



LUSTING FOR LONDON

Australian Expatriate Writers at the
Hub of Empire, 1870-1950

PETER MORTON



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This book is for Heather, again

It was almost an insane lust, this lust to get to England. . . . They were all going, going to England . . . all, except me.

Philip Lindsay, *I'd Live the Same Life Over* (1941)

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THIS BOOK HAS ITS ORIGINS IN MY PREVIOUS BOOK, *The Busiest Man in England* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). That used the biography of one author, Grant Allen, to explore one segment of the literary world of the late Victorian period. That was the world of those who wrote expressly for the market and treated authorship as a trade rather than a vocation.

Grant Allen was Canadian by birth, but he lived as a lifelong expatriate near London. London was the only place where, in late Victorian times, he could make a living as a freelance writer—at least, with the possibility of enjoying the kind of lifestyle that he thought he and his family deserved. To gain it, Allen was willing and able to work at a pace that almost defies belief.

More recently, while working on an essay on Australian writers of the earlier twentieth century, I grew interested in the situation of those people who like Grant Allen expatriated themselves to London to foster their careers as writers. I chose to exclude the years since the Second World War as they have been covered in several admirable histories already. According to the best estimates, there were, in the decades preceding my terminal date of 1950, about 150 Australians who shifted to London and made some sort of a living as authors. For various reasons discussed in the first chapter, only a representative sampling can be treated in these pages—they range from the failures to the internationally famous—but an examination of the details of their motives and careers, I believe, does shed light on a neglected area of Australian literary and cultural history.

Apart from their published works, the expatriates who figure here left behind rich deposits of archival materials, most of which have found a permanent resting place in Australian libraries. I am grateful to the custodians of these materials for helping me to locate, study, and cite them, especially the staff of the Mitchell Library, NSW; the State Library of Victoria; and the National Library, Canberra.

The resources of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and *Austlit* were vital to me, especially in the early stages. Darryl Bennet of the *ADB* and Carol Hetherington of *Austlit* gave me much useful advice about searching

these databases selectively to form an initial broad estimate of literary emigration to England in this period. I am also most grateful to Christine Fernon for clarifying the *ADB*'s policy on handling biographical entries for those expatriate authors who belong to the generations before 1950.

For help with specific queries, I have been able to draw on the expertise, generously offered, of numerous people. I'm especially indebted to, among others, John Arnold for giving me the benefit of his wide knowledge of literary bibliography and patiently clarifying some details of his statistical analyses of expatriates' output in London; Paul Gillen, for our e-mail discussions about the lifelong expatriate brothers Jack and Philip Lindsay; Peter Pierce for his encouragement, especially in the early stages when I was attempting to define the ground; Simon Sleight for sharing his specialist's knowledge of the *British-Australasian* paper; and finally to my friend Nigel Starck, the biographer of a later expatriate, Russell Braddon, for lots of early morning coffees and his fund of entertaining gossip and literary news.

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INTRODUCTION

ISSUES OF DEFINITION AND EVIDENCE

The joyful embarkation, the bewildering arrival, the initial disappointment, homesickness and self-recrimination, usually followed in due course by adjustment, compromise, a degree of self-transformation perhaps, and a triumphant if often only temporary return "home."

Patrick Buckridge (2002)¹

The expatriate is the man or woman who chooses to live in a country not his own because he cannot do his serious work as well in his own country as he can in another. His reasons may be good...or they may be dubious...or they may be bad.

R. P. Blackmur (1955)²

ACCORDING TO AN OLD AND BITTER JOKE, THE LEADING EXPORTS OF Australia are wool and brains. This book investigates the hemorrhage of its literary brainpower that the country suffered over several decades on each side of the year of Federation, 1901. It analyses the behavior of those who expatriated themselves to the British Isles permanently or for a long time, on a quest to discover their authorial talents, or to develop them, or to try to make a better living, or simply to escape from a birthplace that they regarded as stultifying. It gives voice to their hopes and fears, measures their successes and failures, and studies comparatively how their careers were shaped by shifting their country of residence. It also tries to evaluate the attempts of these writers to exploit creatively the expatriate experience—in three very different novels in particular—and the degree to which, insofar as their work was done elsewhere, the loss of these expatriates supplemented or hampered the evolving literary culture of Australia. And last but not least, since in every case the destination and residence of these people was London and its environs, it is also part of the task of this book to investigate what Julian Wolfreys calls

“the rhetoric of imagining London”—here, specifically from an antipodean perspective, and from the late nineteenth up to the mid-twentieth century.³

This topic has been virtually ignored by literary historians. It is true that there have been several excellent books published recently on literary and other Australians in London, but none from quite the perspective of this one. It is the post-Second World War period that is treated very largely in Roslyn Russell’s *Literary Links* (1997) and in Stephen Alomes’s *When London Calls* (1999), and exclusively in Ian Britain’s *Once an Australian* (1997). The old anthology *The Australian Abroad* (1967) has a wide scope and some interesting commentary by the editors Higham and Wilding, but it deals largely with travelers’ experiences in many different places, not with people who stayed for years in London. The two social histories *Duty Free* by Ros Pesman (1996) and Angela Woollacott’s *To Try Her Fortune in London* (2001) do cover the late Victorian and Early Modern eras, but deal with women expatriates of all kinds, not only writers. Finally, the articles published as *Australians in Britain* (2009) exclude the late nineteenth century and only two pieces deal expressly with literary matters. In short, the earlier period—the extent of a long lifetime—has never been treated systematically or even received much attention at all. This is a really striking omission when—so it will be demonstrated in the following chapters—we have here a phenomenon that has been one of the most identifiable and enduring themes in the socio-economics of Australian letters.

It is not only historians who have ignored the issue or misinterpreted it. Even some contemporary Australian writers who have long been resident in Britain themselves know nothing of their predecessors’ enterprise in moving countries. Quite recently the late poet Peter Porter, looking back at his own arrival in 1951, spoke proudly of his own post-war generation as being “the *original* garret-starvers.” If Porter was an early “garret-starver,” then what was the journalist and novelist Louise Mack, late of Sydney, who in 1902 grew so poor in her attic room near the British Museum that she changed her remaining pound or two into single pennies to eke it out further, and even brooded on suicide? Porter seems oblivious to those who had starved and staggered their way to success or failure over the fifty years or more before he was even born.⁴

As far as definitions are concerned, various questions arise at once. What is an expatriate writer? What distinguishes an *Australian* expatriate writer in London from, say, the American equivalent? At what point does a long-stay visitor become an expatriate? Is it useful to distinguish between those who permitted themselves to be absorbed by the host culture, and those who resisted it? Were those who eventually returned after many years away simply going back home, or are they best defined as ex-expatriates? What changes in the standing of the expatriate writer are detectable over the

period, and was the concept as it had been previously understood still intact at midcentury, or had it started to disintegrate, or to mutate into something different?

Then there is the issue of evidence. This book is an exercise in sociocultural history, insofar as that is examinable through group literary biography, memoirs, autobiographies and semi-autobiographical novels, and poetry. Its raw materials are necessarily selective, but the criterion is not solely, or even mainly, the quality of writing. Potentially all is grist to the mill. If it resurrects many wholly or half-forgotten writers and their work, it does so not to rehabilitate a reputation but because they have left behind something unique, or at least striking, to add to the documentation of expatriation. There can be no pretence of inclusiveness, however, in the sense of treating or mentioning every author who moved to London, not even if he or she had a notable, or at least an extensive, writing career there. To do so is impracticable, for three reasons.

First, there is the sheer number of people involved. Only one statistical attempt, by the bibliographer and historian John Arnold, has ever been made to assess the number and productivity of expatriate literary Australians in London.⁵ He took the narrower period 1900–1940 and identified 120 authors who were active in London at some point over those years, and he enumerated some 1,900 creative works published by them over that time. Ninety per cent of these were novels. (He excluded essay collections, journalism, critical works, children's stories, and most ephemeral romances and thrillers.) As Arnold concedes, these statistics are problematic in two respects. For one thing, the author-list is by no means comprehensive: it overlooked some names of those who reasonably qualify as expatriate authors, for example Alec Dawson and Fergus Hume, among others. For another, the source of his publications data was the bibliography that E.M. Miller and F.T. McCartney published as long ago as 1956. This work has some curious omissions, including all Philip Lindsay's numerous books to that date (he died in 1958) and his brother Jack Lindsay's prolific output between 1930 and 1940.⁶ But in most respects these bibliographers from half a century ago took a generous view of what works should be counted as being "by Australian authors" who were British residents. For example, they included some works by Morley Roberts, E. W. Hornung, and B. L. Farjeon. These were prolific writers whose output, even if only partially enumerated, skews the count of expatriates' works published in London. Although the issue is bedevilled by the question of how exactly to define an expatriate author, it is more than questionable whether these particular three were in any possible sense "Australian" authors at all. Morley Roberts spent some years in Australia and set stories there, but his North American experiences were very much more valuable to him, and an Englishman who continually

roamed the world for his material but who eventually settled and died in his birth country can hardly be called an expatriate Australian. Hornung spent only two years, 1884–86, in the country, and did not return; furthermore, although seven of his many novels do have Australian content, most of this seven appeared before 1900, and should therefore, strictly speaking, be excluded from Arnold's table. Farjeon has even less of a claim. He embarked for Australia as a teenager but moved on to New Zealand after some years. He returned to Britain when he was thirty and did not leave it again. Although he wrote more than sixty novels, none with any Australian content appeared after 1900, and he died in 1903.⁷ The count of 1,900 creative works is therefore rather too high, although allowing for the omission of relevant authors and the addition of another three decades or so to the period under review, perhaps not by much.

Second, there is the daunting issue of the overwhelming productivity of some of these authors, especially those who wrote formulaic romance or thriller fiction in the 1930s and 1940s. For example, the romantic novelist Maysie Greig (Jennifer Greig Smith) undoubtedly qualifies as an expatriate Australian author. She was born in Double Bay, Sydney, in 1901, worked briefly on the *Sun* newspaper in that city as a young woman, and departed for London at the age of nineteen. She moved on to America and travelled widely, but apparently was based in England for at least seventeen years, between 1934 and 1948, and again from 1966 until her death in 1971. (She lived in Sydney with her third husband between these two periods.) She churned out six titles or more a year, building up a huge readership: at least 150 novels in all, under various pseudonyms, with titles like *Make the Man Notice You* and *Retreat from Love*, but none of them—or so an admittedly minimal sampling suggests—bear on the subject of expatriation. In fact, in terms of sheer productivity Greig had already been more than matched years earlier by another of the same ilk, Effie Rowlands, who was born in Adelaide around 1866. The British Library catalogue lists exactly 200 ephemeral penny romances under the “Rowlands” pseudonym, starting in the late 1880s. Despite this output she fell on hard times late in life and twice applied to the Royal Literary Fund, a charity, for support, before dying in 1938.⁸ It is uncertain, however, whether or not she was removed to England as a child or left voluntarily when she was a young adult.

These are exceptional cases, but an impressive productivity has always been one of the hallmarks of the expatriate. At a time when one of the surest ways into print was via popular and undemanding fiction, some writers when they got to London survived by turning out a book of this kind once or twice a year, sometimes for several decades on end. It could be done: but in such a competitive marketplace the pace required to make a living in this way could be killing. In the decades before Federation, one of the earliest

of these who has left a record of his labors is Hume Nisbet (1849–1923), a Scottish-born, energetic, pugnacious artist, novelist, poet, and travel writer who left for England at the age of twenty-three. (He returned for a short while in 1886.) By 1904, when he had been sweating it out in the capital for three decades, Nisbet claimed he had been writing 300,000 words a year for many years and in the last two alone had written 790,000 words of fiction and journalism. Not surprisingly for a man by this time in his fifties, he described himself as being in “the acute stage of wearied discontent. Existence seemed to me a long bondage, and I was mutinous with my task masters.”⁹ Yet Nisbet could not afford to retire or even slow his pace. Nor was returning permanently an option. In 1905, the year after this outburst, he published, or more likely paid to have published, his own *Poetic and Dramatic Works*, planned to be in eight volumes, of which only one ever appeared. Nevertheless, he kept up his output for many more years, issuing not only sensational romances but guides to painting in oils, polemical pamphlets, verses, and even an illustrated diary with blank leaves for a voyager to fill in on his way to Australia, with a guide on what to see en route. Almost anything, in fact, that might turn a penny.

In Nisbet we have an early example of what would become a common type: the author-entrepreneur who transplanted himself with tolerable success, though at the cost of relentless lifelong labor. Nisbet, for example, was followed by similar athletes of the pen such as Charles Rodda (1891–1976), born in Port Augusta and at first a journalist in Adelaide, who moved to New York in 1919, aged twenty-eight, to become a music critic, and who later wrote, mostly in London under the pseudonym Gavin Holt, around forty thriller and crime novels. Another such was James Morgan Walsh (1897–1952), known as the “Australian Edgar Wallace,” who departed in 1925, aged twenty-eight, to write about fifty thrillers under his own name alone. Also highly productive, if not in quite the same league, was the novelist, journalist, and children’s author Dale Collins (1897–1956), who was an expatriate for most of his career, from 1923 until 1948, finding fame in the year after he arrived in England with his second novel, *Ordeal*, which was later turned into a play and a film. He was a versatile writer, producing novels, children’s stories, travel books, poetry, and short stories in abundance.

Third, there is a final and, in many cases, an insurmountable difficulty: the lack of adequate documentation. Some writers were very productive once they got to England, but apart from a shelffull of mostly forgotten volumes—which may tell nothing—there are no extant memoirs, letters, or other memorials to reveal anything about why they left or how the experience of expatriation affected them. By no means does this apply only to entirely forgotten authors. Fergus Hume is a case in point. His self-published clever thriller *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* was a remarkable hit of 1886, selling a

phenomenal 100,000 copies in the Australian market alone and more than half a million altogether. Hume sold the overseas rights to a consortium for an absurd £50, a decision which perhaps ranks as the most catastrophic lapse of financial judgment in Australian literary history. Hume, not surprisingly, never got over it. He went to London two years later to try to capitalise on his success and did not return. Next to nothing is known of his English life. When he was interviewed five years after he arrived in London, he had nothing to say about the move itself, but he had bitter things to say about trying to break free of his *Hansom Cab* reputation (the product, he said, of “an immature boy”) that was still pursuing him like Frankenstein’s monster. Hume worked hard. He tried fantastical romances, in the mode of Arthur Machen and, later, H. P. Lovecraft. He tried a volume of fairy stories. He published some dreadful poetry. He returned perforce to mystery stories and thrillers and eventually wrote a hundred or more of them. Yet he only ever scraped a living. The last we hear of him is a pathetic newspaper paragraph of 1925 under the heading “A Writer in Want.” A film adaptation was then being made of the *Hansom Cab* in Sydney, and the producer, in a kindly but rather tactless gesture, sent over some stills to Hume, who by then was in his sixties. In reply Hume told of being in severe straits, ill, virtually destitute, and unable to work. He was still harping on that £50. Some subscription-money was promised and possibly was sent to him, but Hume left only £200 when he died in 1932 and obituaries reported that he had been living for thirty years mostly on £10 a week from a rental property he had inherited.¹⁰ Apart from the long run of his forgotten books, his only remnants are a small handful of business letters.

Further down the scale, the novelist and poet Carlton Dawe is another case devoid of records. We know he was born in Adelaide in 1865 and published two or three books before departing at the age of thirty-three. As with so many others, Britain certainly unleashed his productivity, even if he had no special talent. Dawe produced a remarkable number of thrillers and some science fiction—about seventy, some with fantastical Australian settings—before dying in London in 1935. It is a fair guess that he travelled again in the East, for some of his work has Eastern settings, although that is not certain. Nothing else is known of his manner of life in England or of his motives for leaving.

It is particularly unfortunate that no records seem to exist of the expatriate experiences of Mary Gaunt (1861–1942), the intrepid traveler-explorer. For one thing, she was unusual in being, at forty, much older than average when she left finally for England, bent on a literary career. Gaunt had previously earned enough from journalism to finance a first trip to England in 1890, when she was twenty-nine. It is known that the *English Illustrated Magazine* took two pieces while she was there, but she could not find anyone

to take her novel manuscript and returned home the following year. She did place a novel with Edward Arnold in 1894, at which point, as she said later, she should have tried London again. She married a doctor instead, publishing two further novels and other work with London publishers while still in Australia. She finally left for good after she was widowed, in October 1900. Her first years in England were hard and miserable, although she never described them in any detail; but she became well-known eventually for her novels and especially for the records of her travels, which involved solitary and risky trips to West Africa and China and Jamaica in the tradition of other dauntless Victorian women travelers. She was reviewed well, and her comings and goings were noted respectfully in the *British-Australasian* newspaper. She sold well enough to be independent into old age, but other biographical details are lacking.

There are plenty of others about whom even less is known. John Gordon Brandon (1879–1941) was Australian-born and certainly shifted to London at some unknown date; the British Library lists ninety thrillers and detective stories under his name starting in 1923, and this is probably only a fraction of his output for magazines. A near-contemporary in the same mould, though not quite as productive, was Arthur Rees (1872–1942), who left at about the age of twenty-three, worked for a while as a journalist on *The Times* and wrote about thirty thrillers with titles like *The Shrieking Pit*. Nothing in this output hints at his Australian origins, though the facts that he was able to make one return visit in 1935 for health reasons and that his address at death was Offington Hall, Worthing, hints at attained prosperity. Even less, if possible, is known of R. Coutts Armour (1874–1942), except that he wrote at least 140 books in England, mostly for children, under a variety of pen names.

Sometimes what documentation does exist has survived more or less by accident. That is the case with Hume Nisbet. We would know nothing at all of his thoughts about his career had he not written in a spasm of indignation a small, privately printed pamphlet, “One Chapter from the Life of a Novelist,” in connection with some dispute with his publisher, in which he sketched out his literary activities since the time of his arrival.

In other cases just enough details are recoverable to provoke the imagination. What possible motives, what questing ambition, lie behind the simultaneous decision, in 1904, by all three of the Flatau siblings—Dorota (b.1874), Hermoine (b.1879), and Theodore (b.1886)—to seek their fortune in the English literary world? The children of a Sydney surgeon, none of them had published anything much before they left. It is possible that the two girls accompanied their younger brother when he went to Oxford at the age of eighteen, but what did they expect of their new country? Did their departure have something to do with the fact that they were—most

unusually for Australian authors of the time—certainly of Polish ethnicity? And what did the sisters do after they arrived? If they wrote journalism, it is all lost; but the dates of their books hint at a long and slow struggle. Theodore published the first of his three novels some years after his arrival, though he had been employed earlier as the editor of an Egyptian paper in Cairo. (He read Arabic at Oxford.) After that he was editor of the *World* newspaper in London. We know he was gassed during the war, and then killed in 1916 when he returned to the front. According to his obituary, “he was killed on the parapet of the German front line when he was standing up cheering his men on. One can only say of him that he was very gallant gentleman.”¹¹ What had the two sisters been doing in the long years before their bereavement? Dorota was apparently stirred into authorship quite soon after her brother’s death and must have gained some sort of a reputation, for she wrote nine successive novels for the publisher Hutchinson, starting in 1918. One of her story-collections, *Pong Ho* (1924), deals with low life in the Chinese communities of Limehouse and one story, “Pak of Pennyfields,” about a young couple who are Polish migrants living in such a community, reads as though it might be semiautobiographical. Her sister Hermoine wrote a couple of comic operas and a feeble romantic thriller after 1925. None of the three siblings’ work gives the slightest hint of their Australian origins. The sisters had both fallen silent by 1933, but someone paid for death notices for them in the *Times*, revealing that Hermoine and Dorota died in 1946 and 1947, respectively, at Slinfold in Sussex. Behind this bare bibliographic record must be a poignant story that is completely lost to history. There are many such cases. Particularly thin are surviving records, even private documents, of those who left but failed entirely to realize the ambition that took them to London.

Enough has been said now to show that the usefulness of the statistical approach is limited. However, recently it has become possible to make more sharply focused computer searches of the comprehensive bio-bibliographical databases available for the longer period 1880–1950, specifically the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (ADB) and *Austlit*. As will be demonstrated later, neither of these major reference tools has an entirely lucid and consistent policy of inclusion or exclusion in the case of expatriates. Nevertheless, the new search techniques made it possible to extract details of those authors who lived for long periods in England and who seemed likely to repay closer study. Since bibliographies cannot be relied on to settle the question of who should be regarded as “authors,” the same liberal interpretation will be taken here that H. M. Green took in his groundbreaking *A History of Australian Literature Pure and Applied*. That is to say, its subjects are those people who used words as their vocation or trade, insofar as their target audience was the broad reading public rather than specialists.

In principle it includes journalists of most kinds, including medical and scientific journalists, novelists, poets, historians, philosophers, dramatists, and academics in the area of the liberal arts: in other words, those people who form the literary wing of the intelligentsia in Western societies (or were so regarded, at least, during the century under examination). It does not include people in their professional roles, such as politicians, soldiers, lawyers, pure and applied scientists, and sports people; or other kinds of creative artists such as dancers, singers, musicians, cartoonists, graphic designers and illustrators, painters, filmmakers, or actors.

The result of these database searches, combined with this broader view of what constitutes the “literary” suggests there were around 150 Australian professional or semiprofessional authors living in London and active at various times over this period who meet the definition of expatriation that will be used in this book. Obviously, therefore, only a representative selection of these authors and their works can be considered in detail or even mentioned at all.

While London was always the choice of the great majority, it is worth noting briefly that not all writers who left their birthplace found England to their taste. Some found other European countries, or countries beyond Europe, more appreciative of their talents or more congenial as a settling place. For example, the career of the popular novelist Tasma (1848–1897: born Jessie Huybers in London) took off only after she left Tasmania permanently and married in Belgium in 1885. Greece or Italy claimed others, especially in the first decades of the century when living was cheap in southern Europe, especially along the Mediterranean coast. Arthur Maquarie (i.e. Arthur Mullens, 1874–1955), poet, playwright, and a London friend of Henry Lawson’s, went to Florence to teach around 1900, allegedly, according to Lawson, because he was so poor he could not afford a fire or winter clothing in England at the time. Later he found a berth as an official of the Royal Society of Literature in London. The journalists Joice NanKivell (1887–1982) and her husband Sydney Loch (1889–1954), a veteran of Gallipoli, left in 1919 for an exciting life in war-torn Europe, eventually settling in Greece.

France had its adherents too, and as a city of choice for permanent residence, Paris was next only to London. The rich music publisher Louise Hanson-Dyer chose it in 1927 when she moved there at the age of thirty-three and founded the Lyrebird Press. The artist Stella Bowen left Adelaide in 1914 as an innocent young woman of twenty-one to study painting, but when she was swept up by the unreliable novelist Ford Madox Ford, who had a long history of infidelities behind and ahead of him, she moved in quite a different sphere. For nine years, first in rural England and then in 1920s Paris (a period she herself called “playtime”), Bowen associated with

Joyce, Hemingway, Pound, Stein, and other luminaries of that legendary period. Playtime lasted right up to the dreadful moment at the end of the 1920s when, as she describes it in her autobiography *Drawn from Life*, "I opened my *Herald Tribune* to see in the right hand corner, '£1 sterling = frs. 103' ... I knew that I was ruined."¹² This was an exaggeration, but it was certainly the end of the idyll, though it was England she returned to, not Australia. Alister Kershaw (1921–1995), poet, foreign correspondent, and miscellaneous writer, worked for a year in London but then moved to rural France in 1948, aged twenty-seven and never left it, preferring to struggle there as a freelance supplemented with other kinds of work. Robert Close (1903–1995), who wrote the once-notorious semfictional *Love Me, Sailor* (1945), started out as a deckhand on windjammers and also found his haven in France after being fined and jailed for three months for obscene libel. (The sentence was quashed on appeal but the fine increased.) Rather puzzlingly, he had a great reputation in 1950s Paris, where he was compared to Hemingway; and when the soft-porn Olympia Press republished his first novel under the soundly marketable title of *Prends-moi, matelot!* it made him enough money to buy a yacht and set himself up in Cannes. Unfortunately his vivid autobiography *Of Salt and Earth* ends with his trials in Australia.

Finally, the United States claimed some, but it was not a popular destination for writers until the later years because Australians were surprisingly snobbish about the States before the Second World War. Many agreed with Lionel Lindsay that the country could only interest business people as it was just another colonial society like their own, but written larger. As for American literature, that was not highly regarded. Neither the United States nor Canada was thought to offer much stimulus to serious writers and artists, compared to almost any European country.¹³ Still, John Farrow, novelist, biographer, and the screenwriter of some quite well-known films, moved to California ca. 1923, when he was barely twenty. Dorothy Cottrell (1902–57), whose *The Singing Gold* (1929) was a best seller, moved to California in 1928 aged twenty-six, where she continued to write fiction with Australian settings. The novelist Shirley Hazzard (b. 1931), author of *The Transit of Venus*, left permanently in 1947 at the age of sixteen and later became an American citizen; the following year the scriptwriter Sumner Locke Elliott (1917–91) left at the age of thirty-one. Expatriates of a later generation would be taking a very different position on the United States as a rewarding haven for writers.

Literary people were only a part of the total Australian diaspora of creative persons over these decades. Many other kinds of talented Australians heard the siren call of migration to Europe and elsewhere, and a good proportion of those liked it too much to return for a long time, if they ever did. Milan attracted singers and Paris painters, Rome was the place for sculptors,

Berlin or Leipzig for musicians, Heidelberg for the liveliest possible student experience. For the idealistic, there was Switzerland for international politics; for the active antifascists and antiappeasers of the 1930s, there was Republican Spain. After 1917, for committed communists or fellow-travelers like Katharine Prichard, the archaeologist Gordon Childe, and later Dymphna Cusack, the Soviet Union, China, or Eastern Europe called. And, of course, during the Boer War and the two world wars, many ordinary Australians, and not a few talented ones, were sent much further afield than Europe, courtesy of the military, and thousands left their bones there.

