, cultural and geographical connection with England can be understood as part of a 'mission' that constituted a writing-over of three main aspects of Australian history: the convict origins of white 'settlements', the materialism implied in and generated by the gold rushes and rapacious pastoral expansion, and the material, sexual, psychological and cultural violence that characterised the encounter between the colonisers and Indigenous peoples. This is the generation of Stanner's famous silence (see *After the Dreaming*). These violent, conflictual, often insalubrious histories could be erased by adopting an idealised version of the English story as the 'true' history of Australian culture: the old Romantic metaphors of tree and family, reflecting the faith in the notion of a 'living' polity, encouraged critics to look to England rather than to Australia for their 'roots' and 'ancestry'. And such was the power of this Anglophile vision that, once adopted, Australian texts could become literally unreadable: RG Howarth noted in his tribute to Waldock that 'he could not read our books with any great pleasure. He tried Tom Collins' *Such is Life* several times, and retreated, as he confessed, baffled' (6).[3] Equally powerful and lasting was the intellectual anxiety caused by talk of abandoning the 'roots' of culture: at one Australian university, where the founding professor was widely known as a proponent of Australian writing, the prizes for English study he established were available only to those who completed subjects in medieval language and literature.

Networks were called into operation in the 1950s and 1960s, when older universities were creating second and third chairs in the subject, newer universities were founded, and staff turnover was further increased by the small but steady flow of returnees to England. Indeed, more than a third of those who obtained a chair before 1975 gained their first full professorial appointment in the 1960s, and it is probably not unfair to those concerned to suggest that appointments were made on the basis of promise rather than performance (see Rowe, 127). There is,

3 I thank Antoinette Bauer for pointing out to me the significance of Howarth's observation.

however, a misconception that in the past academics did not publish to the extent that is now expected, or did not work as hard: the amount of work published varied dramatically from person to person, and some holders of chairs from this and earlier periods have records that would be envied in any era. The 1960s and after were probably low points in recruiting: it was possible for at least one career (including a founding chair) to be based on the publication of just twenty-one pages, or five items. There is a marked dominance of senior positions by those with a postgraduate degree from Oxford: nearly half of those who obtained chairs of English from 1945 to 1974 held at least one degree from the English university, while seven had postgraduate degrees from London and five from other British universities. Those with degrees obtained only in Australia were almost always limited to appointments at universities in their own state, although this lack of mobility might also reflect personal factors. Another important element in selection is that of the fifty-three professorial appointees in the period from 1945 to 1974, almost exactly a third were internal candidates. Only seven (thirteen percent) were appointed directly from England, but the most telling figure is that eighty-three percent of professorial appointees in the discipline of English either were English or took their final or only degree in Britain.

During the middle decades of the twentieth century, Sydney became the dominant, the most 'traditional' of Australian institutions, and provided numerous professorial staff to Australian institutions. This is by no means simply a 'natural' effect of its size and quality; rather, it reflects the pervasiveness of the assumption that there are hierarchies between centre and periphery within the country, as well as between Australia and the rest of the world. Melbourne also came to dominate as an institution but did not gather student research strength until relatively late – except for a brief flowering in the 1950s, numbers of postgraduate studies were usually something like half those at Sydney. Allan Edwards brought with him firsthand involvement in the *Scrutiny* movement and related debates, and might have transformed the discipline had he not remained isolated at Western Australia. There, he built a department that reflected his views but did not transmit them beyond Perth until a movement of academic staff from UWA to Melbourne began in the 1960s.

Thirteen holders of chairs of English held first degrees from Melbourne, but none appointed in this period had obtained a final postgraduate degree there except Buckley, and his decision not to take a degree while studying at Cambridge was atypical. The numbers for Sydney are similar: fourteen of those who had taken their first degree there later obtained chairs of English, while time spent teaching in the Sydney English Department was an immediate preliminary to a chair for Maxwell, Russell, Oliver, Cross, Arthur Delbridge, Peter Edwards, Arthur Brown and Derick Marsh. Within the department, Holme, Waldock, Milgate, Wilkes, Harold Rogers and AG Mitchell were promoted to chairs. Another important spoke in this wheel of fortune was Canberra: the CUC and later the

ANU, as well as Duntroon, provided positions for various leading figures from Melbourne and Sydney at the beginning and end of their careers. Among these, for example, is Ralph Elliott, who took up a position as Master of University House at the ANU and became an active reviewer for the *Canberra Times*. Elliott is an interesting and unusual figure: his application for the position in Canberra claims descent from Martin Luther. As a German national living with his uncle in Aberdeen whilst attending university in Scotland, he was interned in Britain thence in Canada soon after the outbreak of the Second World War. On release he joined the British Army, completed his degree at Aberdeen after war's end and became a naturalised British subject in 1947.[4]

Few noticed that the first postgraduate theses in English literature were written in Walter Murdoch's UWA department, or perhaps they presumed that such research could only be mediocre. This is the kind of impulse or reliance on assumption that scholarship must resist, refusing to take at face value an authority provided by institutional framing. Only by such intellectually simple and socially complex means can we expect to generate a vigorous academic culture, one which allows new ideas and new forms of authority to come into being. Little of newness or passion for firsthand judgement is in evidence in the postwar period; the modesty of aspiration in some institutions now seems anomalous, even scandalous.