Painters and other visual artists left in droves. Arthur Streeton, John Longstaff, Tom Roberts, Rupert Bunny, Fred Leist, George Lambert, and Henry Fullwood all went to England or elsewhere in Europe for portions, in some cases large portions, of their careers. Others went and never returned at all, like George Coates and Dora Meeson, Horace Brodzky, Charles Conder, and Bessie Davidson, who went to Paris in 1910 at the age of thirty-one and died there a full half century later after a prosperous and satisfying career.

This is not to say that the likelihood of success was greater for visual artists than for writers. It was just as easy to fail with the brush or chisel as with the pen. Frank Mahony was a very popular magazine illustrator of Henry Lawson and others in the 1890s, but he left it too late to find success in England. He was already thirty-nine when he left in 1901, and found few markets for his work; still, he stuck it out, perhaps unable to return, until he died at Kensington fifteen years later.

But there were plenty of success stories as well. The architect-designer Raymond McGrath (1903–77), who left for London and Dublin at the age of twenty-three, had more luck and found plenty of commissions, as did several other illustrators, graphic artists, and sculptors. The society portrait photographer Walter Barnett (1862–1934) left in 1897, aged thirty-five, having made a fortune in Sydney and helping to shoot some of the first cinema footage there. He did even better in London, where the royal family were his clients, and on the proceeds he became an art collector at Nice. Of sculptors, Margaret Thomas (1843–1929) was the most variously skilled: she left in 1867 aged twenty-four and proved so successful as an artist that she was able to devote much of her life to poetry and writing frothy travel-books with titles like *A Scamper Through Spain and Tangier*. Bertram Mackennal (1863–1931) left for the second time in 1891, aged twenty-eight, and after a starveling beginning secured many commissions in both countries that let him travel to and fro, and he was the first Australian artist of any kind to be knighted. A competitor of his, though much less successful in Australia than in England, was Harold Parker (1873–1962), who sculpted the allegorical groups still to be seen on Australia House. Three cartoonists who became household names in

England had Australian antecedents: H. M. Bateman, Will Dyson, and David Low. Dyson soon leapt to fame when his savagely witty cartoons started to appear in the left-wing *Daily Herald*. David Low was born in New Zealand but left for London from Sydney aged twenty-eight, and his mocking cartoons during the Second World War were superb propaganda. The Nazis were not amused and had Low earmarked for immediate liquidation when they won the war.

Then there were all those aspirant actors and performers, first of the stage, then of the radio and screen as well: the actress, producer, and suffragist Inez Bensusan (b.1871) who left in about 1893, in her early twenties;¹⁴ and the very different Florrie Forde (1875–1940), actress and singer, who left in 1897 and was an immediate hit on the music hall and pantomime circuit. Her lewd ditty “Hold Your Hand Out Naughty Boy” had them rolling in the aisles. There was the actor and dancer Robert Helpmann (1909–86), who left in 1932 aged twenty-three and made his reputation in England, though he returned more or less permanently in 1965. There was the actor-playwright Hugo Hastings (1917–2004), who left some time in the 1930s, whose war-service comedy *Seagulls over Sorrento* was one of the first big postwar hits on the London stage and later a repertory favorite. Departing around the same time, in 1934, the actress Coral Browne made the traditional trip to the London stage and fortune, while the young Errol Flynn went the other way, to California, for a much shorter if more glamorous career in the movies.

And musicians and singers: Australia has produced people with great musical gifts, but the greater the talent the greater the likelihood of departure. An early expatriate was George Clutsam, the popular composer and songwriter who coauthored one of the biggest hit musicals of the 1920s, *Lilac Time*. He left in 1887, aged twenty-one. The eccentric Percy Grainger (b.1882), recognized as a child prodigy, was taken to study at Frankfurt as a teenager, and established his career as a composer and performer first in London and then in New York, where he died in 1961, though curiously he is buried in Adelaide. The pianist Eileen Joyce (b.1908) left in 1927 for good, returning only for tours; another musician, the pianist Noel Mewton-Wood (b.1922), left at fifteen to attend the Royal Academy, and had a short but distinguished career, especially as an interpreter of Hindemith, before poisoning himself in Notting Hill, aged only thirty-one, after the death of his partner.

The export of singers to Europe and America at the start of the twentieth century was so prodigious that the journalist Frank Fox, with a little exaggeration, called it “almost as important an item of trade as the export of frozen meat.”¹⁵ There were prima donnas like Nellie Melba, who left to start her stupendous international career in 1886, aged twenty-five (though

the number of her “farewell” tours at home became notorious), and Ada Crossley, the contralto, who left in 1894, aged twenty-three. Three other singers who moved away early were Peter Dawson, the greatest bass-baritone of his day, who went to England at the age of twenty and remained there; Elsa Stralia, who left Adelaide for Milan and London in 1910; and the soprano Florence Austral, who moved to New York and then London just after the First World War, aged twenty-seven. It is interesting that three of the women found it advantageous to stress their Australian origins in their stage names, just as June Bronhill (‘Broken Hill’) was to do later, while in the same era some writers found it equally advantageous to suppress their origins. All these singers toured widely and repeatedly in Australia.

But all these creative, talented men and women are outside the present ambit. Our concern, from the years before Federation right through to the end of the Second World War, are those people of literary bent who, when they left Australia, headed like homing pigeons for one country, the United Kingdom, and one city, London. Who they were, why they went, and what they found there in the navel of their world is the theme of this book.

CHAPTER 1

SAILING FOR ELDORADO: GOING HOME IN THE LITERARY IMAGINATION

"It is only this, that we are thinking of going home..."

"Home, you say? What do you mean? What home are you speaking of?"

"Why, Home with a capital 'H,' of course. England—Europe, that is to say. What other home is there?"

Tasma (1895)¹

You're off away to London now,
Where no one dare ignore you,
With Southern laurels on your brow,
And all the world before you.

Henry Lawson (ca.1900)²

Practically all the books I read carried me to the Old World, and most often to England, which for me was rapidly becoming a synonym for romance, charm, interest, culture and all the good things of which one dreams. Everything desirable, and not noticeable or recognised as being in my daily life, I grew gradually to think of as being part and parcel of English life. I did not as yet long to go to England. One does not long to visit the moon. But when some well-wrought piece of atmosphere, some happy turn of speech, some inspiring glimpse of high and noble motives or tender devotion, caught and held me, in a book, I would sigh quietly and say to myself:

"Ah, yes; in England!"

Alec Dawson (1914)³

IN THE YEAR 1900, AT THE AGE OF THIRTY-THREE, HENRY LAWSON WAS riding high. His collections of ballads and stories, *In the Days When the World Was Wide* and *While the Billy Boils*, were read in city and bush by the educated and uneducated alike. In the nationalistic mood that prevailed during most of the 1890s, he was regarded by nearly everyone as the first truly distinctive voice of his native land. Yet, on April 20 of that year, this famous man took ship with his wife and two small children, with a one-way ticket to England. He was seen off by a group of Sydney novelists, poets, and journalists, none of whom thought it especially odd that their compatriot should wish to continue his career half a world away. In fact many shared his ambition, and some would go on to realize it for themselves.

What reason could Lawson possibly have had for wanting to shift to that remote, chilly country in the North Sea, so far from his friends, rivals, employers, and the sources of his inspiration? His motives, like the motives of all who had preceded him and all those who would emulate him over the next half-century, were mixed. Money certainly loomed large. Lawson had sold his copyrights for cash down and was dismayed at how little income his fame had brought him: he had been complaining about it stridently in the *Bulletin* magazine. He hoped London would prove more profitable because, like everyone else, he knew there were a few living authors—a very few, admittedly—who had transplanted themselves and had become rich by the exercise of their pens almost beyond the dreams of avarice. Perhaps he knew about Guy Boothby, late of Adelaide, for instance. Boothby was just the same age as Lawson and was making a fortune out of his fast-paced thrillers. Who had ever heard of Guy Boothby, a mere secretary to the Town Clerk, before he left Australia only six years earlier? Could Lawson, with his formidable reputation, possibly do worse than a scribbler like that? So money was a powerful magnet.

Then there was ambition. Lawson, like those who came after him, wanted to find new material and new readers, and test his mettle in the most competitive literary milieu in the world. In asking a patron for the fare, he had said that he believed the whole future of his work depended on it. He had said already that Australian literary men, like prophets, were so often not without honor save in their own country:

You may write above the standard, but your work is seldom seen
Till it's noticed and reprinted in an English magazine.
O the critics of your country will be very proud of you,
When you're recognized in London by an editor or two.⁴

But that honor had to be tested on the spot, so getting recognized in London by an editor or two was another strong motive for Lawson. He had covert

reasons too. One of them was the chance to escape his hard-drinking mates and retreat more into domesticity and creative isolation.

Unlike most of the others who would be leaving later, Henry Lawson had good reason to feel hopeful about his run to England. Some of his work had appeared there already, so he was not quite unknown, and he felt he had the measure of the competition. He was armed with encouraging letters from publishers and cuttings of English reviews, one of which had flattered him with the label of "the antipodean Kipling." Nor was he making a spur-of-the-moment decision. For years he had dreamed of making the trip, though never having the wherewithal; but now at last three patrons, including the colonial governor, Lord Beauchamp, had shown enough confidence in him to pay a fare for him and his family. So everything seemed to augur well.

And indeed England did treat Lawson quite well. His timing was propitious, for Australia itself was in the popular eye, with Federation close at hand; in addition, the colonies were regarded benignly because they had been quick to send contingents to the Boer War not long before. So, for loyalists of the British Empire in England—which is to say, almost everybody—this meant that another well-disposed and affluent country was about to join their imperial enterprise. Australia, after all, was populated almost entirely with their own ethnic stock, except of course for the indigenous population, which literally was not counted at all. In the census of 1921 barely four persons in a hundred were recorded as "foreign" born. Even in 1950 Australian royalists liked to boast that their country had a purer stock, that is to say, a more exclusively white Anglo-Celtic stock, than did Britain itself by that date. In terms of ethnic origin, the overwhelming dominance of the Anglo-Celts had actually increased slightly, from 87 percent in 1891 to 90 percent in 1947. Earlier, politicians had found votes might be gained by citing an even higher figure of 98 percent, which they arrived at by counting every native-born Australian as "British," regardless of their parents' ethnicity.⁵ At the end of our period the White Australia policy was still in full operation, whereas Britain's Nationality Act of 1948 gave, in fact encouraged, liberal admittance to immigrants from India and the West Indies to boost the post-war labor force.

When Lawson arrived, he lived at first with his family as he had planned to do, far from the literary flesh pots of central London. But he was not ignored. Helpful, friendly people like Edward Garnett were willing to have a word in the right ear. Garnett was a ubiquitous man of letters and grey eminence of the publishing world. He liked Australians and at various times he fostered the careers in England of Barbara Baynton, Vance Palmer, Mollie Skinner, and Joseph Furphy. He was a useful man to know. Another was Lawson's long-suffering literary agent, the great J. B. Pinker, who served

as his banker and was tolerant even when Lawson went behind his back to beg a publisher for an advance.

Publishers themselves were no less generous. At a time when a trained clerk might earn £100 a year, and the best offer for a novel might be only £50 cash for the copyright, Blackwood of Edinburgh gave Lawson more than £60 for just three short stories. Another publisher, Methuen, made him a £200 advance on *Children of the Bush*, and certainly never saw the money back in sales. All in all, Lawson had nothing to complain of. He was treated rather better than the average tyro native writer, and it seems he appreciated it. Even when he returned to Sydney under a cloud, his jaunty advice, for public consumption at least, was still "Go to London . . . if you want to do good work, and feel that you can do it, you will need in the first place to live for, say, twelve months in London—for London isn't going to be hustled."⁶

But twenty years later Lawson, by now far gone in his terminal decline, sodden with drink and with his reputation in tatters, scrawled some bitter lines expressing very different sentiments about that trip:

We were but married children and but lately put to sea;
We sailed for Eldorado in the *Golden Vanity*,
The ship was wrecked in London, and neither was to blame.
But liars lied in Sydney, and they spread their tales of shame.
The captain's hair greyed in a year, and not a word said he.
Oh! would that he had never seen the *Golden Vanity*!⁷

Despite some thorough detective work by literary historians, the full story of exactly what happened during Lawson's two-and-a-quarter years in "Eldorado" will never be known. Surviving medical records show that his wife became suicidal and delusional and was institutionalized; their children were boarded out and there may have been an affair with a servant, as gossip alleged. Lawson certainly behaved erratically. In the end he made a hasty return by himself, abandoning all his plans. His return to Australia, or perhaps the English experience itself, marked the start of his long disintegration as a man and author. At any rate, he himself later referred to "days in London like a nightmare."⁸

Here, then, is the other side of the coin for the expatriate writer. Lawson's brief experiences and his response to them—early and late—capture very well some of the motives and the tribulations of the those many literary Australians who sailed off in their own *Golden Vanity* for much longer stays than Lawson's, hoping that for them the ship's name would prove to be the *Argo* instead. There was the chance of reward, certainly, in sales or in reputation; but it was counterbalanced by the fear of failure, of not measuring up, of dribbling away one's talent in mean employments. There was the risk

of missing new opportunities at home and being forgotten; or, alternatively, there was the humiliation of having to endure without chance of reply the envy of colleagues left behind, and the malicious rumors about your progress that might be set circulating.

For those who did go, eventually there arose the thorny issue of deciding when, or indeed whether, to return. For if going was risky, so was coming back, as Lawson found out. The author and literary agent Florence James once said sarcastically of a journalist, who bored people with her talk about her spiritual home being in London, that the woman was finding herself "with a permanent crick in the neck through trying to keep her eyes turned backward towards England."⁹ Such evidence of divided loyalties was unpopular. Repatriates like James's journalist often got short shrift, especially if they brought back with them strong anglophile sympathies and tried to impose them on people who had been there themselves, as Florence James had, and had not got on well. James Joyce put it more melodramatically when he remarked, after he returned to his European exile from a short visit to Ireland, that while it is dangerous to leave your country, it is still more dangerous to go back there, because your countrymen will treat you as a traitor and do their best to drive a knife through your heart.

But though he felt he had to stay away, at least Joyce never doubted that he was an Irishman through and through; nor that he was, to the point of obsession, a writer on Irish themes and no others. Australians did not, could not, have that degree of certainty. Australia was a single country from 1901, but being "an Australian" had only the significance one chose to give it, because one's nationality was still that of another country, far away, a country called by some "Home." So in which hemisphere, really, lay home? Was it the place of departure or the place of arrival? Was it the port of embarkation, from which so many of the best and brightest, before and long after Lawson's time, waved their goodbyes with a mixture of eagerness and anxiety? Or was it that ancestral world, which was a matter of personal memory or recent family history, given the fact that virtually everyone who figures in these pages was of Anglo-Celtic stock?

Many social historians have commented on the peculiar use of "Home" in Australia at this time. Actually "Home" (in the quixotic sense of meaning Britain) was a problematic term except for a fairly short spell around the middle of the nineteenth century when it really was used unselfconsciously by all. The evidence suggests that, among a younger, more sophisticated set at least, the word was being used with a certain amount of edge before the turn of the century.¹⁰ For example, by the 1890s, a long-term visitor from Britain, Francis Adams, was reporting that "Ten years ago England was spoken of affectionately as the Old Country or Home. Now it is 'home', or more sarcastically 'ome'. The inverted commas make all the difference, and the

dropped 'h' contains a class contempt." Sometimes, perhaps, it did, but certainly not always. The abbreviated form was being used in a merely jocular way at about that time, in the "Woman's Letter" in the *Bulletin*, for example, where the intent is certainly nothing more than facetious. The "Letter" did not go in for class insults.¹¹

But the term could be exploited in more creative ways as well. Francis Adams himself wrote a mordant little tale for the *Bulletin*, titled "His Voyage 'Home,'" doing just that. The first-person narrator tells how he has journeyed all the way back to England specifically to take his revenge on a woman who had spurned him some years before. At that time he had been a penniless journalist who had had no choice but to emigrate without her. But he has made good in Australia, and now, as a well-established man, he has "come home" to claim his early love when he hears she is widowed—or so she thinks. She becomes his mistress while they are waiting out the period that society ordains must elapse before she can remarry. Then, at the very last minute, carrying out his cruel plan, he spurns her in turn, telling her he is returning alone to Sydney, the place that for him has really become home. The story plays on two different understandings of where home is, which was an ambiguity that Adams, a radical socialist not sure about his own future, was feeling himself. When he reprinted the story two years later in his collection *Australian Life*, he removed the inverted commas around "Home." This was about the time when Henry Lawson was destabilizing the term and making it even more richly ambiguous. "Hold up your head in England, / Tread firm on London streets," he commanded those who were on the same quest as himself. "For no men are your betters / Who never sailed from home!"¹² If to have sailed away from "home" is so creditable an act, then where and what is that "home" from which some inferior persons, to their discredit, choose never to sail? In which hemisphere is it to be found? Lawson's double negative contrives to leave it open. H. H. Richardson exploited the same ambiguity in the second part of her *Richard Mahony* trilogy when she titled it *The Way Home*. There would be no real home for Richardson's restless doctor-hero in Buddlecombe, Devon, any more than there had been in Ballarat, Victoria, or than there would be for him later on in Melbourne, or in the bush. He is doomed to be a wanderer between two worlds, as, in a sense, his expatriate creator was too.

At any rate, whatever the exact resonance of "Home" may have been at various times, for departing writers it had, in one important sense, no ambiguity about it at all. Home for them never meant Great Britain: that is, neither Scotland, Wales, Ireland, nor even provincial England. For writers, there was only one homecoming: the arrival in the city of London. London was the forge, the yardstick, and the hammer of a reputation.

At the start of the century London, with its population of six million and growing fast, was easily the biggest city in the world. Thirty years would pass before Australia held that many people. In fact, even in 1950, at the end of our period, Greater London still had nearly the same population as all Australia.¹³ London was the earliest and biggest metropolis of modern times and the undisputed hub of all the anglophone nations and colonies. Certainly there were other metropolises emerging in the world of the early twentieth century—New York, Paris, Berlin, Tokyo, Shanghai. But London was not simply the most populous of cities. For Australians it also had the crucial status of being by far the grandest *imperial* metropolis. (Vienna, Moscow, Peking and Constantinople were imperial capitals before the First World War, but none had anything like the global reach of London, nor its great variety of colonial possessions.) It was sometimes called the new Rome, but that was an understatement. Rome at its height never had the prestige of imperial London. Power radiated from it to every quarter, as Britons administered or supervised the affairs of 400 million people; and in the other direction, into the richest entrepôt in the world, flowed tribute in the form of goods and ideas and skills from everywhere. At the height of empire, ca.1925, the very name at the center of all those patches of dusty-rose on the globe was itself metonymic for imperial power (“London Calling”). And packed within this overarching metonymy of the simple name were numerous other metonymic phrases, all highly potent throughout the empire and indeed throughout the world: “the Palace” for the monarchy; “the ‘City’” for finance; the “West End” for fashion; the “British Museum” for scholarship; “Big Ben” for stable democracy; “Whitehall” for imperial governance; “Poets’ Corner” for literature; “Fleet Street” for the media; “Soho” for bohemian life; “Chelsea” for art; and most symbolically of all, “Greenwich” for the ground zero of terrestrial space and time.

Of this multitudinous human hive, Australians were indisputably the free-born citizens. They were entitled to call themselves, as Richardson’s hero Richard Mahony does with such pride, “*civis Britannicus sum*.” Just as Saint Paul was a Roman citizen, though he was born in what is now Turkey, so were Australians British. In law they could not be otherwise. Indeed, opting out of Britishness was not easy. While living in the mother country they had exactly the same rights and duties as any other Briton, including, in most cases, military conscription, and, for young men under twenty-six in the postwar period, compulsory National Service. The bonds were so tight that until the Great War one could enter or leave either country without formalities. Even when bureaucracy had intervened and introduced passports and immigration controls, native-born Australians were described as “citizens” who were British “subjects.” Even well into the 1950s, as C. J. Koch remembers, all you had to do was to flick open your passport at the dockside

and you could stay for the rest of your life.¹⁴ That the day would come when an Australian arriving at Heathrow would need a visa as a non-citizen of the European Union was unimaginable. In the 1960s one academic who had worked for years at Oxford described the experience of having to queue for the first time in the “aliens” immigration line as being like a blow in the face from a respected relative.

So, for more than a hundred years, when the Dover cliffs hove into view, arrivals knew that everything that lay beyond was their birthright. And that was all that the more youthful writers needed to know. They did not have much time for the clever ambiguities and ironies of Adams or Lawson or Richardson or anyone else. They felt no need to engage in a debate about whether it was right or wrong to leave their birthplace. They had to go, because they knew, or thought they knew, where they belonged. They went off to allay that unsettling, dreary, and sometimes corrosive belief that reality was *over there*, and that their doom, unless drastic action were taken, was to be stuck forever on the margin. This belief, though its forcefulness of tone and the manner of its expression have varied over time, probably has linked more Australians of creative and adventurous bent than any other single issue for more than a century and a half. It can readily be traced in memoirs and autobiographical fictions right through this period. Already in the 1880s we hear about

the feeling of deep disgust with one's actual environment, and the accompanying overpowering desire to dwell in a land of literary and intellectual traditions. It was this feeling, far more than the desire to find a market of my wares, which drew me to England.

Thus Arthur Patchett Martin, a journalist, defining his mood in 1883, the year he left permanently, after being encouraged to do so by his correspondent Robert Louis Stevenson, who was no less eager to get out of Europe himself at the time.¹⁵ Such a condition of “overpowering desire” is mentioned so often that it surely confirms how widely it was felt over a very long period. Twenty years later Martin's “deep disgust” reappears as the journalist Louise Mack's rather more genteel “intolerable *ennui*,” but she articulates the mood even more strikingly:

Every afternoon, away in far Australia, there comes over us all a half-past-two-in-the-afternoon feeling, an intolerable *ennui*, a sense of emptiness and discontent, a longing for something large and full that cannot be exhausted. . . . It is our remoteness that pains us. We are so far, far off. Our veins run warm with English blood, and London calls, calls, and we are there, a whole world away. That is the meaning of the half-past-two-in-the-afternoon feeling.¹⁶

In 1921 the novelist Martin Boyd left at the age of twenty-eight to start a new life that, except for one fairly short interval, was to be passed first in England and then in Italy. Many years later, reflecting on how he had felt at that point in his life, Boyd warned that when an Australian arrived in Europe the flow of hitherto suppressed “secretions” induced thereby might be irresistible and irreversible. The expatriate might become an antipodean Wandering Jew. Boyd did not believe it had happened to him—he refused to consider himself an expatriate at all—but he conceded that for weaker spirits the mystical force of the Old World might prove too much:

For his own peace of mind it might be as well to advise such a man never to set foot outside his native shores. If he does so he may never have a certain home again. The age-long secretions begin to function more vitally in the countries where they were formed, and though in Europe he may sigh for the freedom of home, for the long wash of Australasian seas and the aromatic silence of the bush, if he returns there a sudden memory of a Devonshire lane or of Oxford spires may send him again hurrying off to the shipping office.¹⁷

And here is another example of Louise Mack’s “half-past-two-in-the-afternoon feeling” from later in the 1920s, bound up with the search for some antidote to the “banal succession of days.” It is the journalist and historian Alan Moorehead recalling the predominant mood of his teenage years:

And yet I do not believe I was very happy. As far back as I can remember I was dogged by a nagging feeling that something was missing. I could never define this feeling exactly; it was simply a vague unrest, an impression that life was passing by at second best: in Maeterlinck’s phrase, “a nameless, hopeless distress.” Surely this was not all? There must be something else, some deeper experience, something at any rate to give a meaning to this banal succession of days. By the time I reached my university I decided that travel was the answer.¹⁸

Shift forward thirty years, and it is still the same story:

At the time I left Australia, I wanted desperately to leave. . . . I still had that childhood ambition to go further and see more, and whatever the big thing was, it wasn’t here in Australia for me. I knew that then.

So we went to England and I was terribly happy to go, and I remember sailing out and waving goodbye to the Harbour Bridge and thinking, I’ll never see that again!¹⁹

Thus Charmian Clift, novelist and journalist, looking back to how things had appeared to her in 1950, when she was twenty-seven, at the very end of

our period. Speaking of exactly the same era, and also like Clift in distant retrospect, Michael Blakemore, the veteran actor, director, and novelist, has defined his mood in those immediately postwar days as being one of an uneasy sense of the transience and impermanence of European settlement: the “Why are we here?” feeling of contingency. “Even in as populous a city as Sydney,” he muses, “there were days when you looked into the depth of the Australian sky and felt the glare bleaching out all your hard-won scribbles of identity. Until air travel only a brave man could face the yawn of the Australian vastness without a reassuring glance over his shoulder to faraway England.”²⁰ For Blakemore, a stage-struck youth with a domineering eye-surgeon father to escape from, a one-way ticket was the only cure, and he did not return for fifteen years, when speedy aircraft finally made it possible to turn up for a quick visit—and to get out again no less quickly. Nevertheless, he called his autobiography *Arguments with England*, suggesting that, whichever country one was resident in, the inevitable glance over the shoulder in the other direction can still cause a crick in the neck.

Of course, the mood illustrated in these successive quotations covering many decades is common at any date among young people, who often enough are dissatisfied with the milieu in which they have grown up. This applies especially to those of a nervous, restless temperament like Moorehead’s, although at the time they are writing of neither Louise Mack nor Patchett Martin were in their first youth: they were over thirty. In addition, Mack was already in London, having escaped her disagreeable marriage, so she had good reason to try to justify her move.

But there is more at work here than young adults’ angst. What makes this long sequence of impressions so distinctively an *Australian* experience is the way it was linked so insistently, not just to the idea of leaving, of merely getting away to a new place—of going on a long holiday, one might say—but specifically to the tropes of expatriation/repatriation, of “leaving home,” “going home,” and “arriving home.” When Moorehead did get overseas at the age of twenty-six and arrived at the port of Toulon, he instantly had an epiphany that he never forgot. It seemed to affirm Martin Boyd’s quasi-physiological notion of age-long secretions becoming active once more in the ancestral place. “This was the crisis for me,” he reported of his semimystical experience. “As I stood there on the sidewalk, I knew that I would never *go home* again—not at any rate for many years . . . my nostalgia had vanished. I had *come home*. This was where I wanted to be.”²¹ The feeling was so powerful and so instantaneous that Moorehead, a rationalistic, practically minded, third-generation Australian, plays half-seriously with the idea of reincarnation, or inherited memory. Boyd uses the metaphor of secretions; Moorehead, the striking simile of feeling that he was like a dowsing rod, bending gratefully to the earth when it detects water.

Being “so far, far off” was not so much a geographical condition as a question of psychological isolation. Most professional writers, whose work is so solitary, thrive on networking, on being in touch and staying in touch with like-minded spirits. In the early years, for such people, to be an Australian was like being condemned to a solitary confinement cell, or as though one had been born deaf and dumb. When Dymphna Cusack “sent a story home” (as she put it, no doubt sarcastically) for consideration by the *Illustrated London News*, it was as though it had dropped into a black hole. The next she heard of it was getting a check for ten guineas long afterward. Only then did she learn it had appeared in the Christmas number of the paper, not one but *two* years earlier.²²

Cusack’s long-delayed check came by sea mail. The *News*, if it had considered the matter important enough, which naturally it didn’t, could have cabled her a bank draft. There was a telegraph line to London from 1872, connecting by means of a submarine cable via Java, which under special circumstances could serve journalists well—if they had deep pockets. In the British summer of 1898 the fantastical reminiscences of expatriate “Louis de Rougement” started to appear in Newnes’s *Wide World* magazine, telling of his thirty years among a tribe of cannibal Aborigines in the Kimberley, not to mention his sighting of clouds of flying wombats. As his biographer says mildly, “Even in London, this remarkable feat of flight would not go unchallenged,” but in fact de Rougement’s tall stories bamboozled the editors there for a surprisingly long time—not that they had, in best tabloid tradition, any motive to look closer than they had to.²³ It was only when expensive cables started to fly between skeptical journalists and their brethren in Sydney that the story unraveled and the fantasist was unmasked as Henri Grien, a photographer and waiter with a glib tongue who had abandoned his wife and four children in Newtown, Sydney. By contrast, before the telegraph line was built it had taken literally years (1865–73) to expose the famous Tichborne Claimant, Arthur Orton, a butcher from Wagga Wagga, as a fraud and liar in the British courts; and the legal expenses of making enquiries in Australia were so colossal that they consumed much of the estate in question.

At first to send a single word across the world by telegraph cost far more than a tradesman earned in a day: ten shillings. The cheap rate for ordinary messages had fallen to three shillings a word by 1902, which was still expensive. If not quite up to the standard of e-mail, the cable service could be quick enough by that date, as long as the line was intact and you could afford it. In Alice Rosman’s *The Tower Wall*, Julien Archer telegraphs to Adelaide asking her parents’ permission to stay on in London with her author friend. She starts to look for an answer late in the evening of the next day, and one is delivered by a boy on a bicycle early the following morning.²⁴ In the upper-class world of Martin Boyd’s *Lucinda Brayford* set at about the

same date, six cables go hither and thither trying to deal secretly with the fact that the bastard son Bill Vane, heir presumptive of the vast Vane properties in Victoria, is about to embark unawares on an incestuous marriage with his half-sister Anne Maitland. Rarely in real life could the traffic have been so exciting. By 1917 one could send a "weekend telegram" of twenty words for fifteen shillings. That was still a considerable sum. Even ten years later, when the novelist Philip Lindsay, desperate and newly married, had to send a short cable to his father Norman from London begging for a loan, that one missive cost half the weekly rent he paid for his Bloomsbury flat.

The first instantaneous radio communication direct from England, in Morse code, was heard in 1918, to everyone's amazement. Public, transglobal radio services followed within a decade or so. A "beam wireless" radio-telegraph from a huge transmitting station outside Melbourne direct to Britain brought reliability and an impressive same-day service for telegrams from 1927. There was a public radio-telephone of sorts from 1930 and a crude fax service from 1934, but none of these developments meant much to private citizens. A three-minute phone call cost £6 originally, much more than the basic award weekly wage, and setting up the connection was a lengthy job. No one but high-level employees, the rich or the desperate got on the phone to England even in 1950. (And in that year there were not many private numbers to call. Not one in ten of British households had a telephone.)

The only improvements in international communications over all these decades that were relevant to most writers were two. One was the arrival of public radio in the mid-1920s. It brought news and, quite soon afterward, static-laden voices across the world on short-wave telling of the wider world's doings. The ABC offered some literary job opportunities, small at first, benefiting literary middlemen like Vance and Nettie Palmer, but opening up a more substantial market for creative work after the Second World War: it provided a backbone of income for the Ruth Park / D'Arcy Niland writing team, for instance.

The second was the gradually speedier mail services, especially the start of a regular if rather erratic airmail letter service to the United Kingdom in 1934, which at best reduced the carriage time to twelve days. (The complicated political negotiations behind this project, which took several years to realize, supplies some light-hearted background to expatriate Alice Rosman's romance, *The Back Seat Driver*, in 1931.) What it meant to correspond by sea mail before that time is pictured very effectively in Christina Stead's *For Love Alone*. While Teresa Hawkins is saving the money to join her lover in London, which takes her several years, they communicate in agonizingly slow motion. "Each letter of theirs was a monologue," the narrator tells us, mocking Teresa's naïveté, "because of the three months' interval, and this gave their sentiments a false beauty and elevation." When Crow asks her

if she will come to live with him when she arrives, it takes six weeks for her to get the question. After she answers him hesitatingly, "surprised and disabled" at this decisive turn in their ambiguous relationship, it then takes another three months for her to get Crow's response saying his query had not been wholly serious.²⁵ Even by sea mail the timings seem a little excessive. The mails took about a month to arrive from England at the capital cities, a carriage time that remained pretty constant between 1900 and 1950. But then, the loathsome Jonathan Crow likes to string his women along.

There are two well-documented and remarkable uses of the Anglo-Australian mail services for literary purposes in this period. One is the considerable correspondence between Henry Handel Richardson, settled in London and afterward in Hastings, and Mary Kernot (1867–1954) in Australia. They were school friends at Presbyterian Ladies' College in Melbourne until Richardson left permanently in 1888 to study music in Germany. They met twice more, once during Richardson's brief visit in 1912 to gather material for *Australia Felix* and again in 1914 when Kernot visited Europe, by which time they were both in their forties. After that, although they never met again, their intimate correspondence continued until Richardson died in 1946. The letters flowed at the rate of about one a month in each direction for some thirty-five years, with rare interruptions. Both women were dutiful correspondents whose letters meant a great deal to each other. Kernot said that she was "like a lioness deprived of her whelps when anything gets between me & my mail,"²⁶ and no gap in the flow was allowed to pass without a proper apology and a careful checking of dispatch dates, especially during the darkest days of wartime. (Even then, the regularity of deliveries, considering the menace to shipping, is quite surprising.) Kernot was Richardson's chief link with her native land, for she lived as a solitary, especially in Hastings after her husband died. Much of her correspondence was destroyed later, and, of what remains, the Kernot letters are an invaluable source of Anglo-Australian literary gossip.

Mary Kernot was not an author herself. She was married to an architect with private means. But she was well-read, with a wide social circle, especially in Melbourne. She was the perfect foil for Richardson's penetrating and frequently acerbic judgments on those expatriated and visiting Australian writers who came calling on her. Few of these emerged unscathed from Richardson's baleful inspection. Miles Franklin, on her last stay in London in 1932, was judged "an odd creature" though "intensely practical."²⁷ The pretty young journalist Coralie Rees, who was working with her husband there in the early '30s, was dismissed as "a common little piece" who only merited an interview at all because she was struggling to make her mark.²⁸ Nettie Palmer, the entrepreneur of Australian letters, was found pleasant enough, but "strikes me as being rather on the dull—meaning not quick-

witted—side. . . . There's a great desire to *impress* in her; to show me whom she has known and how go-ahead Australia is in matter of literature; which grows very tiring after a bit." Her writing, Richardson thought, was much better than her talk, which rambled abominably.²⁹ On the other hand the communist novelist K. S. Prichard, who was "just off to Russia" was judged "a charming woman, & quite unspoiled."³⁰ And surprisingly (for she had a puritan streak), Richardson had a *faiblesse* for rogue males like Norman Lindsay and Brian Penton when they came calling, especially the latter.

The year of Richardson's death, 1946, saw the start of another lengthy transglobal correspondence, arising this time out of the hugely prolonged struggle by Dymphna Cusack and Florence James to get their best seller *Come in Spinner* into print. The records of this issue are very revealing about the practicalities of communication between the continents as they had evolved by the very end of our period. Two of the parties, Cusack and Miles Franklin (who was serving as confidante and adviser to the coauthors), were in Sydney, and the coauthor Florence James was in London. The draft was entered in October 1946 for the *Daily Telegraph* £1000 Novel Prize and won it, but the *Telegraph* raised endless objections, demanding it be cut severely to evade possible obscenity and defamation issues. Before Cusack herself arrived in London in June 1949, the three women communicated by a mixture of sea mail and aerograms of a single flimsy page, and very occasional cables. Sea mail still took a month and air letters from Cusack to James took nine days to get from Darling Point to Hampstead.³¹

It took five years from first submission to get the publication of *Come in Spinner* sorted out. And even at that later date it found not a local publisher but a London one, Heinemann, and a New York one, Morrow. That was very typical of publishing arrangements over a long period. Little that was palatable to demanding tastes was ever published locally. The NSW Bookstall Company sold paperback editions of Australian writers from 1894, but catered largely—although not exclusively in its early days—for simple, popular demands. By the 1920s it was a spent force, not worth considering as far as most serious writers were concerned. There was the Endeavour Press, an offshoot of the *Bulletin*, from 1932, which published some fine work but soon collapsed. Angus and Robertson, easily the leading local publisher from 1884 right up to 1950, was a real option, but in that era it was notoriously conservative and (some said) mean-minded in every sense.

Most ambitious authors sought a London publisher, either because they had no choice for their particular line of work or because they were pursuing the prestige and sales it might bring. They had to reckon with the fact that a gentleman's agreement among the best British publishers meant that it was the kiss of death to publish one's book in Australia first, since it would then be eliminated from consideration in London. (However, it is

unclear how strictly this was applied, especially further down the publishers' pecking order. Lawson was published locally by Angus and Robertson and then taken up by Simpkin Marshall in London. Also novels serialized first in Australian magazines were certainly published in London afterward. Dorrington and Stephens's *The Lady Calphurnia Royal* was serialized in the *Bookfellow* in 1907 and appeared under the imprint of Mills & Boon later on. Possibly the policy became stricter with time.) On top of that was the truly iniquitous system of the colonial royalty that survived almost up to the Second World War. Under this, the standard royalty paid to Australian authors for their London-published books was set at one half of the normal ten per cent. There was no logic to this; it existed solely because the most reputable publishers could get away with it. K. S. Prichard in Perth calculated in 1926 that her secretary had earned more from her novel by typing up a fair copy than she had made in total royalties from writing it.³² Bearing in mind that most books of all kinds in the shops throughout our period were British imports, writers risked next to nothing in the way of home sales by relocating to England. Their work found its way back to the bookshops anyway.

It is impossible, then, to exaggerate the sheer power of the English cultural hegemony, and especially so, perhaps, over the literary arts. Stay-at-home writers who wanted to know how the English-speaking literary world wagged had to sustain themselves largely on nutriment from Britain; nutriment that arrived in gobbets weeks apart. When they picked up a magazine the obsolete date on the masthead leapt off the page like a poisoned arrow, infecting them afresh with their provinciality. When they picked up a book, the odds were that it had been written and produced in Britain, by Britons, and shipped out in bales, often in rather nasty-looking colonial editions. Those who structured their mental map by means of the contents of such books discovered that, implicitly, they were people who had no culture and no history: they simply did not exist at all. For Anglo-Celtic Australians were caught between two stools. History had not given them the isolation to develop any unique folk culture, mythology, or art, yet they were separated by great silent oceans from the origins of their civilization. They could read nothing, write nothing, criticize nothing, without being reminded that their own literary culture, such as it was, was derivative, a flimsy pasteboard imitation of the magic realm of Overseas. The world then was, subjectively, a far bigger place, and the distant goal of London so much the more enticing. Small wonder that the "intolerable ennui," that ferocious appetite for the capital, could generate an "almost insane lust," as it did in the future historical novelist Philip Lindsay, son of the artist Norman Lindsay, when, trapped in Sydney, he read ecstatic reports from his brother Jack. Jack Lindsay had gone on ahead in 1926 with his friend John Kirtley to promote

their Fanfrolico Press, abandoning his wife in the process. Back came Jack's bulletins with gripping news of the Russian ballet, and "meeting gods like Aldous Huxley in the Café Royal, and of actually getting drunk with Liam O'Flaherty! I couldn't believe it, I dared not believe it."³³

Nothing gives a better sense of the chafing sense of discontent with Australian life for some young people in the 1920s than the opening chapters of Lindsay's partial autobiography *I'd Live the Same Life Over*. They tell of a young man who is half the larrikin and half the romantic poet with a head full of Housman's delicious pessimism, lounging about Sydney waiting impatiently for his life to begin. Lindsay's urge did not remain unsatisfied for long. He got out permanently in June 1929 when he was twenty-three, and here he is looking back at his mood of some twenty years earlier. But much can be deduced from his unpublished novel *The Mangle*, which went through various revisions but was certainly completed in its current form by 1927 because that year is mentioned in the text. Lindsay came to think little enough of *The Mangle*, saying that only the word "THIN" came to mind to describe it, but he did preserve it from the holocaust that he made of numerous other manuscripts in his backyard at Coogee before leaving, and he took it to England with him. Even so, he nearly discarded it as useless in the bar of his favorite waterhole, the Plough in Bloomsbury. He was right to consider it prentice work, but it certainly expresses his yearning to escape the country and join his brother. It is set in a "lunatic block of flats called the Mangle in a most romantic suburb called Darlinghurst in the strangest city in Australia"³⁴ and takes place over a week in the life of Pauline Carmel, separated from her husband and down in Sydney in search of love and adventure. Mrs. Carmel, like most of the other dissolute, hard-drinking and mostly work-shy characters, is a thinly disguised version of a real person. Lindsay told his father Norman ungallantly: "I have worked up a neurotic hatred for the girl on whom Mrs Carmel is built... I wonder if you realise that desirable though Mrs Carmel may be as a passing fuck, she is also a bloody bore."³⁵ Another character, unidentifiable now, called Donald Scholey, a wealthy and boorish Scot, rants against his adopted country's provinciality and second-hand literature. What are Australians, he rants, but

a collection of copy-cats, copying everything and everybody but themselves. Who have they produced except a handful of "flannel[led] fools" and Professor Hunter?... Even your literature's not your own. The only decent books about you have been written by Englishmen—Marcus Clarke, Havelock Ellis, Morley Roberts and D. H. Lawrence. Besides Louis Becke—who got out of the country as soon as he could and only came back to die—the only great thing you've produced in Louis Stone's *Jonah*, and that's even so good that it's never reprinted and there's not twenty men in Australia who've heard of it.³⁶

None of his listeners disagree with Scholey and neither, surely, does his creator, who was already planning his escape, urged on by his lack of work (his drinking was already notorious), various entanglements with women, and having become of some interest to the police, apparently over an abortion. When Lindsay found out what the fare was going to be, "Dear God," he moaned. "Was there ever so much money in all the world!"³⁷ His father came up with the fare, after doing his best to dissuade him from betraying his country by leaving when it most needed its writers to bring it to consciousness of itself. This was an unfashionable notion at the time, and his son found it incomprehensible and ignored it. Norman Lindsay had visited London himself in 1909–10, working on his *Satyricon* drawings, but unlike his sons he found that the city strangled rather than inspired his creativity and he soon returned. However, he paid other visits later.

The Lindsay brothers' attitude is comprehensible enough. The decision not to fight the cultural cringe on its home ground, but simply to bypass it by taking a one-way trip from periphery to centre, was a very natural reaction against the conditions of life in Australia in these decades. Around the turn of the century, Miles Franklin, with precise acerbity, makes her heroine Sybylla Melvyn, in *My Career Goes Bung*, assert that these are only four reasons, all negative, to keep anyone from leaving for England. They are Poverty, Ignorance, Misfortune, or Incompetence. They ring out like a new set of the Four Last Things of Catholic theology, Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell, which is probably the effect Franklin wanted.³⁸ Franklin's attitude, and still more that of Christina Stead's nearly three decades later, owes much to the romantic conception of seeking creative fulfilment in exile, and only in exile; the Joycean idea of *non serviam*, of flying, Daedalus-like, right past the nets of nationality, language, and religion into some dimly envisioned region of cosmopolitan and profitable self-fulfilment.

But Joyce, after all, had only to get on an overnight ferry from Ireland to fulfil his ambition of self-exile in Europe, and it was easy to come back at short notice, as he did when his mother was dying. Few Australians could afford romantic gestures of quite that kind. Even if it was affordable, urgency availed nothing. For the Australian, even for the millionaire, everything had to be done in slow motion. Throughout this period virtually everyone made the trip by coal-fired steamship or, later, diesel-driven passenger liner. (Right at the end there were scheduled propeller aircraft services, but they cost 300 guineas for a one-way ticket in 1948.) Some sailing ships were still plying the route to Europe even after the turn of the century, but the days were gone when the windjammers scudded around the bottom of the world with their load of frequently terrified passengers, driven before the screaming winds of the Roaring Forties on a trip that could take several months. In her novel *Not Counting the Cost* (1895), Tasma has a vivid description of such a voyage

from Tasmania to Europe, based on her own two trips in the 1870s. It takes them six weeks to round Cape Horn, followed by eight exhausting days with drooping sails becalmed in the Doldrums with nothing to do except recite the *Ancient Mariner* to each other. The heroine, Eila Frost, takes the precaution of acquiring a sinister little bottle of poison from a Hobart chemist before departing, for use should she be hopelessly shipwrecked on a desert island. Since fortunately Eila never has to quaff the contents, there is no telling whether this is a piece of black humor on Tasma's part, or merely a realistic detail of the time.

In 1890 the journalist Francis Adams returned to England by sailing ship, probably from the belief that the long windy voyage would be good for his tuberculosis. His wife, however, went by steamship. The steamship made the voyage safe and predictable for the next half-century. The earliest coal-fired P&O steamships took as long as eight weeks, the monotony perhaps broken by the death of a passenger, a pause in midocean and a burial at sea. Such a mournful break in the routine was not uncommon. Louise Mack, Katharine Prichard, and Joice NanKivall all experienced one on their first voyages.

But for most of these years the duration of the voyage stabilized at five to six weeks with refueling stops, following an invariable course through normally placid seas. The route ran along the southern coast to Fremantle, made the long haul of twelve days or so across the Indian Ocean to Colombo, went up to Aden, entered the Suez Canal, and emerged in the Mediterranean. From here one could stay with the ship, pass through the Straits and cross the choppy Bay of Biscay where everyone was seasick. (The sturdy advice was to gulp a big glass of seawater at the first premonitions and get the vomiting over.) At long last one disembarked at Southampton or Tilbury, or else one might save time by leaving at Brindisi or Marseilles and crossing Europe by train. The second choice, coming at the end of such a long sea voyage, could be a wearing experience even for the wealthy. When the fastidious Lucinda Brayford, in Boyd's novel, goes to meet her sister Lydia's boat train at Victoria she is quite shocked at her appearance. 'The dark blue coat and skirt, in which [Lydia] had travelled from Marseilles, was put on carelessly and wrinkled under the arms. Her fair hair hung in wisps about her sunburned, unpowdered face. She wore a string of pearls. Lucinda, confronted by an actuality so different from her imagination, moved forward in a dazed condition of feeling herself unreal.'³⁹

There were a couple of other routes. One was to cross the Pacific to San Francisco or Vancouver, span the continent by train, and finish with a fast passage from New York or Quebec. The other, after 1914, was to cross the Pacific, pass through the Panama Canal, and then go via the West Indies to the British ports.

Whatever the choice, it necessarily involved a great span of featureless days, giving plenty of time for the traveler to contemplate just what it means to traverse, inch by inch, mile by mile, the thick rotundity of the world. In the meantime, like it or not, the voyager was in the company of 500 or so “worthy souls” who “breakfast, lunch, dine, and sup with you 126 times. For over 30 days you see them incessantly, hear no one else but them.”⁴⁰ The entire experience was to come afresh to a sickening appreciation of exactly how far the antipodean had to go to join European humanity. The only compensation, for the poor writer who wanted to get in a little practice, was that the shipboard company could furnish the material for some fictional scenes later on. In *Bachelor Betty*, a semiautobiographical novel of 1907 by Winifred James, there are little studies of a university professor and his family, a tea-planter, nurses, a sallow American, various theatrical folk, and “a table of uneaten missionaries.” James, a young woman intent on a literary career, was probably the only one of those mentioned who was paying her own fare.⁴¹

James’s prosaic assortment of folk is a fairly representative cross section of the kind of Australians then arriving at British ports. There were about 2,000 a year of them in the 1870s, 10,000 from the 1890s until the Great War, and perhaps double that in the interwar period. Many of those, of course, would have been transient visitors, but some stayed. Around 20,000 people in England and Wales were recorded as Australian-born in the census of 1901, and 30,000 by 1951, with females always in the majority. Of the 100,000 Britons who migrated to Australia between the wars, about a quarter eventually returned, and a few of those might be considered to be literary expatriates from their adopted country. (The novelist Angela Thirkell, who fled her marriage and Melbourne after some years there, fits into this category.)⁴²

Collectively the permanent residents in London added up to a considerable number from a country with such a small population. Some of the common occupations of Australians in England up to 1950 were retail clerks, the military, clerical, housewifery, domestic service, nursing and teaching, with most of the adult males in the skilled trades and professions. Naturally, writers, intellectuals, and other creative and artistic folk constituted only a tiny fraction of these, and nearly all of them fell by birth and education into the category of what demographers call “elite emigrants.” “Elite” in this sense is a technical term. It does not imply affluence. Certainly for the few who could afford it the voyage could be luxurious enough. The young actor Leo McKern, who departed in 1946, spent £325 on his first-class cabin, though he arrived almost penniless. (It should be appreciated that the cabin cost him more than the *annual* gross male wage at the time.)⁴³ The author of the famous short-story collection *Bush Studies*, Barbara Baynton, frequently

travelled in high style to and fro in her later years, though by then she was more the rich socialite than author. It is said one family made the return sea voyage more than thirty times.⁴⁴ It was quite routine, in the earliest days, to personalize your cabin by installing your own furniture and carpets for the voyage, selling them on arrival. Before the First World War, a first-class passenger could look forward to food being served seven times a day and a continuous round of dances, deck games, and other well-organized amusements, such as a mock trial for a breach-of-promise case, which offered plenty of fun. There was plenty of gambling as well; bridge, poker, or baccarat, sometimes for high stakes. Nor did the very rich travel alone. In Boyd's *Lucinda Brayford*, the pastoralists Bill and Muriel Vane and their daughter Heather take along for a short visit to relatives their own maid, their cook and, incredibly, their own chauffeur, even early in the 1930s.

Only a tiny few, obviously, could muster resources on that scale. Certainly very few writers could do so. The tyranny of distance meant a visit to London, particularly a first visit on a one-way ticket, was a daunting challenge. It demanded a lot of planning and, almost inevitably given the time it took simply to get there and back, a certain amount of bridge-burning. For Americans, crossing the Atlantic was merely a matter of a few days' voyaging. Henry James, for example, visited London five times, and spent three years in Europe with his parents on one of these trips, before making the big decision in 1876 to expatriate himself for good to the city that for him was quite simply the capital of the human race. But for the vast majority of young Australians the trip was far too disruptive ever to be the simple coming-of-age ritual that it was to become in the later part of the twentieth century. And relative to incomes it was always expensive. The cost of a basic cabin stayed surprisingly constant, hardly altering in a half-century or more. Nicholas Freydon, the writer-hero of Alec Dawson's semifictional memoir, pays £45 for his passage on a mail clipper in the early 1880s, and he has to live like a monk for a couple of years to get the sum together.⁴⁵ A two-berth cabin adequate for a family of four cost £40 in 1900 (that was what Henry Lawson paid) and the cheapest possible bunk in a six-berth cabin without a porthole cost £38 in the 1920s. By the early 1930s, Christina Stead's heroine Teresa Hawkins knows precisely what she needs to scrape up: "Forty-four pounds for the boat-fare, third class, and of course I must have ten pounds to land with."⁴⁶ After a year of penurious living, she calculates it will take another one thousand and ninety-six days to save it from her wages as a clerk in a hat factory, and she resents the fact that 1936 has an extra day in it before her sailing date, being a leap year like 1928, the actual year when Stead herself left.