The trophy in almost any struggle over 'English' is Shakespeare. While John Docker points out that Macaulay had advocated that 'the 17th century should be taught as the decisive period in which British political institutions and the Protestant religion were moulded' (*In a Critical Condition*, 113), Chris Baldick argues that 'for F.R. Leavis, the rehabilitation of seventeenth century [English] literature in place of that of the nineteenth century was "the great critical achievement of our time"' (*Social Mission*, 212). This idealising of England is connected to another important aspect of academia: the venerating of Oxford as the site of a particular and almost transcendent intellectual authority, 'creating an imaginary spiritual and intellectual "centre" for English culture' (Baldick, *Social Mission*, 46). This is a prevailing theme in academic memoirs and reminiscences: generations of students have sought to recognise in the English landscape the world of their favourite texts, 'coming home' to world they already inhabit in imagination. What is at stake in these imaginings is precisely the nature of that collective sense of what is right and true for the world. An idealised England, a set of canonical texts which powerfully evoke the landscape of the 'sceptr'd isle', and an Anglophile university environment go hand-in-hand in shaping a sensibility that is profoundly 'out of place' in the landscapes of Australian literature, a person for whom the local is only ever 'provincial'.

4 RWV Elliott Staff File, ANU Archives, Menzies Library, ANU, Canberra.

What Oxford is to intellectual milieu, Shakespeare is to literature: the touchstone and the wellspring of sensibility. 'Shakespeare' signifies the English people, their language, and their literature in their most complete and distinguishable form. Talk about English returns, irresistibly, to his name. In his polemical study *A Nation at Last*, Stephen Alomes even claims that 'Shakespeare' was one of the names suggested for the new Australian capital city (49). This ideal England, with Shakespeare at its centre, was the very heart of Empire, a heart laid bare in John O'Gaunt's speech on the beauties of England (in *Richard II*, II: i). As one Indian professor of English put it, 'when we think of England, we think of English democracy and we think of Shakespeare' (Nagarajan, 125). Alan Sinfield's comments on the status of Shakespeare, and its relationship to the construction and maintenance of the historically determined idea of 'Literature' in England, are also applicable to Australia: 'Shakespeare is the keystone which guarantees the ultimate stability and rightness of the category … Shakespeare is always there as the final instance of the validity of Literature' (Give an Account of Shakespeare, 135). In Australia the early modern period dominates public perception in this abstract, psychological and emotional sense, such that the authority of 'the Shakespeare scholar' can be invoked to provide validation for behaviour that in other contexts might be named differently (see Livingstone; Livingstone and Corkill). For it is not only within the profession, but at the interface between the academic and the public, that the cultural authority of Shakespeare is brought into play.

An exchange some years ago between Leonie Kramer and Ken Goodwin demonstrates this contestation. The debate was prompted by a conference paper, 'Regimes of Value', delivered in Melbourne by Goodwin's professorial colleague at Queensland, John Frow. Frow, noting the sustained influence of academics like Kramer, whom he named, had suggested that intellectuals 'do have a vanguard role, a "leading" role in Gramsci's precise sense of the word, not in the political but in the cultural sphere' (217). He put the view that 'in the long run it is we, the élite intellectuals in the universities, who for better or worse shape and articulate those uses' of literary texts (217). His paper was somewhat unusual in drawing explicit attention, as this book has attempted to do, to the fact that academics are not passive transmitters of cultural authority. Their decisions in teaching, criticism and research actively shape students' and colleagues' sense of what is valuable. Needless to say I find such an argument an uncontroversial one, although one might suggest that this is because my own postgraduate training and the research for the thesis that became this book were undertaken in the department of which Frow was head.