Even the cheapest class of cabin provided some minimal comforts and a little privacy, though not very much. Sexual tensions caused by lack of privacy over many weeks could grow acute, especially when a set of three

married couples occupied two cabins officially segregated by gender, as was quite common. This issue does not figure much in novels and memoirs of the period, partly because the writers who left were mostly young and single and conducted their liaisons, if any, on deck or in the lifeboats, and partly because decency in this period deemed it unmentionable. In a private letter of 1902, during his voyage to Spain on a crowded French ship, the young artist Lionel Lindsay, travelling alone, was curious about it. "I have not yet discovered how the married do their daily," he reported in some mystification.⁴⁷ One who was prepared to talk by the 1930s was Angela Thirkell, in her comic account of a voyage based on a trip of her own just after the First World War. Through the voice of her narrator, a doctor who is privy to many embarrassing secrets, we hear about an arrangement two couples have made to create two makeshift double bunks in one cabin with a blanket between them. (The third couple gets the second cabin all to themselves on a rotating basis.) One wife—French, of course—finds this simultaneously so stimulating and so frustrating that her husband, a "weedy-looking fellow," has a permanent set of "huge teeth-marks on his neck."

Whenever I looked at that poor chap afterwards, it was all I could do not to laugh.

"And what does Madam say?" I asked.

"She makes me turn in early," said Starkie, blushing like a girl, "and she won't let the others in till eleven. They don't mind."

All the doctor can offer the sheepish husband is "to give Madam a sleeping-draught."⁴⁸

No such resolution was possible for those who could afford no cabin at all. Even for those there were still a few alternatives. At the turn of the century you could get to Marseilles on a French steamer for just £22, sleeping in bunks packed together in groups of fourteen. These sailings were subsidized by the French government to provide a service to and from its Pacific possessions. That was how Lionel Lindsay got to Spain. Around the same time, a passage steerage class could be had on a White Star steamer for as little as £19, on the lengthy route via Capetown.

During the First World War, passages for civilians were virtually impossible to obtain. The young journalist Joice NanKivall Loch got a berth on one of the last troop ships to leave for Europe: the *Orcha*, an unfinished hulk of a ship originally intended to be a luxury liner. It was just after the Armistice, but there was still danger from submarines, so passengers slept in thick clothing and endured many lifeboat drills in the night. The ship carried not only ammunition boxes but bales of stinking fleeces, some of which started to smolder dangerously after leaving South Africa.⁴⁹ Similarly, converted liners

still configured as troop carriers were available just after the Second World War, taking stalwart voyagers to Europe for an absolutely rock-bottom fare. Conditions were just as rough as during the previous war:

In groups of seventy or eighty, we pigged it promiscuously in the foetid depths of the vessel somewhere well below the waterline. We slept on canvas bunks stacked three high and two wide, and we queued submissively for gruesome meals with mess tins in our hands. You had to want to get away very badly indeed to put up with the conditions prevailing in those days. . . . I had no return ticket and no money with which to buy one if anything went wrong, which it certainly would; I had no job waiting for me and no qualifications which equipped me to get one.⁵⁰

On perhaps the same ship, or on another similar converted troop carrier, Jocelyn Rickards, aged twenty-four, the future film designer, fared rather better as she had the luxury of a shared cabin. But the cabin was an “airless cupboard” and it was infested with rats. In old age she recalled: “I can still hear the snap of the trap, the squeal and heavy thump as rat and trap fell from the bulkhead to the floor in the middle of the night.” She also caught an infestation of crabs in the noisome swimming pool.⁵¹

One needed to escape urgently from one’s birthplace to put up with such conditions. But, then, there was nothing new about that. For the best part of a century ambitious people *had* wanted to get away from Australia very badly indeed. And especially writers; writers more than most, indeed, for all—or almost all—of them understood that, since they wrote in English, their work would always be twigs on the parent tree and assessed as such. In London lay the supreme court of judgment; lay, potentially, their ultimate validation as a author. To refuse to appear at its bar to submit oneself to “a London hearing” (Henry Lawson’s metaphor) was not to be a writer at all. But that still left some unsettling questions. If travelling writers thought of themselves as adventurous Gullivers, were they heading for Lilliput, or Brobdingnag? Would their compeers on the other side of the world prove to be, from their point of view, creative midgets, or giants? Would publishers and editors beg for their favors, or would they be ejected on to the pavement? Was it really true that “your weakest stuff is clever in a London magazine” as Henry Lawson had assured them in swaggering tones years before he left himself, or was that just self-deluding nonsense?⁵² In the ruthless struggle that awaited them, it would not do to be slow in coming forward, but on the other hand excessive confidence in one’s powers could be fatal. As a character in one of the novels by the expatriate “Smiler” Hales puts it succinctly, “Most o’ ‘em wot come crying ‘London called me, an’ I came!’ arrive as first-class passengers, an’ go ‘ome steerage.”⁵³

CHAPTER 2

A GOUT OF BILE: METIC AND IMMIGRANT EXPATRIATES

Take my advice. Get out of this country. It's no good for any artist!
Nellie Melba to Ray Lindsay (ca.1929)

The expatriate is only half a man. Half his identity is lost. A man must
work at his desk in his own country.

Norman Lindsay (ca.1964)

IN THE UNPUBLISHED NOVEL BY THE YOUNG PHILIP LINDSAY, *THE MANGLE*, mentioned earlier, there is a fine scene when the character Ronnie Doebrook is leaving for England. He does not expect ever to return. As his liner pulls away from the Sydney dockside, Ronnie picks up one of the yellow paper streamers dangling over the rail, raises it to his lips, and pretends to send a gout of bile spurting over his receding friends and relatives. It is his parting comment on his birthplace. He is realizing his wish. Already he has become—what? An emigrant? An exile? Or an expatriate?

The original of Ronnie Doebrook is, transparently, Lindsay's friend P. R. 'Inky' Stephensen: "Dear excitable Ronnie, his quick staccato voice, the sudden peals of clear nervous laughter, his continual mockery at all that was sacred, at all that was dirty, at everything in the wide world. He revered nothing beyond half-a-dozen reproductions of paintings in his scrapbook and a handful of poems by dead men."¹ Stephensen had gone off triumphantly as a Rhodes Scholar to Oxford, and this vignette is perhaps based on Lindsay's own observation of his departure. Certainly the gesture would have been typical enough of Stephensen. At the time (the year was 1924) his desire for permanent escape from that land of the living dead, Australia, was just as strong as Lindsay's own lust for the same thing.

What is the most appropriate name for those mostly young folk who, long before and after Stephensen and Lindsay, sought to consummate their lust so eagerly? In one of her sparkling essays written during the Second World War, when the topic had much resonance, the novelist and critic Mary McCarthy gave a simple and memorable definition of an expatriate. It is a person whose "main aim is never to go back to his native land or, failing that, to stay away as long as possible."² She was speaking of Americans, not Australians, but her definition meets most of our cases. They might not have put it in quite such blunt terms as McCarthy, or even admitted it at all; but that was, implicitly, the attitude of most of those who stayed away for years, even if they returned eventually; and it was, explicitly, the attitude of those—and they were not a few—who became completely and permanently anglicized pretty much from the moment of arrival.

The terminology demands some closer inspection, however. It is a fact that there is no very neutral term for this kind of personal transplantation. Elsewhere in the world, the terms "émigré," "exile," "expatriate," "emigrant," and "migrant" may be used with no very clear distinction of meaning, but not in Australia. 'émigré' can imply a voluntary element, but it carries an air of *mitteleuropa* and political oppression about with it, which might apply to one class of migrant coming to Australia—Hungarians after 1956, say—but does not have the right ring for any of those who left it. It has been claimed that members of elite Australian families who took off for other countries—the Boyds, for example—were émigrés, but the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) does not substantiate that. All of its definitions for "émigré" allude to a departure for *political* reasons.³ Implicitly, also, "émigré" more than hints at a linguistic barrier to be surmounted in the new country, which affected no one shifting to Britain.

"Exile" is more complicated. In the *OED*, the primary definition of the state of exile is *enforced* residence in some foreign land, such as Ovid suffered at Tomis after annoying the emperor Augustus, although a secondary definition allows it to mean a departure *voluntarily* undergone for any purpose. The noun "exile," however, is more rigidly defined by the *OED* as "a *banished* person," and nothing else.⁴ If this be accepted then the phrase "voluntary exile" is an oxymoron. Indeed, this is surely how it is regarded in common speech. Admittedly, the term "exile" is often used very loosely, even metaphorically. Years ago a collection of critical essays by members of the English department of Sydney university appeared as *Cunning Exiles*, the justification for the title being that even such unlikely authors as Alan Sillitoe, Ian Fleming, and Norman Mailer (with which it dealt) are, in some metaphorical way, "exiles"; that is to say, exiles from one literary tradition or another, or perhaps exiles from their own natures. But this is surely stretching the meaning of the term to the point of vacuity. Most people would gag

at the notion of calling, say, Barry Humphries an exile in Britain. An exile, like an émigré, is understood to be someone who has suffered some sort of expulsion from their native land, to which he or she continues to be fully committed emotionally. Persecution is often assumed to be the essence of it. A poet-in-exile, it has been said wryly, proves his credentials by having had his finger nails pulled out at home.⁵

In her essay McCarthy argues that James Joyce was truly an exile, not merely an expatriate, because although he himself was not prohibited from entering Ireland—for he did visit there three times—his books were. To put it another way, James Joyce was not an exile, but “Joyce” was. In the same way, it could be said that *Doctor Zhivago*, banned in the Soviet Union, was the exile and not its author Pasternak, who did not leave Russia. This may be far-fetched; it is true, though, that the distinction between the Australian expatriate and the exile is not in practice so clear-cut as the dictionary avers. There were in this period some semivoluntary exiles, in the sense that one can be exiled *from*, as well as exiled *to*. Thus, one might claim to have been driven into exile by unemployment. Then again, some Australians had been in prison before they left, and wanted to start over where no one knew about it. Some were spurred on their way as a consequence of a sexual or marital imbroglio. For example, in 1945 Clarence McNulty (1903–64), journalist, ex-editor of the Brisbane *Truth* and the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*, was embroiled in a homosexual scandal and his sympathetic employer, Consolidated Press, shifted him to London to head its new bureau there. He never returned, even though his last years were fairly miserable.⁶ Others, once they had gone overseas, were held there by domestic ties, or, in the case of the novelist Godfrey Blunden, partly from a fear that he might be prosecuted for bigamy if he came back.⁷ Then there were those who could not afford the return fare; those who had burned their bridges so irrevocably at home that they had to stick it out; those who were too ashamed by their failure to return. For a short time Arthur Lynch (1861–1934), an eccentric polymath, adventurer, engineer, MP, and doctor, was unable to return for the unique reason that he was in a British jail waiting to be hanged for treason. Lynch, whose father fought at the Eureka stockade, is the only known expatriate of this period whose ethnicity and personal entanglement in politics were in any way significant to his career as a writer. But even Lynch was no exile. Once the threat of the gallows was lifted he showed no disposition to return.⁸

It is true that one might leave to evade actual or potential punishment by the law. In practice, for literary people, this meant leaving to avoid further issues with the censorship laws. One who did this was Robert Close, who had already fallen foul of these laws before he left. When he was found guilty of publishing an obscene libel (his novel *Love Me, Sailor*), he did time in Pentridge jail before being released on appeal. Close is the only

writer who comes close to the classic definition of the exile. Even Close's departure was in the end voluntary, although if his unpublished sardonic account of life behind bars is accurate, he had good reason not to linger while there was the slightest chance of being sent back there. Although several other novelists had problems with the censors—Jean Devanny, Dymphna Cusack, and M. Barnard Eldershaw among others—this never figured as an *explicit* motive for departure, as far as is known. In 1931 Norman and Rose Lindsay did tell the newspapers they were leaving the country in protest—possibly for ever, they said—because Norman's novel *Redheap* had been banned, but they spoilt the effect by returning the following year.

In practice, as we shall see, few Australians defined themselves as exiles when they left to live in England, and protestations to the contrary never sound particularly convincing. Australia has never had any true writers-in-exile, even though some may have liked to dramatize themselves in that role. Indeed, a cynic might say that an Australian abroad who mentions the word "exile" in his own connection is probably a show-off whinging emigrant who has failed to make good.

A further complication is that, metaphorically at least, one can feel exiled *in* a place and for some writers that place was Australia itself, and their quest was to free themselves from internal exile; that is, to make an escape overseas out of a sense of being strangers in their own land. This affliction, this sense of not belonging, it has been argued, was especially the fate of the woman writer. This is the situation examined in Drusilla Modjeska's *Exiles at Home* (1981). She limits herself to writers active between 1925 and 1945, although it has been argued that women writers' alienation may have been as bad, or worse, earlier. As Debra Adelaide puts it, "nationalism, the major feature of Australian literature, has its counterpart, that of expatriation or exile. Expression of nationality implies security, a sense of place, of home. . . . Women writers were especially vulnerable to the sense of alienation which accompanied fervent nationalism in the later nineteenth century." As these pages will attest, a frequent response to this feeling was indeed flight—by both sexes. This is not to say that a gendered analysis of Australian expatriatism is otiose. Of course it isn't. It is to assert only that, as far as the documentary evidence goes, women and men protested about their sense of entrapment with equal force and in terms that are not readily distinguishable by gender. Adelaide gives four reasons why women wished to escape from internal exile: "the fledgling state of Australian book publishing; the need to find or make closer contact with a publisher, to locate a literary vein in social life, or simply to be able to hawk one's talents."⁹ None of these can really be distinguished as being more applicable to one sex than the other. When Miles Franklin offered the only acceptable reasons for *not*

departing (Poverty, Ignorance, Misfortune, or Incompetence), she certainly was not thinking they applied only to women authors.

So, thirdly and unavoidably, we come to the most loaded term of all: "expatriate." Both it—and still more, the journalese "expat"—carry in Australian English a particular and quite distinctive connotation.¹⁰ If, for instance, Americans wanted to describe Henry James, T. S. Eliot, or Gertrude Stein as expatriates, then the term would be used and understood as more or less neutrally descriptive. They might be called exiles instead, just as neutrally. Perhaps this is because the Americans of any period find it hard to believe that anyone, whatever they might say, has ever really intended to leave the United States for good, and in fact almost all of the Lost Generation of the 1920s did eventually return. Few spent their entire lives in Europe. Malcolm Cowley, who wrote the best participant's account in *Exile's Return*, could name only one writer of lasting reputation who did.¹¹

But more naïve Australians living in England were, and still are, quite bemused or exasperated when the label of expatriate is applied to *them*. The label makes them think, rather (depending on the date), of characters in the novels of Somerset Maugham or of Graham Greene. The expatriate is supposed to look and sound something like Evelyn Waugh's character in *The Loved One*, the Englishman Sir Francis Hinsley, who has sold his soul to Hollywood. Sir Francis, with his "sensitive, intelligent face, blurred somewhat by soft living and long boredom," spends the hot Los Angeles evenings in his veranda rocking-chair, a whisky and soda and an outdated magazine at his elbow, complaining petulantly that he has never heard of any of the names in the London literary papers.¹² Eventually he hangs himself. *That* kind of poor creature is an expatriate, not Australians who happen to be living, for now (it is often "for now"), in England. Even today, few Australians relish being called expatriates. The fact that the word can be converted by a simple pun into a jeering synonym for "traitor" has never lost its sting. Perhaps it is because of the Clive James / Germaine Greer factor. In the popular mind exiles are supposed to be despairing and uprooted refugees, clustering together in little clubs and ghettos, dreaming of the day when they can return to their beloved homeland. It is discomfiting that some expats have flourished "over there" with rather too evident self-satisfaction—a visible reproach, it may be thought, to those too pusillanimous to join them. Perhaps this is the reason for the common use of the periphrastic phrase "based in their adopted country," which almost always means Britain and is most often applied to those who have enjoyed long and successful careers there. "Adopted" is indeed an ingeniously emollient metaphor, given that those who are literally adoptees, these days, often want to recover their birth identity or even resume it, so it sounds less dismissive than the harsher, simple noun "expatriate."

These various ambiguities and evasions are the reason why better terms have now and then been proposed, though none has ever caught on. Ian Mair invented the ingenious word “pomios” (presumably Pommy-Oz, or Pommy Aussies Permanently Overseas) to describe such people, and Miles Franklin called them “exodists” in her novel *Cockatoos*. For a while they were “the AAs”: Australians Abroad. Yet neologisms are not necessary. There exist in British English two perfectly neutral nouns, “emigrant” or “migrant,” both of which, according to the *OED*, simply mean someone who leaves their birth country to take up residence in another for an indeterminate period. It sounds simple enough. But these words are useless for our purposes. These are used only of arrivals in Australia, not departures from it. In any era, to speak of an Australian bound for an indefinite stay in London as being an “emigrant” would baffle a hearer as much as calling him a “pomio.”¹³

So, after all, we are left by a process of exclusion with the term “expatriate.” It is the peculiar aura surrounding this noun—an aura unique to Australia, though its exact flavour shifted slowly over the years, as we shall see—that make its use desirable. The semantics of the abbreviation “expat,” in particular, are fascinating. It can hardly be uttered without a curl of the lip. Packed into those holophrastic two syllables are various measures of fear, envy, contempt, and bullying. If you didn’t go, it was because you suspected you were no good; if you did go, you were a traitor; if you went and came back, you were a failure. And, at the other end of the line in England, once your expat status was known, there might be that other deadly, patronizing question to deal with; the one which repeatedly sends Dr. Richard Mahony into a frenzy in Richardson’s *The Way Home*: If life was so good to you *there*, why come back *here*? (“Australia!” Dr. Mahony overhears a tipsy competitor medico saying, “We all know what *that* means. Ask him what other trades he’s plied there. Make him turn out his credentials.”¹⁴) No wonder some writers took on protective coloration as soon as they arrived, even to the point of booking elocution lessons. Others avoided identifying themselves by taking care to write nothing that had any Australian scenes, characters, or allusions at all.

So the working definition of an expatriate author used here will be as simple as Mary McCarthy’s. It is anyone with strong Australian associations who decided freely to go to live in England; who did so for a lengthy period; and whose reputation—however enduring or transient—became associated primarily not with their country of birth or upbringing but the “mother country.” The last is an important criterion, because it excludes several people with considerable reputations who did live overseas for quite long periods. For instance, Louis Becke (1859–1913), the South Sea Islands writer, spent some of the years between 1896 and 1908 in England, but he travelled to Jamaica and elsewhere at intervals within this period, and

his collection *By Reef and Palm* and other books had established him in Australia first. It also excludes P. R. Stephensen, the editor, essayist, and eccentric of letters. He spent eight years, 1924–32, in England in his youth, and they were memorable for two reasons: first, for his influence on other expatriates, notably the Lindsay brothers; and second, for the fact that he certainly had more impact than most visitors on the English literary world while he was there. Noisy and tirelessly energetic, Stephensen's great coup was scraping an acquaintance with the dying D. H. Lawrence on the Riviera in 1928, and persuading Lawrence to let him publish an expensive edition of his paintings in full color via his short-lived Mandrake Press, including ten copies on vellum for a silly fifty guineas each. (Though even at that price they were oversubscribed.) Lawrence himself predicted all too accurately: "I don't think Stephensen is very safe—keen on self-advertisement and puffing up big enterprises *and* getting in the cash.... The Mandrake, like the frog, will blow itself up too big, too quickly, and will burst."¹⁵ The reckless young Stephensen took some big risks over Lawrence. Four copies of the paintings book were seized and burned by the authorities, yet he went on to print and publish in England with Lawrence's permission a "secret" edition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, for which he would certainly have gone to prison if discovered.¹⁶ (Many years later, in 1965, this particular enterprise proved to be Stephensen's swan song, for he died while giving a talk on his part in the affair.) The general impression is that Lawrence, testy and miserable though he was in his last months, found Stephensen excitable, overfamiliar and a bit hard to take, but well-meaning and useful. Yet, for all that, and despite Stephensen's indubitably occupying a small footnote in British literary history, no one would question that his ultimately tragic career and his equivocal reputation belong entirely to Australia.

Three other exclusions under this principle might be mentioned. Miles Franklin (1879–1954) did live overseas for long portions of her life. In 1906, five years after *My Brilliant Career* had given her a reputation, she left for Chicago at the age of twenty-seven, and lived there for nine years, working for a women's trade union league. She visited London and Paris on a brief holiday in 1911, and in 1915 moved to London to live. In the war she worked for a hospital unit in the Balkans. After the war, until 1927, she worked for a housing association, living in Hampstead. She visited her relatives in Australia in 1923 on unpaid leave, before returning. Back in London in 1924, she began the "Brent of Bin Bin" series of novels in the British Museum Reading Room, the three of the series written there appearing between 1927 and 1931. She visited Australia again in 1927, giving up her London job, and apparently existed in Sydney on poorly paid literary work for the next three years or so. She yet again returned to London in 1931, staying with friends, but being unable to sell enough literary work to sustain

her, she had to go back to her mother's house in the following year. It was not until she had reached this final resting-place that she was able to produce her most fully achieved novel, *All That Swagger* (1936). Her London stays gave Miles Franklin a living of a kind, but not via literature, and it never delivered the fame she sought. Franklin was certainly a very long-term visitor to London—she stayed for about fifteen years altogether, on and off, and moved countries more than most writers of her time. But she would not be enrolled as an expatriate, not because she failed there in terms of remuneration and reputation—for many expatriates did that—but because she is indubitably an Australian writer, the author of fifteen books on Australian themes, none of them turning specifically on the issue of life overseas.

Certainly it might be thought curious that someone who was so utterly committed to the self-imposed task of trying to augment, or help create, a corpus of Australian literature should do it while living in other countries for a large fraction of her adult life. But there are other examples. Patrick White (1912–90) is an identical case: he spent most of the first half of his life in England and Europe and started to publish there; but again his writing career obviously belongs to Australia. The third case in this bracket is that of Dymphna Cusack, who had long been eager to depart but was prevented by money problems and ill-health from doing so until 1949, in her mid-forties. After that she was away for some thirteen years, doing a good deal of her work overseas, but she spent little time in England—she lived in France, Eastern Europe, and China—and like White and Franklin her overall career would never be defined as other than an Australian one.

But there are rather few cases like Stephensen's or Franklin's, White's or Cusack's. If one thing unites nearly everyone who will figure in this story, it is that they were young and independent people. Few went with spouses; even fewer with children. Most left before they were out of their twenties, and if they lasted in England for more than a few years and started to make their mark there, few returned to active careers in Australia, or at best they travelled to and fro from a base that had become distinctly British. They would have echoed the rueful words of Russell Braddon, a post-Second World War departure: "I loathed Britain's climate, its Government, its taxation, its rationing, its dirt and its lack of surf, sun and good tennis; but I could not leave it. Britain, I was now aware, was more than Home to me; it *was* home."¹⁷

For the purposes of argument we shall not insist on Australian birth, nor on any particular length of stay in Australia before departure, nor on a life-long residence in London. To do so would be counterproductive and misleading, for even during this relatively early period with its long sea voyages, there were cases of multiple comings and goings; in a few cases, so frequent that one is left wondering whether they were, properly considered,

expatriates of Britain or Australia. Philip Menzell (1851–1905), the journalist and biographer, arrived in Victoria in his twenties and left again in 1883, aged thirty-two; then he had further stays in Australia in 1891–92, 1895, and 1900. Francis Adams (1862–93), novelist and social commentator, was twenty-two when he arrived in Melbourne in a vain search for health, and he left again for England six years later, in 1890. Both men, however, were contributors to Anglo-Australian literary culture and, more significantly, concerned themselves both practically and artistically with the idea of expatriation. Menzell was, for instance, editor-proprietor of the *British-Australasian* newspaper in London for about ten years. Adams made a considerable name for himself as a prolific contributor to the *Bulletin* and other papers, as a socialist poetical agitator and as a controversial essayist on far-left political themes; and he was also controversial in England as a novelist. His Australian years were a considerable fraction of his productive life, given that he died by his own hand in his thirtieth year.

In short, it is not the exact length of stay in either country that is important. Our master theme is what writers made of the *experience* of transplanting themselves, in both personal and artistic terms. While it is useful to have some rule of thumb to distinguish those who were essentially visitors to London from those who proved, in their own eyes and others' eyes, to be really expatriates, the dividing-point is necessarily arbitrary and it is futile to make it too rigid. And here and there, observations or literary works by mere visitors to London will be cited when they have some especially vivid or illustrative point to make.

A further useful distinction must be mentioned, one that owes something to the historian Steven Alomes's categorization, though he is speaking of creative artists in the broad sense and at a later date.¹⁸ It can be useful to distinguish between the kind of expatriates who were *metics* and those who were, or became, *immigrants*. Metics in the ancient Greek city-states were alien residents whose loyalties were presumed to lie elsewhere, and who accordingly paid a special tax for a residence permit. In terms of Australian expatriation, the metics are those who in some way maintained a relationship with their home country, in the sense of being imaginatively concerned with the complications of their status; or, at least, who showed signs of maintaining some distance between their own sense of identity and their host country. The immigrants, by contrast, were those who melted, for all practical purposes, into British society to the point of obliterating or "forgetting" their origins (though it was and is very common to deny that, with various overtones of sentimentality).