In her column in *The Australian* newspaper, under the heading 'Bard-bashing Will Leave Us Poorer', Kramer accused Frow of failing to apprehend Shakespeare's universal appeal, and thus of undermining his cultural pre-eminence; she perhaps had heard that her name had been mentioned, but almost certainly not realised that Frow had used her as an example of an influential critic. Few per-

haps would have noticed the letter that surfaced four days later, making the case against Kramer:

> The point [John Frow] makes is not difficult to understand. It is that texts do not convey to readers an axiomatic, immutable, unchallengeable meaning. Institutional context, education, and expectation all affect the meaning that readers impute to a text … Dame Leonie wants to have it both ways. She wants to acknowledge (with some disdain) that Shakespeare's works have been subjected to various interpretations – Marxist, Freudian, and post-colonial, for example. But she does not want to admit that her own interpretation (of Shakespeare's universal humanism) is just that – one interpretation – one reader's interpretation. (Goodwin, Shakespeare)

For the reading public, the authority of Kramer's comments was re-enforced by her own high profile, her tone, and by the fact of her remarks being positioned within Australia's only national daily under the editorial heading 'Education'. Goodwin himself was undone by the subeditor, who placed a smiling picture of Kramer nearby. When I circulated the two letters for discussion in class, students overwhelmingly sided with Kramer: they were keen that anyone questioning Shakespeare's authority, which they saw Frow as doing, be put in their place. Perhaps their Schadenfreude, their pleasure in another's pain, reflected their awareness that for students and academics alike, reflexivity about how value is made can be a painful thing. Much better to pick a winner – and students know that Shakespeare is a winner.

But certainty has its troubles too. The inheritor of tradition must sufficiently resemble that ideal past to be a rightful heir, and be sufficiently different to have credibility in their own moment. Structurally, one can make intellectual authority through citation or through critique, by being seen to continue or by creating a rupture with what has gone before; the balance between these two modes must be delicately maintained. Self-evidently, for example, the decades in which this project was formed, researched, drafted and rewritten are ones in which critique or rupture themselves became acts of credentialisation. It is in the light of such projects, perhaps, that Makarand Paranjape should conclude that intellectual culture in the west is modelled on patricide: 'Western thought is a quest, essentially, for power not Truth, it is violent and usurpatory. It preys on its predecessors' (159). This comment might be said to capture the spirit of this book, but I hope it is a little more than that. For I have tried also to identify and tease out points at which scholarly writing renounces the object of knowledge in favour of making authority, to track the specific ways in which certain modes of writing and certain institutional contexts allow academics to substitute the imperative of seeking carefully researched grounds for opinion in favour of the expression of views that are partisan and self-serving. Yet no-one can capture the full extent to which

off-hand judgements about things that matter – writers and their work, ways of thinking about literature, the relationship between literature and society – persist long after the basis for making them (if there ever were one) has been obscured. How words nag. And only by constant careful work can we dispute those careless judgements. Perhaps the best we can hope for is to be vigilant about the basis for our own pronouncements, or to note our own failures.

Part of the problem of what might in some circumstances even be called corruption lies in the intensity and the complexity of the relationship between a student and their discipline, or field of study. Academics and students invest heavily in the fiction that there is a careful and chronological acquisition of knowledge that is commensurate with level of difficulty and breadth of field – easier to believe, certainly, in the days of English I, II and III. But such a model is, I have no doubt, a fiction. Studying literature, and probably many other disciplines, is perhaps better described as a lumpy and uncertain shuttling between different kinds of sources: literary texts, critical ones, sources on historical context, archival resources which pertain to the writer and their text, reflections on method (which often come from related disciplines as diverse as psychology, linguistics, anthropology, history, political science and sociology) as well as knowledge of research tools (like bibliographies and reference works), supplemented or challenged by chats via email and in the pub. There is no foolproof way of ensuring that knowledge is developed in a logical order, because there can *be* no logical order: who is to say how interest and understanding of any one text can best be sparked in each individual? What verbal aside or what standard reference work will provide the basis for understanding? Even the most erudite and self-confident scholar can be in ignorance of some basic tool or text of the discipline; the most nervous or dilettantish student can have read and been engaged by some complex work, and offer insights that will guide a class in a new and exciting direction. Different cultural or educational backgrounds can mean that a text, writer, period or theme finds a resonance that is more or less unfathomable to fellow students or colleagues.

Perhaps it is amidst this disorder and uncertainty that many academics and students experience a desperation to impose their own version of certainty, to ensure that the 'right way of doing things' is perpetuated and thence their academic record or their scholarly reputation preserved. For myself, I am convinced that what are transmitted are not so much canonical texts as general impressions about what it is appropriate to say about or think of texts, without necessarily having any clear understanding of the basis for such views. As an honours student, I remember being part of an audience which tittered as the lecturer pronounced the name of a famous critic, and then complimented us on our laughter, which he took as evidence that we shared his disdain. Actually, I think most of us were laughing at the combination of the lecturer's exaggerated southern drawl and the American predilection for middle initials; in fact, we had no clue that 'Wayne C.

Booth' was unfashionable, and we certainly didn't know why (or perhaps everyone else did and I didn't?). The detail and complexity of critical arguments are almost inevitably lost through such moments, in which students are encouraged to dismiss rather than interrogate. As three examples, Green's idealism or Arnold's 'culture' have been transformed beyond recognition; in their reiteration, so have the intricacies of deconstruction as a critical practice or way of thinking become lost through the word's widespread (mis)use as a synonym for 'critique' or to mean literal collapse. This blurred inheritance is periodically sharpened, but even more frequently it is misrepresented or lost entirely, even during a single career, let alone by a generation. Thus knowledge of German philosophy, for example, the starting point for so many debates in current literary criticism, more or less 'went missing' in English for almost seventy years – an amazing phenomenon. And it is this general lack of precision or firsthand judgement that makes the claiming of space and place, being authoritative in body, expression and voice, crucial to the exercise of authority. 'Authority' is not necessarily knowing but a manner, even a mannerism, of seeming to know.

Scholarly excellence is merely one of several things considered in making an appointment, for example, or making a reputation. During the appointment process, scholarly originality or precision seem rarely to have been significant factors, which is not to say that applicants might not be fatally handicapped by ignorance. But where the candidate is otherwise thought desirable, gaps in competence are massaged away, the weaknesses of competing candidates are highlighted, and qualifications and personal qualities can be re-configured (by influential committee members) into handicaps. During this process, and in gatherings like conferences or seminars, it can be seen that any discipline has what we might call areas of permissible ignorance. In the teaching of English literature in Australia, I would argue that this permissible ignorance once again includes Australian literature. In other words, socially and professionally it is acceptable to express ignorance of Australian writers and their work, whereas confessing to not having read, say, the work of George Eliot or Shakespeare would be professionally damaging; equally, it is thought acceptable for academics to write on Australian literature without any knowledge of the field. And frustratingly for specialists, it is constantly necessary to dilute research publications, particularly those for overseas audiences, with introduction and survey in order to inform supposedly 'expert' readers of the basics. (Thus it is as likely to be the most simplistic as it is the richest work in Australian literary studies which finds an international audience.) For notwithstanding the myth and ambition of academia, what we are able to think and write are by no means the product of free enquiry: these things are shaped by what it is institutionally desirable to know and to say; research is not always, or not even about, what needs to be known, but what might build a career. Knowledge and authority are over-determined by class, gender and social background, and this fact is reflected in the backgrounds of members of

the professoriate under discussion here. Although there are exceptions, by and large, only the exceptional survive coming from the 'wrong place'. Conversely, evidence shows that attending a private high school or a selective metropolitan public one is a more consistent foundation of a career than is a strong record of publication.

This relative homogeneity of socioeconomic backgrounds parallels the situation described by Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron in their study of academics in France, *The Inheritors*. Bourdieu and Passeron show that university students from privileged social backgrounds inherit from their family 'knowledge and know-how, tastes and a "good taste" whose scholastic profitability is no less certain for being indirect' (17) – those from privileged backgrounds are familiar from their childhood with the 'infinite, infinitesimal nuances of good taste' (22). Related to this 'inheritance of taste' is a studied disdain among such students for orthodox reading and the formal requirements of the degree: the memoirs of many academics relate with glee their determined non-attendance at lectures, and the wide range of their reading prior to and during (but not part of) their degree. What is not mentioned is the fact that family background frequently meant that 'canonical' territory had already been conquered, as had related areas of knowledge. Those *already* steeped in the literature, languages, history, art and theatre that constitute formal study, and whose familiarity with academia might have been increased through family connections, have the time and self-confidence to move beyond the curriculum and to supplement their knowledge in ways that become socially productive, in the off-hand reference to another form of high culture, say opera or theatre.

What is implied time and again in the criticism from the 1930s through to the 1970s is that it is middle- and upper-class detachment from and opposition to popular culture that has been the basis of intellectual authority, attitudes that had a material effect on the lives of academics, writers and students. Significantly, the protocols of the profession only required critics to read other critics, as Miles Franklin suggested in a comment on Harold Oliver. Franklin was critical of Oliver's ignorance of scholars working outside of the universities. Writing to fellow author Katharine Prichard in 1953, she made an important point regarding authority and the 'safety of distance':

> I think these little academics are like gnats buzzing in the eyes of Australian writers … I told [Oliver] there was a lot more to be said [after his CLF lecture on Furphy], and he seemed quite disconcerted. He was very, very good on Furphy. I told him so …. He was very pleased, and then I added how sad it was that while Furphy was alive not one single solomon simon university person had ever written to him, or taken any notice of him whatever … By the way, he never mentioned Nettie, who for years wrote delightful articles on Furphy, but he was most holy in acknowledgement of little Wilkes and