The line between metic and immigrant is admittedly a fine one, yet it is a useful distinction. Henry Handel Richardson and Jack Lindsay both spent most of their adult lives in and around London, yet the career-trajectories

of each show Richardson was a metic who in her best work engaged imaginatively with the question what it meant to shift the country of domicile, while the second was an author-immigrant for whom the matter rarely held much interest after his first few years. To illustrate the difference again, take the cases of Martin Boyd and Christina Stead. Boyd lived overseas for all his productive life, including about twenty-five years in England, and was an anglophile (of a kind), while Christina Stead lived for fewer years there and was internationalist in spirit. Boyd refused to concede that he was any kind of expatriate at all—he said the label was meaningless for him—while Stead was content to accept it, in the sense that she defined herself as an Australian living overseas, while denying just as strongly as Boyd that she was at all alienated as a result. Yet, as we shall see, both put their status of being Australian writers with an intimate knowledge of London life to remarkable and perceptive uses in their fiction. Whatever their protestations, both were, creatively speaking, metics, not immigrants—for, in the sense just mentioned, they retained a psychic gap between their homeland and their place of residence. It was Stead, not Boyd, who eventually went back to Australia in old age and reaffirmed her birth identity. It is therefore ironic that it was Stead, not Boyd, who suffered from being publicly defined as a cosmopolite, in an unfortunate contretemps in 1967 when she was first recommended for, and then denied, the substantial Britannica Award of \$10,000 on the grounds that she had ceased to be a sufficiently Australian author to qualify for it. In the event, no award at all was made in that year.

Numerous others of the immigrant type in this period could be named—numerically they probably outstripped the metics—although by definition they lie on the periphery of the theme of this book since, by and large, they had nothing interesting to say about the experience of shifting countries. A perfect example of the immigrant, in a later generation, was the poet and novelist Randolph Stow. Someone once asked him for his reflections on what his permanent move to England in his thirties meant to him, only to be told: “I’m sorry to say that I can think of nothing to say on the subject of being an expatriate . . . my change of address was quite comfortable and unremarkable, so that I take it entirely for granted, and would be hard put to it to find 50 words to write on the theme.”¹⁹ Many an immigrant, if he or she were honest, would have to echo Stow’s blunt words.

At this point we can quickly dismiss from any further consideration two special categories of literary Australians, the first being those who were removed as children before their talents bore fruit, and the second those who were unambiguously visitors to England, even if they were long-term ones. Some names still quite well-known to British literary history are in the first category. It includes Mary Augusta Arnold (better known as Mrs. Humphry Ward, 1851–1920), who was taken away from Tasmania at the age of five,

thereby depriving Australia, in theory anyway, of a future novelist and philanthropist. Mrs. Ward's *Robert Elsmere* (1888), though forgotten now, was once regarded as the greatest novel ever written of Christian faith and doubt. It sold a million copies, but it is hard to understand what its mass appeal ever was, since even the intellectual Prime Minister, Gladstone, said he found it very slow going indeed. But what is even more inconceivable is that such a work, emerging as it did from the heart of Oxford's powerfully high-minded agnosticism, could ever have been written in Tasmania.

A very different kind of person to the austere moralist Mrs. Ward was Elizabeth von Arnim, author of *Elizabeth and Her German Garden* (1898) and many other books. She was born in Sydney in 1866 as Mary Beauchamp, cousin to Katherine Mansfield, and was removed to England as a small child. Later she became on her marriage the "Gräfin von Arnim," and went on to have an adventurous career in Berlin, London, Switzerland, France, and Charleston, South Carolina. H. G. Wells was one of her many lovers. On one occasion the two of them read a newspaper article by Mrs. Ward decrying modern sexual morals. As a riposte, in the open air, they "made love all over Mrs Humphry Ward," lying on top of the newspaper, and afterward they lit a match and "set fire to her."²⁰ This is surely one of the most curious collocations ever recorded of Australian expatriate life.

Down two such different paths might an Australian childhood lead a future author on the other side of the world. Other female examples of permanent departures in youth are "John Presland" (1885–1975), the writing name of Gladys Skelton (later Bendit), who left to be educated in London and Cambridge, and wrote biographies and guidebooks; Marian Allen (1892–1953), the children's author and illustrator; and G. B. Lancaster (born Edith Lyttleton, 1873–1945), the popular writer of romantic novels with colonial settings. Lancaster was born in Tasmania but was taken to New Zealand when she was six and went from there to England in her mid-thirties. (She lived in Tasmania again for a while in the 1930s, so is a marginal case.) H. B. Marriott Watson (1863–1921), the versatile novelist and editor, was also removed from Australia to New Zealand as a child, though his entire career was spent in England. Madge Garland (1898–1990), the lesbian *Vogue* fashion journalist, was born in Melbourne but was taken off to London and Paris in her early teens, in due course to build a formidable career as a professor of fashion design, as an adviser on clothes to Virginia Woolf, and as the arbiter of the New Look in the late 1940s. Richard Hillary (1919–43), author of the well-known war memoir, *The Last Enemy*, was Sydney-born but removed at the age of three. From Oxford he joined the RAF and was killed after suffering hideous burns in an earlier crash.

Once again, childhood departures can be a grey area, for there is no precise age at which involuntary removal turns into voluntary departure.

Colin MacInnes (1914–76), who became a cult novelist at midcentury, is such a case. He was English-born and sixteen years old when he followed his mother, the writer Angela Thirkell, back to London in 1930–31, never to return. MacInnes had been taken to Melbourne as a small boy on a commandeered German troopship repatriating diggers who had committed various military crimes like desertion, insubordination, and even murder. Indeed, one of MacInnes's first novels, never published but written around 1952, is set in Tasmania and has the memorable opening line: "On his fourteenth birthday Dugald was seduced, not unwillingly, by the aboriginal dustman." He wrote two other novels with Australian settings, one surprisingly sentimental for such a hard-boiled chronicler of louche London life—the lives of black immigrants and homosexuals—which he captured in *City of Spades* and *Absolute Beginners*. He soon lost all other connection with the country, in life and art. No doubt arises in MacInnes's case, but in others mere convention decides the issue. Henry Handel Richardson was eighteen when her mother took her two daughters to Leipzig with the intention, according to Richardson herself, of having them "finished." Her removal is not, perhaps, strictly definable as voluntary, but it would be absurd to deny her the label of an expatriate Australian author.

The second category, that of the visitor, is more clear-cut. Obviously those who arrived in London as tourists, or on business or family visits, are of no concern here. Some them stayed for many months, especially the kind of people, mostly well-heeled nonentities, whose movements were listed week after week under the heading "Australians in Europe" in the *British-Australasian* newspaper. ("The Rane of Puducota is wintering on the Riviera.") Such people were neither desperate to get there nor anxious about what they could make of themselves when they arrived, since getting a job, still less building a career, was not their object. There were some literary visitors who more or less fall into that category. Representative of one type is Mary Mitchell (1893–1973), daughter of a rich barrister and businessman. She wrote as a hobby until she had a first great success with the pseudodaring *A Warning to Wantons* (1934). She visited England repeatedly, sold most of her books there, and was a strong Anglophile; but she had neither the impulse nor the need ever to consider herself a candidate for expatriation.²¹

Another type is the visiting journalist, or the person on a world tour who had minor literary aspirations. Such people might well send back letters recording their travels, and on their return convert them into a chatty book for the delectation of those who would never make that trip of a lifetime. An early typical example of this class is a local government counselor, John McMahon from Melbourne, who visited London in 1889. Of course he was impressed by "the metropolis of the civilised world" as he pursued the usual tourist beat, obsessively recording the exact size of monuments and

rooms to the point where one wonders if he carried a tape measure around with him. He saw everything a tourist would try to see today, apart from the Crystal Palace. But it is interesting what he did *not* see, or at least did not see fit to record. He never visited the East End, and has nothing at all to say about the miles of slums, making only a guarded mention that, in a general way, "London presents a dingy, clouded and sombre view, and its smoke-besmeared houses give the colonist quite a depressed feeling." He kept his specific strictures for the West End shops and the theatres. ("In no case do they compare with our Princess.") London has to be seen, concludes McMahon, but you wouldn't want to live there. He and his fellow-visitors from Victoria, who between them have visited most countries, all concur happily one evening in the bar of the Langham Hotel "that there is no place like good old Melbourne."²²

Even after narrowing the definition of the literary expatriate by removing the children and the visitors, it is plain that we are faced here with the flight of dozens, at the very least, of the brightest, most stimulating, and most creative minds in literature, broadly considered, that Australia produced over the best part of a century. The extent of the loss—in numbers alone, without any consideration of the cultural impact—has never been properly assessed, but there are some misconceptions about it. Even so shrewd an observer as Jack Lindsay maintained in 1963 that "it is only in the last decade that the exodus of intellectuals has become large-scale and significant."²³ This is nonsense, as a computer-assisted trawl through the relevant biographical databases soon confirms. It is simply not true that the drain of talent as a phenomenon started after the Second World War, in the 1950s, when international travel became speedy and ever cheaper. It set in much earlier, though the data do not exist to say whether the ratio of the expatriate losses to the total population was lower or higher before or after the War, or how far the losses were balanced by an inflow of talent.

Considering the matter in the broadest terms of literary sociology and economics, there is no difficulty in identifying the largest push factor in literary emigration: it was the parlous state of the local market for writers right through this period. Making a decent living, even a bare existence, as a full-time author or freelance journalist in Australia was, notoriously, exceedingly difficult in the pre-Federation years and for long afterward, even for those whose work had met some acclaim abroad. There were the awful examples of local writers like Price Warung (William Astley, d. 1911), author of convict tales, whose wretched career was dogged by ill-health, low pay, and a morphine habit. There was Mary Fortune, an obscure scribbler of detective fiction for fifty years, who died blind, an alcoholic and impoverished around 1910 and was buried, bizarrely, "in another person's grave" in a place and at a date forgotten.²⁴

There were some exceptions in every decade. Edward (Ted) Dyson (1865–1931) beat the odds by carving out a career as Australia's best-paid freelance author-journalist of his time, making a phenomenal £600–700 a year by dint of his machine-like productivity. He supported a family of seven on it. A hard-headed ex-gold miner, Dyson studied the demands of every paper in the country as closely as others study racing form guides, and rarely received the long envelope of rejection. His *Fact'ry 'Ands* tales (1906), comic stories of young working women of the slums, use the same material as that being used by English Realists of the same period like Arthur Morrison, in his *Tales of Mean Streets*. They were immensely popular in their day. For fiction, even for verse, sales of tens, even hundreds, of thousands of copies were not absolutely impossible for local authors; they were just very, very exceptional. There was, of course, Henry Lawson. Jeannie (Mrs. Aeneas) Gunn published her bush tale *We of the Never-Never* (1908) in London without ever leaving the country, but still sold half a million copies or more. Rolf Boldrewood is said to have made £10,000 from his bushranger stories—but even they were all published in London. Dennis A. B. 'Banjo' Paterson (d.1941) famously made bush balladry pay for a 40,000-acre property near Yass, and C. J. Dennis's *Songs of a Sentimental Bloke* sold 66,000 copies immediately on publication in 1915. Steele Rudd's *On Our Selection* eventually sold a quarter of a million copies. Later the breezy, innumerable, undemanding bush-adventure narratives of Ion Idriess (1889–1979) and Frank Clune (1893–1971) made very acceptable livings for their authors.

But such cases were wildly unrepresentative. A far more poignant site of Australian authorhood, in those days, was in Sydney, at the *Bulletin's* bench in front of the accountant's office. It was there that some of the best-known contributors to the magazine queued on Saturdays, year in and year out, to hand in their cuttings as proof (a cunning device to make them buy a copy) before getting their checks for a few shillings or pounds. Payday was a social occasion. The short-story writer J. F. Dwyer used to wear his best clothes for that visit, around 1903, though he was actually making his living as a house-painter at the time. Such a sight might have been seen at any time over the several decades following. Douglas Stewart, who was literary editor of the magazine for twenty years from 1940, describes how, apart from the current luminaries of his own time, grey ghosts from the past like Roderic Quinn were still haunting the offices, more or less looking for a handout.²⁵

The rates of pay were never generous. Looking back from the perspective of 1920, the thriller writer Albert Dorrington reported that while he had been a contributor to the *Bulletin* (he had left for England in 1907, aged thirty-three), he had been writing, on average, five columns a week for the paper. His earnings were about £4. He reported that, from what he had heard, things had not changed much over the years: "The papers that pay

for accepted matter in Australia are few...and around these are gathered scores of clever scribes panting to give their life's blood for a little bread and cold type. The struggle to get a story printed is more terrible in Australia than in any part of the world." Dorrington was one of those who did not do that much better in England. He was not very successful, making a meager living over a long career before dying at Ruislip in 1953. Thirteen thrillers or so are his memorial.²⁶

The historian surveying the local opportunities in the decades just before Federation and for several after it might well be excused for wondering, not why so many authors expatriated themselves, but why anybody stayed behind at all. There was no dearth of creative talent potentially available for export. Considering the tiny population, an extraordinary number of Australians had a literary product or two in their bottom drawer. The *Bulletin's* literary contest in 1928 drew more than 500 full-length novels, and in 1937 there were 1,100 submissions to its short-story competition. The *Sydney Telegraph's* competition of 1937 for the best novel (won by Herbert's *Capricornia*) drew twenty-six full-length manuscripts, but after the war, in 1946, the same competition (won by Cusack and James's *Come in Spinner*) drew 380. The Australian literary milieu was energetic enough, but its energies were either bottled up or just ran off into the sand. It suffered from two great weaknesses. First, it offered so few of those useful supplementary jobs such as reviewing or editing, teaching or translating that for at least 200 years have kept the writer's pot boiling. English writers who did reviewing as a routine and necessary part of their living frequently complained that it was full-time work for part-time pay and absorbed too much of their creative energy. No such complaints were heard in Australia, because the opportunities to do freelance reviewing for any income at all were virtually zero.

Second, there was hardly any work to be had for the miscellaneous essayist or literary journalist working in the tradition of what the French call "high vulgarisation." What local magazines did exist that published literary or general-interest material could not pay much when they were swamped by imported productions like the *Cornhill* or *Punch*, copies of which in earlier times could be mailed out for one penny, a sixth of the cost of a personal letter. W. T. Stead pointed out from England in the 1890s that any Australian magazine of quality was likely to be stifled by competitors from London, because it could not possibly "be so cheap, so profusely illustrated, or so varied in its contents as its English or American rivals." Stead's own Australian endeavor, his *Review of Reviews* with sixteen pages of local material added to the London edition, lasted longer than most. It started in 1892 but folded with the outbreak of war in 1914.²⁷ The situation altered little over the next half-century. Certainly there were a number of weekly or monthly magazines, at different times, that used

freelance contributions, including serial stories and articles. There were about thirty such at the end of the 1920s: examples are the *Melbourne Leader* (1856–1957), the *Australasian* (1864–1946), the *Australian Journal* (1869–1962), the *Melbourne Review* (1876–85), the *Bulletin* (1880–2008),²⁸ *Dawn* (1880–1905), the *Melbourne Book Lover* (1899–1921), the *Lone Hand* (1907–21), the *Bookfellow* (1911–25), the *Triad* (1915–28), *Birth* (1916–22); *Home* (1920–42), *Aussie* (1920–31), *All about Books* (1928–38), the *Australian Quarterly* (from 1929), *Southerly* (from 1939), and *Meanjin* (from 1940). For the unsqueamish, there was the muck-raking *Sydney Truth* (1890–1958) or its editions in other cities.

These were the longer-lived magazines. Few survived for many years, and unless one had a post as a staff journalist, the idea of actually making a regular living writing for them was a matter for hollow laughter. When asked for advice on how to market poetry, Hugh Macrae, then regarded as a poet of some distinction, and a man of great good humor, could offer only the bleakest of responses. “I am enormously poor. I drive butchers and bakers mad; and I cannot see how any freelance journalist could benefit by anything I might have to say—other than this.”²⁹

Apart from the few magazines, it was the dailies and weeklies published in Sydney like the *Mail* and *Smith's Weekly* (1919–50) that encouraged, before the turn of the century, the emergence in that city of what small, coherent, financially viable literary culture the country possessed up to the Second World War. There was a small scene in Melbourne too, but that city had suffered its own kind of exodus of talent eastward and had lost the position it had held earlier in the nineteenth century as the literary capital. By the 1920s the days of its evanescent larrikin papers like the *Hawklet* and the *Free Lance* were long over. It had become, as Kirkpatrick puts it, “effectively a city of daubers, not scribblers.”³⁰ And if Melbourne was a distant second, then the other urban centers' contribution to organized literary culture was negligible to the point of invisibility. In the remote Perth of the 1920s, for instance, there was only one novelist of top quality (K. S. Prichard), no playwrights, no publishers, no poets to be taken seriously, and no literary magazines at all except for the university paper.³¹ It was (almost) Sydney or nothing. In that city, *Smith's Weekly* was in the 1920s what the *Bulletin* had been in the 1890s. It was well-known for its humorous articles and good poetry. Kenneth Slessor was on the staff, and for some time its editor. It paid its journalists and cartoonists generously: a startling £14 a week in 1927, which was an attractive salary if one were a fixture on the paper. *Smith's*, like the *Bulletin* earlier, was the center for the main vocal circle of literary people, loosely linked into an urban network of friends and enemies, allies and competitors, appealing to a large and catholic reading public in the bush and the cities, operating within what was generally a radical-liberal

political environment, but prepared to give almost anyone a hearing. There was nothing remotely like it elsewhere in the country.

But it was all very small beer, really. Hard though it is to credit, even A. G. Stephens, for all his power and influence as literary editor, never knew a moment's security at the *Bulletin*, being employed by the week on a wage at best half that of the head cartoonist.³² When he was away in England for seven months in 1902, he had no guarantee that his job would be held for him, even though he continued to supply plenty of lively material for the Red Page right from the heartland of English letters. For those working freelance, even in Sydney, opportunities narrowed remorselessly after the Great War. Frank Greenop's excellent *History* of these magazines tells the full story of the tribulations of their owners and editors, and his account of the undiminished optimism with which one new doomed magazine after another was founded only to fold months or a year or so later must be a matter of some wonder.

So, if anything, the pace of expatriation seemed to increase in the period between the Armistice and the onset of the Great Depression. For those bent on departure, no doubt, every decade felt like a uniquely dismal period in which to be left behind. No decade shows any noticeable shortfall in its quota of expatriates. But in the interwar years, the so-called dry years, Australia seemed even more of a cultural desert than it had been in the distant, and by then mythologized, 1890s. Writers, especially women, seemed to put about as much practical energy into planning their escape from the nowhere land, the land without any fertilizing tradition, as they put into their writing. Even more desolating was having to come back, as Miles Franklin did, in the middle of the Depression, because even in London she was unable to find enough of a market for her work to sustain her, as she was not willing to descend to out-and-out journalism. A Sydney journalist, Harold Mercer, noted sadly in 1929 that "the freelance life in Australia is certainly a hard one, and has not improved to any extent during the last twenty years. New papers have arisen and new rates (not commensurate with the increased standards of living) are being paid; but whereas, at one time, practically every paper had a welcome for the casual contributor, many of those who welcomed him have gradually shut the gate." Mercer claimed that in this worsening climate he had to write not just stories and articles for pay, but jokes, verses, sermons, circular letters, advertisements: anything. And he did. Mercer was certainly no slouch. He started to contribute to the *Bulletin* at the age of fifteen and by the time he died in 1952 he had more than 800 publications under his own name, and many more under a variety of wry pseudonyms, two of which were Harold Hardup and Percy Pawnticket.³³

Naturally, things did not improve into the 1930s, with the country mired in economic woes, or in the war-disrupted 1940s. Mercer's career overlapped

by about a decade with that of the formidable writing team of Ruth Park and D'Arcy Niland. After their marriage in 1942, the lives of this young couple over the next decade or more were marked by continual uncertainty, despite their total professionalism. Like Mercer, they wrote everything and anything: westerns, romances, comedy scripts, articles, and gossip columns. Though it is quite devoid of self-pity, Ruth Park's memoir of those years, *Fishing in the Styx* (1993), makes painful reading. The Park/Niland team worked as self-employed writers about as hard as it is possible to work at anything, yet in the 1940s they were barely making the minimum wage, and for a time were reduced to living in the slums among the poverty-stricken. At one point, at Collaroy, their baby asleep in its pram was stripped of its clothes by a thief. They wrote in *The Drums Go Bang* that "the chief character in our life was the postman, as he is in the lives of most would-be writers. . . . One morning nine manuscripts came through the slot in the door one after the other. They hit the floor with the thud known as dull, while we watched, too horrified to speak."³⁴ During this period they collaborated to produce 60,000 words a week, of which 15,000 might sell. Niland published about 500 short stories in Australia and several novels, including *The Shiralee*, but died young. Park's career, over six decades after *The Harp in the South* in 1948 brought her fame and a thousand pounds of prize-money, was one of unparalleled productivity in almost every genre. But in her early years of struggle, apart from some support from the ABC and other radio stations, there was nowhere to turn except the solitary typewriter. There were none of those "cosy hideaways," as Murray Sayle called them; no "long-haired papers" as the British knew them, supported by rich men or their wives more or less as a hobby.³⁵ J. F. Archibald, editor of the *Bulletin*, did leave a large bequest in 1919 to succor distressed journalists and earlier, in 1907, a Commonwealth Literary Fund was set up to help truly destitute authors, but it did nothing for their careers. There was no Australia Council, no Literature Board, no writers-in-residence awards. Rich Australians did not go in for the private patronage of authors. As for the universities, their eventually huge subsidizing role was entirely a post-Second World War phenomenon.

In the final period, that is to say the first few postwar years up to 1950, the rush away became a flood, especially as it included (so the future would show) more talented writers than ever before. Released at last from internment and in a more chastened mood after the war, "Inky" Stephensen told the young journalist Alister Kershaw, when he was about to leave in 1945, to go if he must, but to be sure to come back: "'Go and snuff up the stink of the old European corpse,' he urged me, 'but make it a *wanderjahr*. Then come back to the sun.'"³⁶ But Kershaw knew he would never come back, and he didn't. He spent the rest of his life freelancing in rural France, just getting by with odd jobs and turning out the occasional marketable title like *A History*

of the Guillotine, happy to be a New European even while his homeland was acquiring New Australians.

Kershaw, like the dozens of others who had preceded him to the Old Country, did not know when he took ship exactly what to expect or even precisely what he wanted, other than to leave his birthplace behind. Naturally people like him thought they heard the siren-call of possible prosperity and fame, but usually they had no reason other than their native optimism to expect such an outcome. Most of them were too young to have displayed much of a track record even in Australia, let alone anywhere else. Usually they were buoyed up by nothing more than the powerful sentiment—reinforced by their reading—that the greatest, richest, most populous city on earth *must* have something for them; something, at least, that would be beneficial when the seeker returned. There was the sheer ease with which one could move to the vast headquarters of the greatest empire the world had seen since the fall of Rome; there was the commonality of language and customs and citizenship, and the ability, if required, of camouflaging one's origin; there was the guarantee of excitement and novelty; the dazzling range of opportunity—potential, at least—for anyone who nursed the belief that their talents marked them out from the herd. "England,—London; huge and grimy, dear, old, hiving London, is the forcing bed for your work, my friend," Daniel Whyte is advised by a friend in a novel by Alec Dawson, as early as 1899. "The world's a flower-garden, and artist men and women bees. Home they fly and back they hum, to London town, their hive; and there the honey's made. . . . Home you go, my honey bee; the hive is waiting for the spoils; the queen sits ready with her laurel leaves."³⁷ Well, perhaps—for the talented and the lucky. At all events, in less flowery language this was the message repeated and absorbed by Kershaw and his fellows hundreds of times over the years. It became an article of faith.

CHAPTER 3

THE AROMA OF THE PAST: IN ANTIPODEAN LONDON

I don't know how or why it should be so, but indeed, with only rare exceptions, the great public of our land up north insists on the presence amongst them, at the beginning, of those to whom its favour is to be extended.... Yes, Mr Kestrel, London is the place for you; great, lonely, unique London, splendid and infamous, the beloved granary of all the world, that is the place where you shall win recognition for your children, born and unborn.

Alec Dawson (1900)¹

Arabs, when they make coffee, leave the old grounds in the pot, so that the aroma of past brews enriches the new one. I think it is this aroma of the past which catches Australians who come to Europe.

Martin Boyd (1961)²

REPRESENTATIONS OF LONDON IN AUSTRALIA HAVE BEEN MEDIATED FOR SO long by books, newspapers, magazines and, eventually, by film and television, that new arrivals tended to read it as a dictionary of quotations. It has been well said that, above all other cities, London is not just “a place”; it also “takes place” as it is defined and redefined in the countless versions of it over 800 years or more. And the bounds between the physical city and its imaginative reworkings, between presence and association, are indefinite and permeable.³ Nowhere was this more true than in the Australia of this era. From most childhoods there persisted into the adult consciousness the echoes of nursery rhymes and songs, the words of playground games, and the half-remembered phrases of primary-school teachers expatiating on the England of colorful history and legend. All educated young people consumed the

classic Victorian novelists, Dickens and Eliot, Thackeray and Trollope, and these masters' visions of the capital became part of their mental furniture. As the new century dawned, new visions followed. There were the bracing if often grim productions of the naturalist school, Gissing, Wells, George Moore, and Jack London, or those of the daring New Woman school; and later, those of the challenging modernists. All of them, in that great age of text, were read much more broadly and alluded to in common life much more frequently than any "serious" literary equivalent today.

Added to the mix, in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s, was a torrent of popular fiction arriving from England. By the 1920s a quarter of Britain's entire exportation of books was being shipped to Australia, and this continued for years on the same scale. The greater part of this cargo was certainly novels, because for many years from the mid-1890s on there were nearly as many novels being published in Britain as there were books of every other type combined.⁴ In 1930 London's publishers were said to be releasing ten novels *a day*, most of them forgotten within the month, but not before a good portion of the print run had been shipped overseas. In addition to the books, imported newspapers and magazines supplied an endless flow of serial stories, and hundreds more were reprinted in the Australian papers under then-new syndication arrangements. Some of the most eagerly read were those by expatriate authors who had made it their business to know what would most appeal to the stay-at-home reader.