> Howarth, and all these little sawflies that are 'professing' Furphy now that he is 'safely dead', as AGS said in connection with Lawson. (Ferrier, 328)

Whilst Franklin's contempt has her usual hyperbolic fervency, it is certainly true that this study is often reiterating arguments that were long made by critics and writers such as Franklin, AA Phillips, and Nettie Palmer, as well as the sentiments of students and junior academics who have identified and protested Anglocentric bias in appointments, curricula, and criticism. In the 1950s and 1960s Australian literature was the unkempt, unruly adolescent in the academy, under the disdainful scrutiny of its by then well-entrenched 'parent', whose fortuitous amnesia regarding its own struggles just a generation before enabled teaching and criticism to exist on a deceptively rich rhetorical diet of 'universal standards' and 'universal human concerns'.

The centre is able to resist interrogation because it marginalises, in structural ways such as the organising of curricula, 'other courses', and the ways of speaking that are related to those new fields. For English studies, it was only in these 'other' courses that the identities the 'centre' takes for granted come under scrutiny, as Toni Morrison argues in her early study of whiteness, *Playing in the Dark*. And in terms of method, bringing questions about the basis of value judgements to the fore in discussions of literature is often resisted by students who believe in objectivity and universality, who experience the posing of such questions as a kind of corruption:

> The ideology of higher education proclaims that true knowledge is value-free. Feminist analyses of … language are not value-free: ergo, they do not count as real knowledge. They are mere propaganda, indoctrination, bias … My nonfeminist students resent 'bias' above all. (Cameron, 13)

The pervasiveness of this view in the literary media is a reflection of the strength of waves of influence – here, of versions of Arnold's 'disinterest' – that retain their energy for decades, travelling from university English departments to students across the country via graduates who become teachers and media critics. And I am conscious of it in this work too, anticipating the reader who thinks me too attentive to, say, homophobia.

The findings of this study also suggest that a discipline will seek to write its origins in terms of its conquest of the site of greatest opposition, a moment that represents a crisis in the political project that the development of new fields within disciplines seem inevitably to represent. Thus 'English literature' as an oppositional (democratic) practice was greatly compromised by its inclusion in the curriculum at Oxford, where the first appointee to the chair was a philologist; at the same time, 'other' origins of the discipline at Edinburgh and the provincial universities were erased. Thus the history of English in England becomes a story

of debates about its inclusion in the site of greatest prestige and power: the title of DJ Palmer's history of the discipline in England, *The Rise of English Studies*, signals this movement towards the gratifying moment of conquest. The introduction of Australian literature to Australian universities has likewise been mythologised in ways that imply that the moment of greatest 'success' is the moment of incorporation into the academy. This is a dubious assumption but one constantly restated.

Perhaps because of its apparent proximity to literary culture – the ecology of writing, publishing and selling books – the introduction to Australian universities of the study of Australian literature pushed at the limits of the discipline of English in a way that the introduction of American literature, with which it was roughly contemporaneous, did not. But when the subject *was* taken up by those in positions of power, it was with considerable ambivalence. Critics sought on the one hand to claim authority over the local, and on the other to read that 'local' using the 'universal' measures of authority typical to their profession. For 'Commonwealth literature', on the other hand, the inaugurating moment was a conference, a meeting in England of comparative nationalists and contrasting nationalisms, whose *gathering together* legitimised the field in an important way. What this mode of storytelling involves is the tacit recognition that it is precisely this encounter with the dominant that produces the greatest risk to the ethical and/or political project, as Vincent Buckley argued later in his life.

It is the relentlessness of reinstating of simple versions that, in a sense, every researcher struggles against, at the same reducing their capacity to reach and to persuade a general audience as they do. Thus it is clear that academics with relatively weaker reputations for scholarship often play the central role in the literary culture of their time, not just as newspaper reviewers (the most common form of such participation) but as confidant(e)s, supporters and friends of creative writers and their institutions, or as driving forces in educational institutions other than universities. This seems to be a kind of structural tension, as more 'scholarly' versions of the discipline are understood as being those which are quite deliberately removed from contemporary literary culture, in that way mimicking either the temporal distance of early modern literature or the highly self-conscious elitism of literary modernism. One indicator of this tension is that it is as routine to poke fun at scholarly interest in popular culture as it is to satirise the esotericism of academic research.

It is clear that scholars might usefully try to analyse the relationship between the teaching of literature and the production of creative texts: how might writers be influenced, for example, by their perceived failure in gaining academic as opposed to commercial success? In that sense the formative relationship between writing and scholarly study of writing is yet to be understood; Christopher Newfield puts it more angrily, speaking of the United States: thousands of writers 'fully engaged in the analysis of their times, died on vines that lacked the ba-

sic cultivation [literary and cultural studies] continued to lavish on Shakespeare and Joyce' (*Unmaking the Public University*, 145). A further area of inquiry is the history of the discipline since the late 1960s and 1970s, when major demographic and political changes affected tertiary education in Australia. A number of new universities were founded: Monash (1958), La Trobe and Macquarie (1964), Flinders (1966), Griffith and Murdoch (1973) and Deakin (1979). In roughly the same period, university colleges at Armidale, Newcastle, Canberra, Townsville and Wollongong became autonomous. Following the development of the 'unified national system' various colleges became or merged with universities. This proliferation, coupled with changes in approaches to literary studies, makes the landscape of English over the period since 1970 far more complicated than it was in the first century of the discipline in Australia.

Perhaps the key finding of this study pertains to the continuing and powerful influence of teachers and mentors. The examples of Holme, Brereton and Murdoch show the importance of patronage, a situation not unique to literary studies. Indeed for some, mentoring is the single most important variable in determining the success of an academic career:

> Standards for professional behaviour and criteria for evaluating teaching, research and publications are largely determined by 'unwritten' rules handed down from one generation of scholars to the next, and communicated informally from one colleague to another. Interrelated networks of senior persons – both within institutions and across the disciplines – not only determine in an informal way what issues are considered important, what journals prestigious and what research valued; they also often control access to positions, publications and promotions on the strength of their own reputations and their shared contacts … In order for newcomers to succeed, merit alone is rarely enough; they must also be 'socialized' into the profession. (Hall and Sandler, 2)

It is most of all through mentoring that a kind of institutional echo is sent and heard, with habits of administration, research, teaching and recruitment maintained by the heirs of the institution long after the passing away of the specific 'presence' who shaped the environment. I think of these two things as ghosts or swamps: some individuals seem to loom over their workplaces for generations; others almost literally disappear. There is a remarkable longevity and continuity in the distinctive institutional identities developed in Australian English departments over the first century of the discipline, but these do not precisely reflect the shape of the past. 'Reproduction' in education, much debated, is an inexact science, and there is very little evidence to justify the pervasive belief in supersession evident in much modern criticism. While we might be comforted by the belief that we have intellectually and morally outgrown the past, there is no con-

vincing evidence that scholars have become more or less diligent, more or less learned, more or less 'scholarly' from one generation to the next. What is clear is that there is a regular cycle in which new intellectual approaches or ideas, and those who propound them, are demonised as a threat to scholarly integrity and the social order, only to become dominant on the back of that resistance, and are seen by the next generation as the old order embodied.

This study can validly be criticised for its focus on dominant institutions and dominant personalities, and for paying little attention to those who do the most work in tertiary institutions: students. Studies that focus on what happens in classrooms and what happens *after* classrooms – the practices, and long-term impact, of teaching and learning – are urgently needed. The necessary recuperation of 'other' histories is, likewise, another project; my feeling is that to begin with it is to risk ignoring the fact 'that members of minority groups who do succeed in such a system are at least as likely to identify with it as the enabling cause of their own success as to turn against its unjust distribution of symbolic capital' (Moi, 1037). Such is the power of 'tradition' that femaleness, homosexuality, Jewishness, a country background, attendance at a state high school, working-class families and ocker accents have been *disguised*, dismissed, grown out of and disowned far more often than they have inflected criticism or teaching in the first hundred years of the discipline in Australia, at least for those who reached positions of power within the academy.

One example of this is provided by Andrew Riemer, a Hungarian immigrant who spent time in a 'special' class at primary school because he did not speak English when he first came to Australia in 1947, and who subsequently became a specialist in Shakespeare and an associate professor of English at Sydney. He described his experiences at Sydney in his award-winning autobiography, *Inside Outside*:

> Most of us respected what our lecturers and professors – those incredibly learned people in black gowns – stood for, even if we found them unutterably boring and stuffy … We accepted without question the shape and structure of our courses of study. Though we were frequently bored by the books we were required to read, or the topics we were obliged to consider, many of us felt that the lack was in us, not in the system. (171)

Riemer describes the ways in which mimicry and parody became part of his coping with the institutions of literature, criticism, assessment and teaching. But it is striking that he should here take up two key concepts, mimicry and colonial lack, from a nascent post-structuralist postcolonial criticism (exemplified in the work of Homi K Bhabha).