The England of the imagination was so potent that any reference to it could be packed out with literary quotations and allusions that readers would readily accept as comprehensible and appropriate in almost any context. When E. J. Banfield, popular later for his accounts of beachcombing in Queensland, drew a picture of a Kent village in 1884, he described a cart casually as being "such a one as Barkis used to drive," and followed this allusion with a snippet from the *Canterbury Tales*. He assumed that any reader at home or abroad would automatically pick up the reference to *David Copperfield*.⁵ When the poet Mary Fullerton got to Dover as a permanent arrival in 1922, her first vision of the Kentish fields provoked, in a joyous letter, a riot of free association alluding to Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Hardy, Dickens, and Chaucer. At one moment she is reminded of Browning's heroine Aurora Leigh arriving in England by sea (possibly she had in mind the lines "Hills, vales, woods, netted in a silver mist, / Farms, granges, doubled up among the hills"); the next moment it is Tess Durbeyfield hoeing turnips, then the fat boy's trip to Dingley Dell in the *Pickwick Papers* is evoked, and finally it is the pilgrims of the *Canterbury Tales*.⁶ Fullerton was fifty-four, much older than the average arrival on a one-way ticket. Such an outpouring of allusion might look like mere posing, but considered more charitably perhaps it was a way of validating her decision to leave, a way of meshing herself

into a great tradition by blurring the division between life and literature. Merely to arrive in England, especially London, was to submerge oneself in centuries' worth of literary accretions.

Nor was it just overtly literary visitors, as Richard White has shown.⁷ Many amateur diarists were able to find a snippet of English poetry more or less appropriate to the bit of landscape, rural or urban, they were traversing. Their imagination had fed fat on the soggy clichés of romantic fiction, where England was "a land of dreams... with its flowery fields and deep cool woods... the spires of Stratford town... the daisy-covered fields where the larks rose singing." These were not entirely clichés, of course, especially in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Early visitors to the more prosperous parts of deepest rural England—Kent, say, or Sussex, before motor transport and commuting began to alter it—truly did see a magical, preindustrial landscape where the work of man and nature had been blended into a harmonious unity essentially unchanged for a thousand years or more.

And always, as a climax, there was waiting for them "the incomparable romance of London."⁸ Even quite sophisticated visitors saw London through the prism of literature. Guides to the capital took it for granted that they would want to and be able to. For example, a straightforward, quite mundane guidebook to London for Australians and other colonials (probably soldiers, judging by its date, 1916) alludes casually to the Temple as the place where Ruth Pinch first met John Westlock, leaving the reader to pick up the reference to *Martin Chuzzlewit*, which is not, after all, the most familiar of Dickens's novels.⁹ This was by no means exceptional. The *only* sight-seeing itineraries of any kind offered in the famous first *Blue Guide* to the city, used over many years by thousands of visitors, were "literary walks."¹⁰ All literate Australians carried some version of such a guidebook around in their heads. For the poet and journalist Jack Abbott, Leicester Square meant not only the grimy reality of 1905, but the fields where two aristocrats duelled in Thackeray's *Henry Esmond*. Even for Henry Lawson, not particularly well-educated, the city meant not so much the center of imperial trade, but rather Todger's, the lodging where the coach sets down Mr. Pecksniff and his daughters when they come to town, also in *Martin Chuzzlewit*.¹¹ When the journalist John Adey was asked for a few pages of personal "impressions" of the city in 1913, he started by quoting an entire sonnet by Wordsworth. He saw nothing peculiar in citing a poem written a century earlier about a London then one-sixth of its current size and viewed by the poet from the vantage-point of a bridge that no longer existed. Adey is blind to the irony that this vanished London is, in any case, a city that the poet himself is on the point of leaving, to go overseas. Indeed, his next comment after quoting Wordsworth at length is that this poem really had said all there was to say

about the London experience and he had little to add to it!¹² No wonder even the most nationalistic or philistine of Australians thumbed the pages of his poetry anthology, and perhaps nodded or frowned once more over Shelley's fervent if ambivalent sentiments, sent from abroad in a letter-poem to his friend back in England:

You are now
In London, that great sea, whose ebb and flow
At once is deaf and loud, and on the shore
Vomits its wrecks, and still howls on for more.
Yet in its depth what treasures!¹³

Once arrived at "that great sea" (and it was a far greater and more complex sea than in Shelley's day), the reactions spanned the full spectrum of feeling suggested by Shelley's expressive metaphors. For the ordinary tourist visitor with a full wallet there was no cause to fear being vomited out as human wreckage. London was a friendly enough place in the short term, and if one felt nervous about consorting with the natives there were plenty of Australians at hand, engaged in every kind of business and none; and that could be a relief because, by a well-known principle, the distinctive behavior of one's countrymen in London was somehow more tolerable than the same thing met with at home. Long before Kangaroo Valley and the Walkabout pubs of a later era, there were well-recognized meeting places for the homesick. There was an Austral Club in Piccadilly with Tuesday at-homes, and even a militia regiment, the King Edward's Horse, with an Australian squadron, accessible to any respectable, healthy young man with some free time and a wish for some mateship.¹⁴

For visitors and permanent arrivals alike, the largest social center for Australians in London over many years was the office of the *British-Australasian* weekly paper, which acted as a clearing-house, luggage store, and mail drop for all kinds of visitors. Founded in 1884 to supply news to investors and intending emigrants, it expanded its scope to matters cultural and social, and lasted under various names for about sixty years. In its heyday, under the long editorship (1908–42) of Charles Chomley, it was conveniently located in High Holborn, near and later inside Australia House. It offered at various times the Rendezvous club room, a travel agency, a library, weekly organized lunches at a nearby hotel (carefully pointing out to the uncertain new chum that "no tips" were expected), and even a literary agency. Generally conservative, rather snobbish and imperialistic in tone, its contributors were nevertheless of all persuasions. At various times they included Will Dyson, Spencer Brodney, Agnes Murphy, Vance Palmer, K. S. Prichard, Helen Simpson, and Martin Boyd. Although it relied heavily on

expatriates to furnish much of its copy, editorially the *British-Australasian* did not scruple to bite the hand that fed it. It took a caustic view of those who had come seeking fame. "Recognition in Europe is very hardly won, and... the vast majority who come to try for it only remain to lament their folly," is one of many warnings it issued.¹⁵ It was the *British-Australasian* circle that earned Barbara Baynton's wonderfully cutting label of "Dingo Dell"—meaning those who enjoyed clubbing together and playing out the role of the professional Australian overseas.

Before the Great War the *British-Australasian* circle overlapped with another one centered on the home of Henry Somer Gullett, an energetic, sociable journalist and later a politician, who specialized in encouraging migration. There was another circle specifically for writers, which met on Thursday evenings at the Royal Colonial Institute and perhaps continued into the interwar years.¹⁶ This was probably in some way the antecedent of the much later "Literary Group" that met in the basement of Australia House, which Peter Porter recalled attending in the early 1950s, itself probably the nucleus of the group formalized in 1952 as the Society of Australian Writers in Great Britain. (Later the final phrase was dropped.) Its first president was the immigrant classicist Gilbert Murray, and to start with it drew in most of the big expatriate names, especially those who had come over just after the war, though it degenerated after some years into a film club and finally disintegrated.

There were three other notable Dingo Dells distinguishable in London before the Second World War. One, early in the century, was a small group of journalists gathered around the *Pall Mall Gazette*, with its leading lights being Patchett Martin and its literary editor Marriott Watson from New Zealand. Australia always got a good press in the *Gazette* in this era. In the later 1920s a second Dingo Dell—by far the best-documented one—was based in Bloomsbury and Hampstead, and consisted of the Lindsay brothers, Jack and Philip, "Inky" Stephensen, John Kirtley, and later Brian Penton, with Eric Partridge briefly on the periphery. It was associated with the short-lived Fanfrolico Press, which published forty-six books in all, specializing, at least at first, in the more scabrous works of classical authors, put out in deluxe editions to evade the attention of the police and Customs. (Even as late as 1955, the Fanfrolico translation of *Lysistrata* was seized by the U.S. Post Office as "lewd, obscene and lascivious.") Via their Press, Lindsay and Stephensen jointly put out six issues of a magazine, the *London Aphrodite*, between August 1928 and July 1929. "We affirm Life... we affirm Beauty" it asserted in its first issue, crying "death to the deadliest moderns," and threatening to "draw blood even from the bloodless." T. S. Eliot and the "whining cult of *The Waste Land*" was one of its favorite targets. The most striking thing about the *Aphrodite* is its relentlessly swaggering tone. It

claimed that its mission was to drop a "spoonful of effervescent saline" into "the slimy and stale waters of 'post-war' Modernity." Apart from the editors, who wrote a large part of each issue themselves, contributions came in from Kenneth Slessor, Hugh McCrae, Philip Lindsay, Anna Wickham, W. J. Turner, Brian Penton, and Bertram Higgins. By the fourth issue, though, they were admitting that their "organ for the dissemination of our bad temper" was falling on deaf ears.¹⁷ The circle was riven by disputes over money, policy, and various personal rivalries, and finally fell apart when Kirtley returned home in 1927, Stephensen in 1932, and Penton in 1933. Three of this Dingo Dell, however, the Lindsay brothers and Partridge, became immigrants, fixtures for life in and around London, enjoying mixed fortunes as freelance writers and scholars.¹⁸

Finally, at about the same time, a third, much more private and domestic Dingo Dell was located in Kensington, consisting of the lesbian poet Mary Fullerton, her partner Mabel Singleton, and Singleton's business associate Jean Hamilton. Singleton and Hamilton ran a domestic staff agency for a living. Jean Hamilton had settled in London after some adventurous experiences. In Melbourne her elderly lover had been Walter Baldwin Spencer, a famous ethnographer and biologist. She accompanied him on field work to Tierra del Fuego in 1929, where, under atrocious conditions, he had died of a heart attack in a snowbound hut.¹⁹ In 1931 this little circle was temporarily expanded by the presence of Miles Franklin, then on the last of her London stays. Both Fullerton and Franklin helped each other conceal their identities under their respective noms de plume of "E" and "Brent of Bin Bin." Franklin had to return for good in 1932, but none of the others did.

But Dingo Dellery of whatever kind was of little sustained interest for those travelling on one-way tickets early in their lives, and who were planning an indefinite stay. They wanted to influence—or at any rate to penetrate—the native literary circles of London, not consort with their fellow countrymen by joining some coterie or hanging around the *British-Australasian's* office. Indeed, Louise Mack thought the influence of the *British-Australasian* was particularly pernicious. No one, she said, took any interest in it outside a small circle; nor had anyone heard of most of the people puffed weekly in its columns, and especially not the ones who rushed to its office with "pars" about themselves. The reality, she concluded bleakly, was at the date of writing (1902) not a single artist, writer, or musician, or poet ever mentioned in its pages had in truth risen above "the middle rank of innumerable English men or women of the professions."²⁰ Mack herself, once her novel *An Australian Girl in London* had appeared, never traded on her expatriate status ever again. She wanted to be exactly what she became: a productive, versatile, highly-paid, well-regarded employee of Fleet Street, whose origins, though never concealed, were simply irrelevant. Mack was

a woman who assimilated easily and apparently did not suffer from any psychological entanglements over the question of her own identity and her relationship to her adopted country—at least once she had started to make her way.

The adjustments were not so smooth for other expatriates. The prime metaphor for many Australians seeing London through literary eyes has always been the one Shelley, as an Englishman, does not use; that is to say, London as the Great Mother. It takes no great effort of cultural psychoanalysis to see the oscillation of feeling, the attraction and the repulsion, the love and hate, esteem and contempt, envy and admiration, as an oedipal conflict between mother and son. London is the eternal feminine, in all her guises, from finger-wagging nanny to devouring ogress. For Murray Sayle, "Britain is old, bent and stooped Mum; we think of her in super-ego terms, the ultimate source of our values, the nod of encouragement and the stern look of disapproval." P. R. Stephensen tried to exorcise her by references to "doddering old Grandmotherland," but it did not really work. How many expatriates did indeed yearn, overtly or covertly, for the approval of Mum or Grandma yet despised themselves for wanting it!²¹ More melodramatically, for Victor Daley, in his poem "When London Calls," the Great Mother appears not as a benign Grandma or Mum but as the deathly enticer, *la belle dame sans merci*, a tempter for the (male) talented and a seducer of (male) souls:

She sits beside the ship-choked Thames
With Sphinx-like lips apart—
Mistress of many diadems—
Death in her heart!²²

Daley's jaundiced inspiration here was the complete critical silence in England that greeted his collection of verse *At Dawn and Dusk*, something that outraged his colleagues, who valued his poetry highly. Daley took his own warning to heart and stayed at home. Others chose imagery to express their hope rather than their fears. For Miles Franklin's heroine Ignez Milford, stuck miserably on a Goulburn farm, London appears as a "mart for all outstanding gifts whether in the fields of science, art, learning, female pulchritude, or sport." It is a "big spider" that has "tentacles enveloping the globe, [and] sucked in everything of worth or otherwise desirable."²³ Spiders and tentacles? The metaphors are muddled, but the yearning is plain.

The spider-web analogy was worked out better by Arthur Adams (1872–1936), who was another of those highly prolific, all-round literary men of talent that Sydney produced in such profusion early in the century. Adams—poet, novelist, journalist, editor, playwright—was sent to China as

a war correspondent to cover the aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. He had officer status and was therefore allowed into a stricken Peking with the others for a day of sanctioned looting and rape. Adams surprised himself by his own moderation, returning to camp "with comparatively clean hands." After China he moved on to London, "careless and carefree," where at first he high-mindedly refused staff journalism, determined to make his mark as a poet and playwright. His savings dribbled away so quickly that he was forced to work out which penny sections on the horse-bus routes offered the best value in distance covered, so he could walk the others.²⁴ Three years of laboring as a hack freelancer gave him the material for *London Streets* (1906), a set of neatly turned poetic vignettes. In the opening sonnet, London is symbolized as a "vast grey cobweb" with at its center "silent and full-fed, / A spider, old, contemplative and wise!":

Ah, far from England float those filaments;
Weaving old wizardry they touch and claim
Tribute of souls from unseen continents!
In that Great Greyness prisoners they lie.
There, drawn by the great lure of that great name,
My alien heart, shrivelled and long sucked dry!²⁵

Ending up sucked dry in London's grey web was certainly a fate to be avoided; but, then, Adams knew there was the "old wizardry" he speaks of to compensate. For there was the sheer romance of the place. Like other great cities, but more so than any other, London could be a Camelot, a Mecca, a Vanity Fair, a Promised Land, a City of Dreadful Delight. Going there could be an Embarkation for Cythera, a voyage of sexual initiation or transformation: especially that, perhaps. Arthur Adams in *London Streets*, like many another before and since, bewails the ever-vanishing, ever-renewed alluring faces in the passing throng: "Each figure on the pavement is / A vial of untasted wine!" (Though perhaps not all the vials were untasted by Adams. Three Interludes between the poems, where humble work-girls—a seamstress, a bank clerk, and a "typewriter"—appear under the fanciful names of Atropos, Andromeda, and Eurydice, hint at more promising encounters.)²⁶

It is not that British society was necessarily more tolerant than Australia in its acceptance of eccentricities of ideas or behavior. In some ways it was less tolerant, especially when caught up in one of its periodic public fits of morality. It was the British establishment, as late as 1931, that hounded William Lygon, Fifth Earl Beauchamp, out of the country for his sodomitic indiscretions.²⁷ When Beauchamp toured Australia in 1930, it was thirty years after his brief and controversial service as governor of New South Wales, when he had been one of Henry Lawson's patrons. In 1930 Beauchamp's

final downfall was almost on him. Yet he was accepted by Sydney society, even though eyebrows were raised at the presence of a handsome valet who was very obviously his lover. Beauchamp was equally well-received there after his divorce, despite the frightful gossip that by then was following him from one place of exile to another. In 1932 he lived at Darling Point, in a mansion called Carthona, and engaged in various sporting activities, as well as admiring the lifeguards at Bondi. He returned in 1934 and 1938 and at some point acquired Australian property that he left in his will to one of his lovers. All this is the more remarkable as in between these stays Beauchamp, after five years of exile from England, had tried to return there for his wife's funeral, only to be turned back at the port of Dover after a warning that he would still be arrested if he so much as stepped off the ferry.

Beauchamp's downfall was not a consequence of his activities themselves, but of being found out and exposed by his political enemies. This was very exceptional: for most, London and its environs offered concealment. For the sexual escapist, exhibitionist, or entrepreneur London's anonymous, swarming multitudes supplied deep cover to all sorts of transgressive sexuality—promiscuity, homosexuality, adultery, incest, pedophilia—providing one were moderately discreet and respectable enough to pass unchallenged by generally deferential policemen. (Ten or so of the male and female Australian expatriates treated here were certainly or presumably gay on the evidence of their writings and lifestyle, but in only one case, or perhaps two cases, was it distinctly a factor in their departure and in no case did it have any public effect on their overseas lives.) As another immigrant, Joseph Conrad, puts it in another study of a different kind of exile, the terrorist, in *The Secret Agent* (1907)—and in this comment he is must be drawing a contrast specifically with Australia—London is a “monstrous town more populous than some continents” with room for any story, depth for any passion, darkness enough to bury any life.²⁸ Such was the dark romance of the great metropolis.

Mr. Verloc's seedy little shop in *The Secret Agent* has on sale the same sort of crudely printed wares that in real life would soon be emerging from the press of William Nicholas Willis (1858–1922), an ex-politician and cofounder of the *Truth* tabloid newspaper. Willis, after making Australia too hot to hold him, apparently abandoned his wife and six daughters and shifted to London around 1910, where he made a living on the edge of legality out of salacious literature. For material he turned to translations of Paul de Kock's novels and the short stories of Maupassant. One of his tactics was to spice up these texts by imaginatively expanding their racier portions. Another of Willis's lines was pseudomedical scare books on sexual diseases (*The Grip of the Venereal Microbe*) or tracts against contraception (*Wedded Love or Married Misery?*), which were peddled by semireputable publishers like Werner Laurie and Stanley Paul. Finally Willis, possibly with his son in

league, wrote and marketed peculiar paperback mixtures of sex and sanctimony telling of the perils and temptations lying in wait for innocent girls who seek city excitements. In *The Story of Lena, a Girl of London Town*, for instance, the descent of an incredibly naïve young Dubliner into semiprostitution is couched as a warning tract; but nevertheless it gives the young male reader, at whom it was really aimed, some knowing vignettes of gambling hells, drug dens, pimps' lairs, night-clubs, hot-bed hotels, and other scenes of sin. Willis survived in London for some twelve years and only once, it seems, got into a scrape with the law, and even then his name was kept out of court. An employee of Willis's publishing house, the "Anglo-Eastern Publishing Company," perhaps agreed to take the rap for some consideration. Unfortunately, Sir Chartres Biron, the magistrate, proved to be an admirer of Maupassant himself, and took a dim view of the gamey additions to the master's story *Une Vie*. (An augmented copy of this had been mailed to a punter, or possibly a police informer.) But the fine was only £10 with costs, a fleabite.²⁹ Willis was obviously a hypocritical rogue, but he remained immune because of his skill in confusing matters by recruiting the great and the good to his "causes." *Lena*, for instance, came with citations from a couple of bishops endorsing Willis's campaigns against the white slave trade. Whether they knew just what use was being made of their well-meant platitudes is unlikely.

A few years before Willis died penniless in a Lambeth slum, there turned up a very different controversial and colorful character ready to take even more profitable advantage of the relatively sexual leniency of the capital. This was Dr. Norman Haire, popular sexologist, birth control publicist, medical journalist, and gourmand, described by Ethel Mannin, a novelist and socialite who knew everyone in the 1920s, as the second most infallibly amusing person she had met in the course of a long and lively career. Eventually, though, she fell out with him, finding him a "monster" even by her broad-minded standards. Possibly this was after Haire had asked Mannin if she had tried sex with animals. "In response to my reaction of horror he asked calmly, 'Why not?' and added with an amused smile, 'They say you can train a peke to do anything!'"³⁰ For his own part, Haire was interested in women only as gynecological complaints or emotional problems to treat, though his bedside manner was excellent—and rewarding.

Haire was born in Sydney in 1892 into a Polish-Jewish family. There were eleven children, and Haire would tell audiences that he existed only because his mother knew nothing of contraception. He found his natural theatre in Harley Street after moving to London in 1919: in more than one sense, in fact, for he was fascinated by the life of the stage. As a youth he was an excellent amateur actor and reciter in Sydney and only trained as a doctor under family pressure. He hated his medical course, being far more interested in

literature and especially drama than any science. As with most expatriates, a mixture of motives propelled him toward England. An appointment he held in Newcastle went sour, and he longed to perform on a larger and more profitable stage. Also, years later, in a column on euthanasia, he claimed that his inability legally to cut short the suffering of his father, who was dying agonizingly of cancer, made him flee the family home.

The expense and risk of setting himself up in Harley Street was thoroughly justified when he hit a vein of pure gold with his promotion of the Steinach male rejuvenation procedure. This absurdly simple operation, which was just a partial vasectomy and could be done in minutes, was supposed to have a miraculous effect on aging men. Haire started to do these in 1921 and continued with them for years. He interacted with the British literary world in the most intimate way when he gave W. B. Yeats the snip in 1934 in an attempt to renew the poet's virility. Though the operation was quite useless, Yeats wanted to believe in it, and Haire could reasonably claim to be the foster-father of Yeats's great last poetic phase.³¹ Charging large fees for this, and for discreetly inseminating aristocratic ladies by donor, made him a rich man. They enabled him to pursue his sense of the theatrical in his consulting rooms by decorating them with lavish Chinese embroideries and silvered ceilings. There is a good pen-portrait of Haire by the novelist William Plomer, himself an exile from South Africa, in his memoir *At Home*, where Haire is given the mysterious pseudonym of "Zebulon Pood." Plomer met "Pood" around 1934 when he was in his heyday, and described his rooms in acidic terms:

It looked more suitable for the smoking of imitation opium, to the strains of *Chu Chin Chow*, being furnished in bad Chinese made-for-export style . . . the excessively carved furniture and screens, the joss sticks burning in a big porcelain vase before an image of Buddha, and the bronze sconces in the form of dragons, from the mouths of which dangled the dried and spiky skins of globe-fish, enclosing electric light bulbs.³²

Hugely fat—at the age of twenty-seven he already weighed 101 kg—with a long, white, flabby face, Haire was a familiar sight as he toured about town in the back of his Rolls-Royce. In a popular novel of 1929 he figures under the mischievous pseudonym of "Dr Saxon Locke." The name puns on "sex unlocked," and is a triple pun in fact, for Haire was a Jew, not a Saxon, and treated patients at the Lock Hospital, a venereal diseases clinic. In this novel he is described as "one of those people who do not care what they say or who hears them say it, provided it is what appears to them the truth. Further, he took a school-boy zest in shocking people. He began by shocking everybody: patients, people who met him socially, the secretary,

the door-maid—anybody within radius of his remarks.”³³ His startling indiscretion—he regularly served up the confidences of the consulting room as gossip for his friends—and his advocacy of total liberation for everybody gave the newspapers plenty of copy in the 1930s, and he never minded stoking the furnace, even when the more cautious advocates of birth control edged away from him.

Haire returned to Sydney just before the war started. As a Jew no doubt he feared the future, but he was also unwell—he had been diabetic for years. Spiteful remarks, however, put his departure down to cowardice. Back home he continued his practice profitably, gave radio talks, wrote an advice column in *Woman* magazine, and feuded with the NSW branch of the British Medical Association about using his own name in public debate. His *Woman* articles, which he tried to continue on returning to London, were informative, sensible, and popular, though Haire and the editors regularly irritated each other. Haire’s patience was certainly tested when his drafts were censored or otherwise interfered with, as for example when his word “urine” was replaced with “bodily fluid.”³⁴ On the other hand, Haire boasted publicly that his articles had doubled the circulation of the magazine all by themselves, which was untrue. He could be very naïve, as when he expected *Woman* to print a list of people who had contacted him privately about their sex problems. Some of them were identifiable personal names, as the editor pointed out caustically. Perhaps these various irritations spurred him to return to London after the war. He died there of a heart attack aged only sixty in 1952, leaving his estate of £30,000 to Sydney university and a self-penned entry in *Who’s Who* that he made longer than either Churchill’s or Bernard Shaw’s.

It is hard to know what to make of Dr. Haire. He was a curious mixture of showman and self-promoter, committed humanitarian reformer, and serious contributor to the nascent field of sexology. Unquestionably he did good work. He helped to found the first birth-control clinic in a working-class London suburb despite powerful opposition from religious lobbyists. He treated poor patients for free and took enormous trouble in answering privately the pathetic queries and pleas that arrived by every post from his popular readership. He lent his name to a variety of good if mildly eccentric causes, like the Dress Reform League, and at one midsummer revel of the League he appeared in shorts, an orange shirt, and Tyrolean braces: a daunting sight. But it is hard to credit that the large income accruing from his rejuvenation work did not cloud his awareness that his operation amounted to nothing more than a placebo and wishful thinking. He was not a conscious charlatan, but at times his money-hunger verged on the unscrupulous, as when he tried to persuade a hesitant patient who was suffering from fatigue to have his virility operation as soon as possible, offering to do it

on time payments when the patient said he couldn't afford the fees. And he could not refrain from regularly undermining his own credibility out of sheer love of fun and publicity. For a doctor to put his name as editor to a fairly serious *Encyclopaedia of Sexual Knowledge*, and then to list one of his contributors as "A. Willy," was simply asking for trouble, but Haire was too rich and too flamboyant to care about the effect on his professional reputation.³⁵ (A bookseller, though, was not so immune. He went to prison for supplying the same book by mail order.) All in all, Dr. Haire was certainly one of the weirdest expatriates ever to leave his home shores. In London he found a fit stage for his ambitions and lifestyle. For the urban romantic—and most Australians arrived in a romantic state of mind—Dr. Haire fitted the ambience of London like a glove.