There is a certain irony in the fact that Riemer's work has become part of the 'new diversity' of Australian writing while he himself defended the 'core teach-

ing' of the English Department, having insisted on the universality of precisely those values he is critical of in *Inside Outside*. With Wilkes, Riemer was one of the most outspoken opponents to curricular revisions at Sydney in 1992 and took early retirement not long after, convinced that his colleagues 'were irresponsible … in their refusal to countenance anything but the most minimal imposition of structures on our students' courses of study'.[5] In the midst of the debate he commented to journalist Tony Stephens that although he would 'continue to teach in the ruins of the English Department', he rejected the claims made by 'ideology' and those who had no sense of literary value (Stephens, Winds of Change). As this reaction and other debates at Sydney illustrate, there is a passion, one might even say ferocity, in the advocacy or defence of what are conventionally represented as ideological rather than personal disputes. But as my discussion of Riemer implies, what emerges most strongly from this study, this *institutional* history, is the power of the personal: the impact of childhood reading and the study of literature at schools and universities on an individual's ideas about and ideals of culture and place; their sense of what is right and valuable. The importance of this history, and specifically of the personal and emotional elements of taste and training, emerged more and more strongly during the course of my research, as people approached me with stories of their own undergraduate and teaching experience. These discussions tend to reveal that, although very little of the course content was retained, memories of particular teachers – their manners and attitudes, likes and dislikes, passions and idiosyncrasies – could be vividly recalled. Conversely, and fascinatingly, remembered details of 'fact' such as dates, places, etc., were almost *always* wrong (checked against sources such as university calendars).

The nature of this anecdotal evidence is reflected in the conclusions drawn from Graham Little's important study of the experiences of Arts and Science students at Melbourne. Little found that for most students, their time at university brought about a shift in personal style rather than any specific intellectual growth (150). Their undergraduate education had not equipped them to make a critique of the disciplines they had studied (151), and their comments on teachers were related to impressions of personality rather than scholarly approach: 'they seemed on the whole accepting rather than critical; certainly there were few signs of informed, sustained criticism of the university' (170). Little suggests that students feared 'to betray the idealism, vague and tentative though it is, of their more romantic notions of what the university can do for them … *The myths have not only preserved but stifled*' (183; emphasis added). This seems to me a very accurate account of the impact of universities as institutions: they are places where intellectual disputes are played out through personality, and more often reflected in

5 Canon or Fodder? *Weekend Australian*, 16–17 November 1996: 29.

decisions about appointment, tenure, promotion and funding of research activity than they are reflected in (and contained to) academic fora such as journals and books. Nevertheless, students and academics continue to believe that there is an objective truth, unsullied by any personal element, to such debates. Thus they are entranced by any detail of taste or tantrum. Students *and* academics have an investment – emotional and professional – in seeing the forms of knowledge they promote and produce as timeless and valuable. But perhaps this mood is changing: the repositioning of students as clients, the shifting of terms from enrichment to value for money, and the ever-present threat of litigation mean ever-increasing attention to quantifying the 'value adding' achieved by education. This change reinforces what Cary Nelson, more than twenty years ago, identified as the crucial element of institutional success: conformity. As he so scathingly put it, speaking of the United States, 'we retain the tendency to replicate our worst selves, and we are most likely to tenure the amiable, the uncontroversial and the dull' (3).

In the period under discussion in this book, perhaps the most important of these signifiers of conformity was accent. Voice, along with appearance, is used as the basis for judgements not only about voice and appearance, but intellect, manners and values. Broad Australian accents were long associated with 'coarseness of sensibility', to use a Leavisite term. In several important essays, the first published in 1951, AG Mitchell suggested that prevailing assumptions about 'standards' and 'standard English' that were the basis of speech education were wrong, and that the (Australian) accents of children should not be 'modified' in the classroom. These arguments represented a challenge to conventional educational thought and practice: ironically, one of the reasons women were preferred, however grudgingly, in teaching was because it was assumed their more refined speech would be a better model for children. Mitchell was one of a group of language specialists, among them Arthur Delbridge and GKW Johnston, who poured their labour into studies of Australian English. These academics were associated with the production of the major Australian dictionaries, including the Macquarie. As noted, Mitchell was founding vicec-hancellor at Macquarie University, where the dictionary project was housed, and his younger colleague at Sydney, Delbridge, was one of the foundation professors of English and subsequently Director of the Speech and Language Research Centre there.