Urban romanticism, though, rarely survived a prolonged encounter with the imperial capital as soon as one ventured beyond the precincts of Harley Street and the other select residential areas. Outside those, and beyond the tourist belt, most of London—notoriously unplanned, monstrously swollen by a century of jerry-building—was a spectacularly ugly place. That was true in 1880, in 1920, and, after the Luftwaffe had done its worst, perhaps truest of all in 1950. Literate Australians who grew up from the 1890s onward knew about it theoretically from the "abyss" literature of Jack London, Arthur Morrison, George Gissing and, later, George Orwell. Even so they were almost always taken aback by the gross actuality: the lack of grand perspectives, the weeping skies, the soot-stained buildings, the endless acres of squalor, the mudflats, and the miles of moldering warehouses along the south bank of the Thames.

And there were far worse human assaults on the sensibilities. Whatever the era of their arrival, it took time for Australians, who had seen nothing remotely comparable at home, to adjust to the rampant poverty, especially when they contrasted it with the shameless, flaring vulgarity of the rich. The gap between the haves and the have-nots was a matter of appalled comment, expressed in remarkably similar terms over a century and a half, from observers of every political stripe and none. The gap was exacerbated during economic downturns and wartime. The conservative *British-Australasian*, after detailing a lavish dinner menu at the Ritz in the weary closing stages of the Great War, ended with this sarcastic comment from the expatriate author of the article: "These notes will, we hope, put an end to the miserable suspicions entertained by the lower orders that the rich are better off than themselves in war time. If prices are high and food is short down your way, why not 'pig it' at the Ritz? As we were bowed out of the door we saw, under the arches at the front of the hotel, three old women huddled up in their rags for the night."³⁶ Of course, there were slums everywhere in Europe at this date, and long after; there were dreadful slums in the big cities

of North America; they were slums of a kind in Sydney and Melbourne; there were even, some dared to assert though they were howled down, slums in Adelaide. But somehow London's slums seemed worse than those in other European capitals like Paris, Berlin, or Vienna because the plutocracy flaunted its wealth in the face of deprivation with an ostentation that sickened onlookers. Its cheek-by-jowl glittering opulence and foul deprivation was unmatched anywhere else, in Europe at least. Its street prostitution rivaled the excesses of Sodom and amazed even Fyodor Dostoyevsky, no shrinking violet, who saw with his own eyes little girls being pimped in the Haymarket by their own mothers.³⁷

The spectacle and the squalor thrilled and horrified most visitors and many residents in about equal proportions. Three years after Dostoyevsky, in 1865, the South Australian novelist and sociologist Catherine Helen Spence (1825–1910) paid a visit at the age of forty, having been away for twenty-five years. She wrote, and published in a British journal, one of the earliest antipodean impressionistic essays, wherein she sounded a decorously pained chord much repeated later. "The contrast between the wealth and the poverty of England strikes [a visitor] with a strange feeling of awe," she lectured her readers, who probably needed no reminding, "when he compares the hideous slums of London with the miles of streets in which no one can live on an income of less than a thousand, two thousand, five thousand pounds a year."³⁸

Yet apart from low-key and transient bouts of disorder, there was no hint of real rebellion, let alone revolution. Most Australians could hardly credit the extraordinary tolerance—some called it the apathy—of the London poor. Alec Dawson's hero, Nicholas Freydon, when he first arrives in London in the 1880s, is stunned by the passivity of the slum-dwellers he lives among, in the face of excruciating temptation. Half-starved himself,

I have felt my fingers itch, my stomach crave woundily [*sic*], as I passed along a mean street in which food-stuffs were exposed outside shop windows; a practice which, upon a variety of counts, ought long since to have been abolished by law.

Oh, the decency, the restraint, and the enduring law-abidingness of London's poor, in the face of continuously flaunting plenty, of gross ostentation! It is the greatest miracle of our time. The comparative absence of either religion or philosophy among them to-day makes the spectacle of their docility, to me, far more remarkable than anything in the history of mediaeval martyrdom.³⁹

Why did the poor submit to starving to death or dying early of malnutrition when there was abundance on every hand, there just for the seizing by the desperate with nothing to lose? Nicholas Freydon has no answer; he can only

marvel at their tolerance. Nearly half a century later, the journalist Arthur Adams was still pondering this question, which he found even more puzzling after the intervening upheavals in Europe, especially in France. "Life for the poor is bitter: but there are no revolutionaries among the poor of London," he reported. He had no answer either why this should be so, except a shrugging "they accept their lot. They are suddenly content."⁴⁰ Others agreed with this, but preferred to draw a different moral. A. G. Stephens, Adams's predecessor as editor of the Red Page of the *Bulletin*, was more vexed than moved by the stolid apathy of the underclass. He arrived on a round-the-world visit in 1894, summed up the scene at one sour glance, and decided the British workman was happy to live as a brute: "Give him meat and drink, a wife to kick, and a little money for cards or so-called 'sport,' and all the fine democratic ideals may go hang."⁴¹

But when it came down to individuals, the docility of the poor masked more sinister tendencies. The idea that new monstrous metropolises like London were producing a hitherto unknown personality disorder, soon to be christened "anomie" by the sociologist Emile Durkheim, was not a new one. Dostoyevsky himself had produced the prototype, Raskolnikov, in *Crime and Punishment*. There is a more relevant version of the rootless, alienated, contemptuous urban intellectual who would be stalking through fiction from the end of the century onward. It may be found in a striking, if now forgotten, novel *Leicester: An Autobiography*, which originally appeared in 1885 while its radical young author, Francis Adams, was making a name for himself in Australia. It was issued by a very minor London publisher, almost certainly a vanity press. Probably it was first drafted as early as 1880, when Adams was only eighteen. He was well-educated, with a scholar's appreciation of classical literature. Before leaving for Australia he spent the years 1880–81 in Paris, trying to enter the diplomatic or the civil service and in the meantime learning about life and art, and after that he worked briefly as a schoolmaster. He arrived in Melbourne in November 1884, at the age of twenty-two, in a vain search for health—he was tubercular—and left again six years later. It was not a long stay, then; but Francis Adams liked Australian life, and Australians who shared his political views liked his style. He was a prolific contributor to the *Bulletin* and other papers, especially as an essayist on social themes and as an aggressively left-wing political agitator. Mortally ill, he returned to England, and a few years afterward his wife helped him to shoot himself in a Margate boardinghouse. He was still only thirty. Then, in 1894, soon after his death, Adams's first novel was picked up by the slightly raffish publisher John Lane, given a new title, *A Child of the Age*, and released as the fourth item in Lane's avant-garde "Keynotes" series of novels. An anonymous introductory note claimed that Adams had revised it at some point, though whether that was in Australia or after he

returned to England in 1890 is unclear. Certainly in some passages it seems to see London through Australian eyes.

If *Leicester* as originally drafted was really the product of an eighteen-year-old's imagination, then it is certainly a remarkable feat. Told in the first person, the young narrator has a brooding temperament, a high opinion of his own superiority, and a fine scorn for the ethics of the herd. But Bertram Leicester is really a naïve young man, unschooled in the ways of the world, and when he is cheated of his inheritance by his guardian, he is left to his own devices on the uncaring London streets. He takes a cheap lodging-house room, considers his resources, and responds like many another autobiographical author-hero in a like predicament:

I went in and invested in a pen, nibs, ink and paper. These were my weapons. Then proceeded on home: went upstairs: found my bed already made (which was pleasing): put my weapons on the table, myself in the chair and, tilted back, began to consider.

I had seen somewhere or other that Byron received £500 or so for his shorter pieces, "The Bride of Abydos", "Giaour", etc. There is, then, surely a good chance of my getting at least £10, or perhaps £20 if my book sells well.⁴²

Alas, Leicester finds to his surprise that books of poetry are a drug on the market. He contemplates suicide, but muses that even the price of a good dose of prussic acid is beyond him. This is typical of the tone of the novel, which is morbidly obsessive about disease and bodily secretions to a degree that revolted its reviewers. The *Graphic* described it as "filth for filth's sake" and the *Athenaeum* compared it with Zola, calling it a "nightmare of a book" with a "repulsive theme." Inevitably, it was banned by Mudie's and other circulating libraries.⁴³

Filled with frustration, loneliness, and a craving for revenge, contemptuous of his own weak spirit, both tempted and disgusted by the "wolfishness and glitter" in the eyes of the prostitutes who whisper to him in the streets, young Leicester is almost swept into an act of crazed assault as a young woman passes him carrying an umbrella, with her dress gathered up provocatively against the rain:

The devil rose in me. I made a short half-step after her. I would seize her, tear that thing from her hand, rip and rend her laced clothes: rip and rend them off her, till she stood tattered—naked, there in the rain of the half-darkness with me. And all I would desire more, would be to take mud and bespatter and foul her, and then turn and go on my way with laughter. The thoughts were lightning swift. I gave a cry of fierce-suppressed delight: stopped: and halted. *Was I mad?*⁴⁴

A good question. Fortunately the urge to rape and defile is deflected when Bertram is attracted by Rosy Howlet, a pretty young fellow lodger down on her luck. He gives her money when the landlady insists that it is time for her to go out and earn it on the streets. The chivalrous Bertram does his best to raise her to his own level, and it takes him a long time to realize just how stupid, selfish, and lazy she really is.⁴⁵ Later, when his fortunes improve markedly, Bertram and Rosy live together in some style in Paris, where they soon grow bored with each other. Rosy dies of pneumonia, releasing Bertram to start his adult life as a man of means, sustained by the fortune inherited from his guardian, who has had a change of heart.

For Durkheim, anomie was a leading cause of suicide; but, as in Leicester's case, it could also lead to rape or murder. Bertram Leicester is not the only half-crazed outsider stalking the streets of the great metropolis in fiction. Much more alarming, because more plausible, are the fantasies of one John Mason, the unemployed, starving, expatriate journalist and, one must assume, in some sense the alter ego of his creator, John Henry (Jack) Abbott, in his *Letters from Queer Street* (1908). Abbott was born into an affluent NSW family in 1874 and after having some local success with a set of Boer War memoirs left for London to build on his reputation. He probably stayed from 1902 to 1909. It is known that he published four books while there, and wrote for various papers; but he must have had, at least intermittently, an appalling time if these curious *Letters from Queer Street* are even partly autobiographical. The book consists of twenty letters written by Mason and posted at erratic intervals to a friend in Sydney. It is this supposed friend who is releasing them to the public, after Mason's death. Written with an escalating sense of despair, the letters offer somber vignettes of down-and-out life in London from an outsider's perspective.

The main conceit of the book is that "Queer Street," that is to say the condition of extreme poverty, is a physical address, though no postman ever deigns to call there. This is the "reason" why the correspondence from Mason to his friend is entirely one-sided. The writer is too ashamed of his condition to want to hear condolences from home. The early letters are full of *nostalgie de la boue*. As he tells his friend, "I must confess to some liking for the squalid and beautiful, sorrowful and happy, and altogether wholly hopeless and damnable place." Mason relishes the strange lore he has acquired, such as how one can enjoy a five-course dinner for a few pence by moving from one street-barrow to another, starting with periwinkles and ending with coffee. He learns how to write a really heartrending begging letter to susceptible people. He knows that it is just about possible to sustain life on three pennyworth of food, which buys a scone and a cup of cocoa twice a day. He knows where the freelancers retreat to, like dogs to their kennels, when the miserable day is over and "the last lingering hope of a 'par' or a

'story' finding acceptance is ended by the closing of the sub-editorial rooms, and drowned in the boom and crash of the [printing] machines."

It is then that they, like Mason (and, one guesses, Abbott himself at times), cross the Thames via Blackfriars Bridge to the frowsty lodging-houses to be found on the south bank, and select there a fourpenny, a sixpenny, a ninepenny or a one-shilling bed, depending on their means. The fourpenny beds are in dormitories of six or eight, and no one with any sense gets into the bed. You sleep on top of it in your clothes. One morning Mason wakes up to find a dead face close to his in the neighboring bed. But on many nights, lacking the resource even of fourpence, Mason wanders the streets or escapes from the sleet by sheltering under Hungerford Bridge. At one point he goes down to the Embankment to drown himself, but is saved when he is dragged from the Thames after plunging in to try to save a prostitute who has had the same idea. In the end he dies of tuberculosis, with a last plea to his distant friend—surely the weirdest plea ever heard in life or literature from an expatriate:

They'll plant me in some suburban cemetery near London. I'll rot. Most of my chemical constituents will have been added to the soil of England by the time you would be able to do what I ask; but, nevertheless, there would be some of me left, if only bones. Now, I would like you, old boy, to have my bones dug up and planted "on the other side." I want, if I can, to do a little "daisy-growing" in my own country. Pack my skeleton in a gin-case if you like, and chuck it down an empty mine-shaft; but, if you can, do see to it that I may decompose ultimately into Australian soil.

Presumably this last request was accommodated, for a valedictory "editor's note" says "John Mason was found leaning over the last unfinished sheet of this letter. He lies in Waverley Cemetery, Sydney." He was just thirty-five.

Although *Letters from Queer Street* made little noise in England, reviewers in Australia enjoyed its stubborn, pathetic humor, as well they might. The *Bulletin* specifically recommended it as an antidote to anyone who was contemplating trying their literary luck overseas, although at least two other quite lengthy reviews pointedly refrained from mentioning that Mason is an unsuccessful journalist.⁴⁶ And, interestingly, not a single reviewer drew attention to the most ferocious passage in a book that throughout is full of half-suppressed rage:

At those times I have been, and have frankly acknowledged it to myself, uncompromisingly homicidal. As I have trudged round and about the hard streets, aching and hungry, I have half amused myself—well hardly "amused", but diverted myself—by vain imaginings as to how I might run amok through London, and by curious speculations as to how long a run

I would have, and how much damage I could do before I was killed or taken.

I have gazed at the Monument, and pictured myself in the cage at the top with a magazine rifle and fifty cartridges. The clearing of those busy city streets would be a matter of minutes. How the shopmen and bank-clerks, and stock-brokers and costermongers, and cabdrivers and women, and louts and loafers would run for cover! And when the streets and thoroughfares were cleared, so far as they might be within my range, it would be vastly entertaining to lob some long shots westward that would drop, as bolts from the blue, in Fleet Street or Lincoln's Inn. With the sight up to 2,000 yards you could make yourself unpleasant to London over a wide area, and annoy it very much. A bullet would suddenly smite a man dead in Holborn, and no one would know for hours how or why he had been smitten, or by whom. Somebody down in the Commercial Road would stagger, and come down on all-fours on the pavement, and cough up blood, and Jew and Gentile would crowd round, and then panic, and then scurry into their holes like rats. The craft in the river could be livened up, and the bargees hustled, and windows of warehouses over on the Surrey shore punctured, and stray shots sent winging into houses more than two miles away. And then how the well-protected Londoners would howl for the police, and sent those decent fellows clambering up the narrow stairs inside the Monument to take me into custody. . .

It would be an exciting half-hour in the City of London, a very hell of a time. One could imagine oneself laughing at them, and singing out, "Dance, you devils! I've been hungry amongst you, and I hate you, and it's my turn now—damn you!"⁷⁴

These depths of anomie are presented disturbingly and presciently. The Boer War was a cruel war fought for dubious reasons and the first to introduce concentration camps, modern armaments, and guerrilla tactics. Its aftermath saw men return to civilian life who had been turned into embittered and even paranoid loners, capable of seeing perfectly innocent Londoners as "rats" and "devils." There were few controls over guns in Edwardian England. No one, of course, had ever heard of a posttraumatic stress disorder, from which Abbott was probably suffering. John Mason, a Boer War veteran like Abbott himself, well knows the power of a sniper at large in a city's streets armed with a semiautomatic rifle and telescopic sights, just as Joseph Conrad, at about this time, was grasping the power and the mentality of the nihilist suicide bomber in *The Secret Agent*. As for Jack Abbott, after he repatriated himself he remained a freelance writer, specializing in local historical fiction. He was highly productive over many years—one of his best pieces, for *The Lone Hand*, was a fantasy documentary telling of a Japanese invasion of Sydney, almost as good as H. G. Wells. But his career eventually slipped downhill as he became an unpleasant and dangerous alcoholic. By the 1940s he was being paid what amounted to a pension of £5

when he turned up each week at the *Bulletin* offices—with which magazine he was associated for more than fifty years—clutching yet another of his unusable stories.⁴⁸ He died in 1953 in a psychiatric ward.

No one, reasonably enough, rated highly the chances of being murdered in London by a disaffected, homicidal fellow-expatriate; but there were plenty of vigorously hostile literary reactions to the capital, especially from the pens of new arrivals after the first fine careless rapture was over. The social conditions, the climate, and the urban environment were all of them the objects of negative comment by virtually every Australian, visitor, and resident alike. There had, after all, been plenty of precedents in the comments of other visitors, American and European. That acute French observer, Hippolyte Taine, in *Notes on England* (1872) thought little of the public architecture, refusing to be impressed (not surprisingly, perhaps, for a Frenchman) even by Trafalgar Square: “That hideous Nelson, planted upon his column, like a rat impaled on the end of a stick!” But the miseries of a foggy London Sunday nearly did for him altogether:

A thick yellow fog fills the air, sinks, crawls on the very ground; at thirty paces a house or a steam-ship looks like ink-stains on blotting paper. In the Strand, especially, and the rest of the City, after an hour’s walking one is possessed by spleen and can understand suicide. The tall, flat, straight facades are of dark brick; fog and soot have deposited their secretions on these surfaces. Monotony and silence.⁴⁹

The Frenchman’s disdain found a reflection in many antipodeans’ reactions. Randolph Bedford (1868–1941), another of those larger-than-life characters who at various times was a journalist, a speculator, a politician, a novelist, and a newspaper proprietor, was in Europe from 1901 to 1904 looking at mining ventures and trying to float a company to raise cattle in the Northern Territory. In his splendidly splenetic and ironically titled *Explorations in Civilisation*, Bedford strides confidently about the capital, talking to anybody and counting no man his better. Thirty years after Taine, even Bedford in his vigorous and not oversensitive prime was driven half-mad by the sheer dreariness of Sunday in the capital, and the peculiar juxtapositions of social deprivation and high culture:

Sunday was even lonelier. My window was at the back of the hotel; and in the street below there was a small house, the baby of which wailed all day, and the mother of which drank all night and was murdered for two hours every morning for a week three hours before daylight. At least, she screamed “murder” for two hours of the period mentioned. And that house is but 150 feet from that literary fountain, the British Museum.⁵⁰

By the time Bedford turned up in London, another man of similar stamp, George Meudell (1860–1936), a shrewd, vulgar, nationalistic, well-travelled, and well-heeled stockbroker from Melbourne who claimed to have visited forty-eight countries, has been living there for a while, though not for business reasons. He was equally dismissive and more specific in his complaints. “From November to May, the climate consists of fog, damp and gloom in equal parts.... The fog is palpable, material, a very pall to body and mind. No drug in the pharmacopoeia is so depressing. The sun cannot penetrate the London fog, a canopy of smut, a shroud of soot. Then the fog’s hand-maiden, those furies—zero, cold, ice rain, snow, biting winds and mud! The third horror of London makes an uncomfortable Trinity—to wit the crowd of people. Noise, climate and crush.” There are good objective reasons for believing that London was reaching its nadir of polluted awfulness as the Victorian age drew to its close. Every day, a thousand tons of horse dung fell on the unsealed streets. Each year saw a new record in the millions of tons of coal burnt, which produced those nightmarish pea-souper fogs and streaked every building with sooty rivulets. Meudell was even more dismissive about the urban environment than he was about the climate. “London,” he said sweepingly, “lacks the grace of Paris, the dignity of Berlin, the beauty of Vienna, the cleanliness of Copenhagen, the quaintness of Stockholm, the majesty of St. Petersburg. London possesses the narrowness of Canton, the noise of Chicago, the vulgarity of New York, the crowding of Calcutta, and the filthiness of Buenos Ayres.” Certainly, when he left the first attempts at slum clearance had hardly started, though after his time the urban environment improved a little with each passing decade—until the Blitz. It was all too much for the footloose Meudell. His patriotic conclusion was that “Daily did I thank old Hoddle for giving Melbourne ninety-nine feet streets so we might have twelve feet footpaths.”⁵¹

But no one who had come across the world to be a writer was going to turn round and go back again just because of the murky weather, the narrow footpaths, the class-divisions, or even world wars. The pull of London was too strong for its less attractive features to figure very largely. The soot, the frost, and the smog lingered for decades, certainly up to midcentury, to the dismay of each new generation of arrivals. But initial impressions soon dwindled into toleration and then acceptance. Miles Franklin, exceptionally, went to Chicago when she left Australia, no doubt because, like one of her heroines, she had heard that America was a land of opportunity and egalitarianism, while “the beggary of London under its thin crust of paraded luxury and culture and snobbery was a nightmare.”⁵² But these words were written long after she had moved to London herself, for she found the city irresistible in the long run. Then again, the idealistic young Muriel Matters, who arrived in 1905 at the age of twenty-eight to try to become an actress,

hated the lodging-houses, the wailing street organs, and the whining beggars, but she perked up when she came under the influence of Prince Peter Kropotkin, the anarchist, who scornfully dismissed her stage ambitions and inspired her to become a social agitator and suffragette. She was most famous for padlocking herself to a House of Commons grille so effectively that it had to accompany her to Holloway prison. At any rate, she never left the Great Wen, dying at Hastings more than sixty years later.

Similarly, Jack Lindsay was briefly disgusted on his arrival in the 1920s by the ugliness and poverty. He could not believe he had been so taken in. "We had never imagined that men could live in such a dwarfed and sootied world. . . . The impact of London so depressed us that we did not dare to speak of it for days; above all we felt fooled and humiliated. To have come so far for this. . . along the kerbs were puffy-faced tarts with coats pulled tight round their fat legs." But soon he acquired an amazingly exotic girlfriend and was buoyed up by an acquaintance with the likes of Nina Hamnett, D. B. Wyndham Lewis, Peter Warlock, Augustus John, and the Sitwells, something that he recorded with considerable satisfaction. "I sat back, enjoying the scene from a remote distance, over a bellyful of beer. 'At last I have found my proper Hell', I told myself. 'Now I am at home.'"⁵³ Though this comment comes a little more than halfway through his autobiography, Australia almost vanishes thereafter. In all his long life Lindsay showed no interest in visiting the land of his birth, where despite his productivity he was virtually forgotten, and his perception of what life was like there had to rely more and more on second-hand impressions. That was more or less inevitable, but right to the end he stayed loyal and enjoyed lambasting new arrivals who jeered at the country they had left behind as though they were "superior visitors from Mars."⁵⁴

In 1902, twenty years before Jack's arrival, his uncle Lionel Lindsay, the artist, had taken a more philosophical attitude from the start, perhaps because he knew he was just passing through. (He found Spain much more congenial.) He met up with a journalist friend, Ernest Buley, for a roam through the London underworld. The black-bearded, stocky Buley was the ideal Virgil to escort the antipodean Dante through the nether regions. Buley was then in his early thirties and a recent arrival himself, having left Australia after a spell in Pentridge jail for stealing from the Mint, where he had been a clerk. They went to the music halls and then to a gay bar where a row of guardsmen in resplendent uniforms were sitting, looking to supplement their meager pay by traditional means. "Psychologists say it's the uniform," Buley tells Lindsay knowledgeably. "They're waiting for clients."⁵⁵ Mad on horse-racing, boxing, and gambling, Buley must have been struggling for his journalistic life when he took Lindsay around, and he was an unlikely candidate for success on his past record. But in coming

years he proved to be an excellent example of what London could do for the fast-footed miscellaneous writer who could turn his hand to anything. Biographies of Lord Clive and John Franklin, two books on Brazil—Buley saw no reason to visit the country to get his material for these—a dozen novels set on the race course or the football field, histories of the Anzacs, a three-year spell as the editor of the *British-Australasian* paper, and a staggering amount of freelance journalism produced at the rate of up to 35,000 words a week turned Buley from a jailbird into a respected member of the profession. But even the energetic Buley could not reconcile Lionel Lindsay to London, not after the poor but honest pleasures of Cordova and Seville. He wrote home disgustedly:

All factory hands and waitresses are amateur Phrines [prostitutes] and the great British Press and Public don't believe there's any vice in the land—vice as we understand it, undersized and impoverished life; these narrow hipped big headed girls with broken backs fill me with horror. In Australia there was no concept of poverty so degrading that it engenders disgust and what accentuates it is its close association with riches.⁵⁶

He fled to Florence soon after and unlike two of his nephews eventually returned to Australia.

The most common problem was that some literary Australians in England struggled for self-definition in both life and work. There were various ways of attaining it. In Mary Marlowe's *Kangaroos in King's Land* (1917), a blithe account of its young author's attempt to penetrate the British theatrical world, three struggling actresses suffer from an identity crisis as soon as they arrive. Pert Judy Mason declines to be labeled "a Colonial" and puts a potential employer right:

"I was brought up to think myself an Englishwoman, we all are, you know, but you soon put me in my place when I came over here."

"Really? How do you mean?"