The arguments Mitchell made were quite radical ones, and they did not go uncontested. A response to the *Australian Quarterly*, written by a former teacher, demonstrates the ways in which the authority of England was naturalised and deployed within the school classroom, and the way in which the assumption of the moral high ground can seamlessly cohere with a rhetoric which defends 'standards'. The quotation used here is lengthy because the response exemplifies in many points the attitudes to Australia, England, and cultural authority with which this study is concerned. The letter also models that blindness to biases of class and culture which could be manifested by the most committed educators:

> The N.S.W. Education Department has never, within my long experience of it, attempted to 'get rid of natural Australian speech'. It has, however, attempted to get rid of some of the vowel sounds that are common in popular speech and replace them by vowel sounds which approximate to those used by educated people in Southern England … Speech is an art and not a natural function. It follows that it must have standards. Professor Mitchell writes as though any one kind of speech is as good as any other kind of speech … What is desirable is that all who are engaged in the work of education should have a high standard of speech … If millions of American and British people think that a particular mode of speech is 'funny', this is a very good reason why Australians who value the good name of their country should not use it. It is not necessary for them to adopt the speech of another country. They merely have to adopt the good speech of their own country. May I close by relating an experience of my own in India? A gentleman from Siam who had been educated in England, speaking of two Australians he had heard on the radio during the war, said to me: 'Your Mr. X. is not so good. He speaks like a Cockney. But Menzies is excellent. I have never heard better English in my life'. I have never heard anyone suggest that Mr. Menzies' speech is 'not natural Australian speech' or that he has 'adopted an English model'. (John MacCallum)[6]

The two meanings of 'standard' – like the two meanings of discrimination – resonate throughout. Drafting the sheep from the goats is easy work, as is renaming a regional English accent the best of Australia.

But in the past, as now, far more serious threats to literature and its study come from sources outside the university. Many Australian universities no longer teach literature. Those that still do are trimming back their curricula with a commensurate effect on staff and student numbers. And current debates seem to have a sharper edge. Educational institutions and the political cultures by which they are shaped are characterised by a contempt for kindness (derided as weakness or sentimentality), a horror of criticism (belittled as obstructionism or ignorance), and a contempt for expertise (sneered at as 'preciousness'). The values which inform current work practices – in the case of academics, teaching and research – not only militate against compassion and inquiry, they are actively hostile to them. Underpinning this situation is an antagonism to history, understood as 'experience' (of what works and what does not), as precedent (what has been valued in the past), and as method (attempting to understand or strip away the effects of temporality in developing serious analyses of why things have happened). This antagonism is rhetorically and *structurally* determined by laissez-faire capitalism,

6 Mitchell replied to MacCallum some time later, with a letter to the same journal.

by a constant demand for and valorising of growth. Change and momentum are normative, but less valuable as part of an unthinking charge into the future on the basis that the future is better. It is not a real future but an imagined future that fuels capitalism, a future built on the fantasy of limitless growth just as powerful as the fantasy of the imagined England that shaped the lives discussed in this book.

In these circumstances there is vital work to be done by historians of all academic disciplines in introducing methodological reflexivity, particularly in those areas now numerically, financially or culturally dominant in modern universities, notably commerce, medicine and the applied sciences. Understanding the volatility and contingency of disciplinary truths gives us a powerful tool for reflecting on the ways in which institutional environments have the capacity not only to create the conditions for the discovery of truth, but equally to suppress truth. Insisting on the value of history as integral to academic and pedagogical practice, not to mention good governance, means insisting on the value of considering context and precedent (whether positive or negative), as well as the necessity of reflection, and the value of humility. What I mean by this is that it is too easy to presume that we are morally and intellectual superior to those who went before us simply because of the passing of time – or because we have databases now, or because 'they didn't have to worry about money then'. The study of history can help reflection, if and when we are able to imagine that the current order of things is no more inevitable than the unfolding of events in the past. Making time … reading … remembering … asking questions about why things are as they are, or could be … these are now radical acts.

AFTERWORD

Nightmare of a Chair Search Committee.

How nice to get Dr Forter.
How nice indeed, my dear;
He writes for the Saturday papers,
He's a Grade A mountaineer;
besides, as a sort of bonus,
he'd be away two thirds of the year.

What about this Ms Avaporto?
Is anyone pushing for her?
Avaporto, is that Italian?
O I don't think there's much to fear.
She comes with a reference from Billit.
Let's wait and play it by ear.

Ralph had a letter from Harold.
He's on leave, I think, in Trier;
There's no-one in Europe. Of course not,
but Oxford is far too dear,
though that young woman at Merton
may bring out her book this year.

Do you think we could get an American?
Someone not too queer?
No, no I didn't mean that. But someone
trained as a Conferenceer,
Someone from Princeton or Harvard
(Yale's on the way out, I hear.)

And so on, and so on, and so on,
for more than nine-tenths of the year.

Vincent Buckley (1991)

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