"Oh! I am a 'foreigner' or 'from abroad', or 'not English'. So now I claim a title of my own. If I am not English I must be something, so obviously I am an Australian."

"Might I not mistake that for an aboriginal?"

"I think not. When you speak of Americans, you don't mean Red Indians."⁵⁷

But once she has got that off her chest, Judy Mason is quite willing to be taken for an Englishwoman. She just resents being patronized.

For those who were unwilling to contemplate such a merging of identity with the mother culture, an alternative reaction was to swing over and adopt

a pose of pugnacious provinciality that was by no means restricted to the vulgar tourist. Henry Lawson was one of the earliest offenders. During his London stay he wrote a few nondescript sketches on his impressions that are dreadful in their pointlessly aggressive nil admirari tone, especially as he was writing for London's middle-brow *Argosy* magazine. He finds the Thames is just a larger Yarra; the famed docks are "simply big dam arrangements of masonry"; the Bank of England would be better for a scrape down and a couple of coats of stone-color; the Tube is "about as hot as the centre of Bulli Tunnel, near Sydney, and good deal dirtier"; St Paul's "does not appear much more imposing than a big corrugated iron shed."⁵⁸ Such Bazza McKenzie-like utterances must have confirmed the readers' worst prejudices about philistine Australians. No wonder this chauvinistic drivel horrified the *Bulletin* at home, which called it "barely second-rate journal-work, destitute of life or power. One naturally hopes that he will recover and improve."⁵⁹ Unfortunately the *Bulletin's* prognosis of the start of a permanent decline proved only too true.

To be fair, other much more worldly visitors to London at much the same time as Lawson refused to be impressed either. The town planner Charles Reade, over on a visit, came across "a low prison-like building" sprawling across a square, whose "only adornment is a painfully small tower shaped like an inverted egg-cup." Few might recognize the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square from Reade's demeaning description; or Nelson's Column from some phrases about "an elongated jester's stick stuck into some blocks of stone."⁶⁰ Again, Randolph Bedford was disenchanted from the start when he noticed that the cliffs of Dover were not white as expected and as poets had promised, but "dirty grey." Then, as the train pulled into London Bridge station, his first glimpses were of factories "up to their knees in slime," fog that "smelled like bad coffee," and hawkers lining the Strand with "flayed" faces the color of red chilblains. London was a sad disappointment altogether. It struck him that the capital, indeed the whole country, was slipping into decline. For Bedford, as for others, the source of the decay was obvious. It was the fault of the Jews and the Asians. Echoing the casual anti-Semitism of the time, he proffered the usual clichés. The Jew has no nation; he is a "dirty, curly-nosed cormorant...picking up what everybody else throws away; and his horizon always bounded by tuppence." (Bedford's own horizons were pretty bounded by money too, though a lot more than tuppence, since he was in London expressly to raise a loan.) And then there were the Indians. There was a White Australia policy, snorted Bedford: where was the White Britain policy? Any empire that relied on a helot class for its labor was doomed to become decadent, he thought, and that was what was happening to the British Empire of which he was part, now that it was letting other races do its work for it. He found ample evidence for this theory

in the slothful behavior of the British women who came aboard his ship at Colombo. "Lazy and floppy and grubby with idleness" Bedford found them, demoralized by the idle life of the memsahib in the East and unwilling even to breed. They disgusted him: "Married women all them, but not one baby to three women. Instead they nursed dogs and cats, kissing the animals a dozen times a minute... these women are lower than the Australian gin."⁶¹ It persuaded him yet again that keeping out the "coolies" from his homeland was the only possible strategy. At the very least, it forced women to do the work nature intended them to do.

What all this amounted to was the Cringe Inverted: that is to say, defining a negative vision of London—cold, dirty, riddled with class divisions, and morally decadent—through which could be discerned a warm new Britannia, egalitarian and white, hard-working, progressive, cheerfully semi-pagan, home of true children of the sun. It gave visitors the moral authority, or rather the smug license, it has been wittily said, "to run a superior finger through the dust on a foreign window sill."⁶² This sort of horrified complacency set in well before the turn of the century and is a recurrent theme thereafter. The Cringe Inverted fills many a page of Louise Mack's *An Australian Girl in London*: "Here came men and women crooked all to one side or the other. It was terrible to me. Coming from my fair young country it seemed to me that these men and women, whom nobody even turned to glance at, were shouting aloud, 'Decay, decay!'"⁶³ The social reformer Catherine Spence did not like remembering what she had seen during her visit, and years later she was moved to find some fantasy resolution. Her novella *A Week in the Future* is a utopia where the heroine is magically transported from the Adelaide of 1888 to the London of 1988, where she finds a city transformed from the smoky metropolis Spence herself had found so dismaying on her visit some twenty years earlier. Miraculously, the population has fallen to just one million, and the horse has given way to the bicycle, but we do not discover what has happened to the missing five millions.⁶⁴ Have they given up reproduction or have they departed voluntarily for the colonies? Or is there a more sinister explanation? Either way, it is the future of London, not of Adelaide, that engages Spence's imagination. Although we are told comfortingly that "the mother-city of the van had not lost her historic glory through throwing off her surplus population," in terms of cultural psychology one detects a good deal of schadenfreude here. Spence's utopia is a way of punishing London for not having become within a hundred years the Socialist paradise that she had once thought inevitable.

As a fiction, Spence's utopia surely owed a debt to the Englishman Richard Jefferies's quite popular demolition-fantasy *After London* (1885), where the entire population vanishes to parts unknown and the capital subsides into a stinking swamp. The idea of literally cutting a decadent

Britain down to size was much relished by some Australians whose social consciences were less active than Spence's. Fergus Hume, of *Hansom Cab* fame, tried a variation on the theme in a novella, *The Year of Miracle*, of 1891. The "year" in question is the last of the nineteenth century, and things are in a bad way, according to the hero: "The world is getting overcrowded, and what with socialism, anarchy, war, famine, and Heaven only knows what... unless we have a great war or a great plague everything will go to the devil." War, though, is forever out of the question, for "military weapons have been brought to such a pitch of perfection that each nation is afraid of the other." This unfortunate assessment was a not uncommon sentiment at the time. However, in Hume's fictional universe, it is not necessary to wait for the guns of August 1914 for a little spring cleaning. Right on cue, a terrible plague sweeps the capital, accompanied by a minatory flaming comet. Millions die. Yet this plague is a cloud with a silver lining:

The plague had cleansed as with fire the slums of Whitechapel and the low parts of London of their criminal population, and seeing that only the strong and healthy were left, these were made to work. Idleness was not permitted to either man or woman; marriage between those weakly, either mentally or physically, was forbidden, and altogether the rulers of the people did all in their power to aid the development of the English race so as to abolish from their midst disease, crime, and poverty.⁶⁵

As a hard-working but barely successful expatriate, Hume can be excused for fantasizing now and again that a plague might come and sweep away not only the slums of Whitechapel but all those superfluous scribblers of Bloomsbury, thereby reducing the competition for such struggling exiles as himself. A good strong eugenics program with forced labor camps for the recalcitrant idle might work wonders too.

Another example of an Australian reduction-of-London fantasy—one much better written than either Spence or Hume, in fact—is *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire* (1890), by Henry Crocker Marriott Watson (1835–1901). Watson, who was born in Tasmania and died in Victoria, was a clergyman and only marginally an expatriate, but he did live in England in the 1880s. *The Decline and Fall* (whose American edition bore a subtitle "A Realistic and Thrilling Picture of London Society") opens in the Australia of a thousand years hence, in the year 2992. Much of the continent has become a garden paradise, with suitably futuristic technologies like electric cars and air travel. The young hero, William Furley, a new graduate, together with a small party of friends, decides to undertake a sea voyage to "the cradle of our race." International communications and geographical studies must have deteriorated badly over the millennium, for apparently

England is now an almost-forgotten backwater about which little is known in advance. On arrival, after their ship is put at risk by a thick fog, they find an England reduced to a series of villages. Even London is now a small town, with its people living a medieval kind of life amid the ruins of the metropolis, whose history is virtually forgotten. The citizens still have an air of "rude independence and freedom" ruled over by a Prince Albert, but what is left of the capital is modest indeed:

London lay before me—a small town, badly built; the streets narrow, and often crooked, still narrower alleys lying behind them. The houses were small, in the principal streets of only one storey, occasionally of two storeys; in other streets they consisted usually of but a ground floor, and in the alleys were wretched huts. The larger streets, however, were well paved with stone. Internally, the rooms, even in the largest houses, were small. A room 18ft by 21ft was considered large; and rooms of that size were rare exceptions. The population was about 10,000; but there were many villages within a radius of ten miles; altogether, the population did not number 20,000 people. The houses were usually built of a light-coloured brick; but the better class were of stone, taken from the ruins that lay beneath our feet—the remains of the London of old days.

Much of the rest of the country has reverted to a freezing wilderness with roving packs of wolves and wild boar, where the winter lasts for seven months. Interestingly, the climate change is said to be due to a shift in the Gulf Stream. Then, in a vision induced by a witch, or Sybil, Furley experiences firsthand just how the collapse of Britain has happened a thousand years earlier. The vision starts on London Bridge, and before him is a busy scene, "but inexpressibly saddening. The human beings—God's highest handiwork on earth—did not seem to consider that cleanliness and neatness and beauty were demanded of them. The great mass were hurrying through life without regard to those personal attentions which the high importance of human life demands."⁶⁶ The general tenor is conservative: the common people are being seduced by the chimera of socialism and are relapsing into scornful atheism and lax morals. As the centuries pass, more and more of the most enterprising people are emigrating to the colonies. There are strikes and bloody revolution. So passes the millennium, and the vision ends in the "present." Sadder and wiser, Furley and his party return thankfully to their antipodean paradise.

More muted, less melodramatic sentiments about the apparent decline of Britain into decadence had a long life among radical expatriate Australians, continuing right into the Depression years until prognostications of another global war made the collapse of civilization all too likely a prospect for the imagination to want to dwell on it. Such sentiments are first detectable in the

responses of Australians living in London in the years around the First World War. Even so level-headed an observer as Vance Palmer thought he sniffed decadence when he visited a show called "Wild Australia" at the Crystal Palace in 1910. He contrasted two English young women in the audience—well-dressed and refined, but very aware of their impact on men—with the ones in the show: "A dozen girls and men from the bush. The girls all brown with bare tanned arms and short skirts and tumbled hair" who stood in groups "talking in their slow, slangy way" in relaxed terms just as though a group of one sex or the other were talking separately. For Palmer, it was the Australians who were the more truly civilized, and he liked their style. But when we look closer, we see that Palmer's heroines are representatives of that stereotype, the Bush Girl, a personage who, so it has been argued, was the local variant of the English New Woman, with the latter's neurotic and sexually confrontational elements deleted. The Bush Girl had the vote already, which defused the suffrage issue, and was a mate; almost an honorary man. She was far from sexless, but in Palmer's picture the bare arms and short skirts signify equality, not sexiness. It is the coy Englishwomen who exude knowing sexuality, and as far as the young Palmer is concerned—it is not irrelevant that he is writing to his fiancée—that is precisely what points to the incipient decadence of the citizens of Home.⁶⁷

Such contrasting images of antipodean womanly virtue versus British decadence were particularly popular in the wearying end-stages of the Great War and tended to focus on the loosened sexual morality that it had helped to promote. In the penultimate year of the War, Frances Fitzgerald, wrote a clever short story contrasting British moral decay with Australian superior values. Fitzgerald, born Frances Elmes, was an expatriate: she had left in 1905, aged thirty-eight, to become a feminist journalist, the lover of the editor of the *British-Australasian* paper, Charles Chomley, and the mother of two of his children. She died in the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1919. In her story a stalwart, square-jawed Anzac with wound stripes on his sleeve is looking into an Oxford Street shop window for a present he might buy for his Bush Girl sweetheart at home. He is accosted by a young factory worker of eighteen who is teetering on the brink of prostitution (although we are supposed to believe her own assertion that she is not a "bad girl" who has fallen over the edge yet.) He tells her to leave him alone as he has already been rooked of all his money. Indignant at his rebuff and scorn, she offers to buy him a snack in a café, which he accepts. Over their tea and bun, he casts a critical eye over her cheap finery, superficial prettiness, and ingratiating manner, and calls her a fool who ought to stick to the path of virtue instead of trying to pick up soldiers. He admits he does have money, and pulls out wads of cash. He offers, when the war is over, to send her the passage-money for Australia where she can marry a decent man. She finds this,

reasonably enough, hard to credit, but when the waitress approaches she hesitates, then settles the bill herself. The implication is that she has taken the hint and will be preserving her self-respect. Perhaps one day she will be a Bush Girl herself, capable like the soldier's loved one at home of sticking a pig, rounding up a mob of sheep, and running a station. Thus the title of the story, "The Woman Pays," neatly inverts the usual melodramatic resonances of that phrase and gives it a quasi-feminist twist even while asserting the superiority of Australian (male) virtues. The subtext to the story is the decadence of urban—especially London—life, and the healthy simplicity of antipodean rural life. After all, it appeared in a journal that advertised every week government-assisted emigration programs aimed at domestic servants and farm laborers. Perhaps the story itself was intended to be a piece of mild propaganda to that end.

Extolling the merits of the Bush Girl stereotype was one way of pointing to the growing decadence of the mother civilization. Another way was to stress the charming, unforced, naïveté of the urban Australian young woman on her native soil contrasted with her buttoned-up northern cousin. There is a most entertaining passage in *The Australians*, Arthur Adams's bouncy, semidocumentary novel about Sydney, written after the war in 1920 but set in the months leading up to it. Adams, more than most, had mixed feelings about the mother country and thought he sensed a shift of moral balance from the ancient hemisphere to the newer. Like other such reactions after the war, *The Australians* promotes the idea that the Old World, from which so many positive values had flowed, was periodically subject to mad blunders and brutalities that Australia, as a young nation, should refuse ever to be drawn into again. The country's appalling war toll threw up all sorts of theoretic solutions as well as some admirably practical ones, like its long but ultimately futile labors to make the League of Nations work.

Just as Rosa Praed, Alice Rosman, and other expatriate authors had done before him, Adams spotted that there was a market in feeding the appetite of an intrigued British audience eager to learn about new manners and mores emerging across the world. In this novel he takes the viewpoint of Madge Harpur, a prim young Englishwoman on a visit, and what Adams lets her see of Sydney womanhood may well have sent many an amorous young Englishman who had survived the war in pursuit of an emigrant passage. Madge first runs across that new species, the "Australienne" in the street, and it is through her eyes that the reader sees the undisguised, joyous sexuality of these young women:

They looked. She was clad almost diaphanously. A low V showed as much of her neck as one would see in the lowest cut ball gown; and beneath the interstices of her thin costume there peeped provocatively pink *bébé* ribbons.

Her arms were revealed by the thinnest of loose *crêpe-de-Chine* sleeves; her legs were shapely in silk stockings. And so thinly was she clothed that as she walked Madge's eye could almost see the muscles of the body beneath. Certainly the girl had a figure that was worthy of this partial nudity.

And then the girl, serenely unconscious of the glances of the passers-by, and giving back to the men who stared at her cool, non-committal glances, stepped across into the street. The afternoon sun was behind her. Madge got her second shock. For against that brilliance the girl seemed clothed in no more than a night-dress; she wore practically nothing—or else things of the flimsiest—below her skirt. The silhouette of her straight and beautiful legs was etched against the dress.

"It's—it's indecent!" Madge gasped. "She ought to be arrested. She's practically unclothed."⁶⁸

But very soon Madge is shooting the surf at Manly with the best of them, in her "Canadian" bathing suit with its thigh-covering legs surreptitiously cut off as short as one could get away with. It was about this date that the Beach joined the Bush as a new component of Australia's self-image. It stood for all that was youthful, optimistic, and innocently hedonistic. Meanwhile, in the corrupt Old World, a pointless war looms. So who is the truly civilized, and who the decadent?

In certain critical circles patronized by both Australian natives and expatriates, decadence was assumed to be the fault, not just of the conditions of modern life but, specifically, of modernism. In these circles the ideology of modernism, especially literary and artistic modernism—so important and respected a movement in British and American culture—was taken to be both a partial cause of decadence and a response to it. When even such a nonconformist as Norman Lindsay saw postimpressionist painting for himself in Paris in 1910, he was baffled. He thought it was simply a bad joke, an absurd betrayal of everything European aesthetics stood for. Of course, not everyone felt this way. When Arthur When (1897–1971), a Rhodes Scholar who left in 1920 at the age of twenty-three, became the librarian at the Victoria and Albert Museum in Kensington, a post he occupied for the next forty years, he set himself the task of collecting every article ever printed about Picasso, such was his admiration for the modernists—he was a friend of T. S. Eliot and Herbert Read. On the whole, though, it is a curiosity of Australian cultural history that it was not conservatives like Martin Boyd who were the first arch antimodernists, but rather the young Turks of the 1920s like Kenneth Slessor and Jack Lindsay and P. R. Stephensen. Certainly these younger men looked forward to a new Australian Renaissance (as promoted by themselves) but they saw no place in it for the likes of Picasso in painting or Eric Satie in music or

Eliot in literature. Wildly bohemian they may have been, libertines in fact, but their literary touchstones were the ancient classics, the Elizabethans, Nietzsche, and Blake. The Fanfrolico circle in London railed against modernist art in their short-lived *Vision*, a magazine that in other respects was taken to be outrageously avant-garde by the tiny handful who read it. Stephensen, the prime neo-nationalist and later quasi-fascist, thought the fashionable novels of Aldous Huxley, D. H. Lawrence, and Evelyn Waugh implied decadence, and the modish, frozen pessimism of Eliot's *The Waste Land* proved it. The young Stephensen had no doubt about the way things were tending, nor what, ideally, ought to be done about it. In 1929, during his London residence, he reported in his *London Aphrodite* magazine that it made him feel "homicidal" when he looked at the "wan faces" reading their newspapers in the Tube:

If this massed paleness and vacuity is what civilisation has brought man to, by all means let civilisation be destroyed. It seems to me inevitable that such will be the conclusion, sooner or later, of all kindly persons endowed with the faculty of observation and thinking. There is a hunted and miserable, a caught look, about these pale creatures trapped in the mechanical whirligig. Better destroy them, to put them out of their pain.⁶⁹

Stephensen seems to have had enough of London by the next year. In his autobiographical novel *Clean Earth* of 1930, which deals with the expatriate lives of three Rhodes Scholars, a character refers to the people of London as "sewer-rats." (The title refers to the longing of Stephensen's fictional self for Australian bush life.) London was still inducing anomie, or dreams of mass murder, at this date: shades of John Mason, up on the Monument with his semiautomatic rifle and a good supply of ammunition, laughing crazily as he fantasizes about taking potshots at the scurrying vermin below. Six years later, by which time he was back in Australia, Stephensen was predicting that the populations of the two countries would be equally balanced at twenty million each by the end of the century, maintaining that "nothing less than a new and exclusive industrial invention, comparable with the steam engine" could possibly maintain Britain's population at 45 million, which was the current figure. (Australia's was then under seven million.) Like Spence, he did not explain where 25 million people and their offspring were going to within sixty-five years.⁷⁰ However, what now seem eccentric views about a future drastic subsidence in England's population were very common in Australian thinking of that time. It would be absurd to ascribe the novelist Martin Boyd's opinions wholly to those of his character Paul Brayford, who is an arch-reactionary who thinks Western civilization started to go downhill with the French Revolution; but Paul's beliefs about English decadence,

though extreme, do echo one of the key themes of *Lucinda Brayford*:

"When [our export trade] ceases to flow the monstrous cancer they [the businessmen] have grown on our country will die, our vulgar empire will disintegrate, the surplus population will migrate or perish and England will become itself again—small, agricultural, aristocratic, a possible *terrain* for a true indigenous culture."

"All your schemes of government involve such enormous cemeteries," said Lucinda.

"Nothing to the cemeteries there will be when your government of business men has bungled us into another war."⁷¹

Paul, like Boyd himself, would have thought it vulgar to engage in practical politics or in any sort of public debate at all—though he is appalled, as a true aristocrat, when his young relative Stephen refuses to fight for his country. But armchair speculators like Stephensen had no hesitation in offering, quite seriously, the most sinister remedies for his readers' consideration. For example, he concluded his *Aphrodite* piece with the airy sentiment that "the re-building of civilisation we can safely leave to those who survive the catastrophe." From this it is obvious that he was contemplating, or fantasizing about, a program of forcible positive eugenics or even compulsory euthanasia.

It should be stressed that such sentiments, and such solutions, were by no means restricted to antipodean oddballs with reactionary opinions. Similar eyebrow-raising passages could be quoted from Englishmen and women, or from their fictional mouthpieces, who politically ranged from the far Left to the far Right: from George Orwell, Aldous Huxley, H. G. Wells, Virginia Woolf, and D. H. Lawrence. (Indeed, it was just these same beliefs about European decadence—his own beliefs, in fact—that Lawrence gives to his character Somers, in *Kangaroo*. For both creator and character, Australia was supposed to be a fresh start.) Apocalyptic visions of global breakdown for one reason or another were seen round every corner. Fears about biological or economic catastrophes were so common that a recent historian calls his book on the interwar years *The Morbid Age*. Drastic solutions to combat the forecast collapse are found everywhere among the intelligentsia in the 1930s. Christina Stead, over from Paris on a visit in January 1932, noted, as Spence and Stephens and Adams had done long before her, how "amazingly and heartrendingly phlegmatic" the working class seemed to be, at a time when millions were unemployed. But more than that, London appeared to her as "Dickensian," turbid, "well worth seeing, rich, but full of decay." "When I looked at London from my upstairs windows in the Grosvenor I was astonished to see that great London looked like a smoking garbage heap,

so dark, smoky and unlighted it is; and so it is now in affairs, and socially.”⁷² Was it not ripe for destruction? Her vision might have been a precognitive glimpse of the Blitz, then ten years in the future. Such gloomy sentiments were voiced less often as the 1930s advanced, as the likelihood of ultimate catastrophe grew closer, and as people in Europe and Australia alike began to think of themselves as living through days no longer describable as “post-war” but, ever more frighteningly, as “prewar.”

CHAPTER 4

DRAWING OFF THE RICH CREAM: THE STRUGGLE IN LONDON

This is an appalling country and interesting beyond all measure.

Will Dyson (1903)

Every one of any note born to us, by the centralisation attendant upon imperialism is drawn off to London like the rich cream leaving only the plain milk beneath.

Miles Franklin (1929)

There is nobody and nothing to whom the Australians are less merciful than somebody who tried to make it in Europe and didn't make it. And they don't even let you know that they're not forgiving it. They're like seagulls pecking a sick seagull; they want to forget about failure.

Robert Hughes (1984)¹

THE RICH CREAM OF MILES FRANKLIN'S SIMILE IN SOME CASES MAINTAINED its sweetly luscious quality in England, but in others it turned out to be just skim milk after all, or else the vinegary life of the metropolis soon curdled it. Franklin herself knew this very well. She found no real literary success herself in London, and permits the authorial voice in *Cockatoos* (speaking from her own experience) to strike a conspiratorial note, with a warning of a deliberate censoring of bad news from the capital. "The facts about those who starved in the Big Smoke until the hat went round to generous compatriots to send them home," says the narrator darkly, "were not in the Sydney newspapers and did not weigh against the successes."² Perhaps so, but there was always room in the newspapers for yet another report on that most acceptable and uplifting trajectory of the expatriate: the longing to leave, the

confused arrival, the temporary disillusionment, the struggle, the slowly rising fortunes, the moderate or great success: in short, the good news that the game plan had worked. The fewer the initial prospects, the more unlikely the ascent, the more the stay-at-homes were eager for the details.

In 1906, for example, there arrived in London James Francis Dwyer (1874–1952), a would-be thriller writer. Here was a story to gladden the heart of anyone planning their departure. Refusing to be put off by what he heard beforehand, Dwyer took the plunge after being released early from Goulburn jail, where he had been serving a sentence of seven years for forgery. He armed himself with references from *Truth* and the *Bulletin*—both of which considerably refrained from mentioning jail—and had even sought the advice of Rudyard Kipling before leaving. Kipling was not encouraging. The great man advised Dwyer that “this country is chock full of men who are in the same business” and therefore to stick to his own land, or at least to keep a return ticket up his sleeve.³ Dwyer ignored Kipling’s advice, but when he arrived the usual dismal realities intruded themselves soon enough. He met a grizzled veteran in a pub who repeated what Kipling had said in more colorful terms by telling him that the streets of London were cemented with the heart’s blood of men who had come to be writers. He advised Dwyer to take the next ship home, dropping his stories overboard en route for the mermaids to read. Fortunately the tough, pugnacious Dwyer was made of sterner stuff and threw London over in favor of America. There he was soon getting ecstatic notes from editors such as most authors can only dream of. Within five years he was getting \$300 from *Collier’s* per story—stickily sentimental stories in the O. Henry vein seemed to go down best—and within ten was able to negotiate an advance of £1500 for his latest thriller. As his own letterhead announced proudly, he published, apart from his thrillers, more than a thousand short stories in the course of a long and affluent career. Nothing among all this work has stood the test of time, which probably would have neither surprised nor depressed Dwyer.

The mermaid anecdote is one of the many tales in Dwyer’s lively *Leg-Irons on Wings*, a gossipy memoir written at the end of his career, in 1949. Amusing and by no means complacent in tone, its early pages are a good example of the literature of the “struggle in London,” a distinct genre in Australian literature and a perennial favorite that is still not extinct today. Struggle literature takes the form of novels which are semifictional and semi-autobiographical in varying proportions; or alternatively it can be structured as a memoir, usually one that has been semifictionalized or romanticized to some degree. The most stereotypical form is a brightly written, breezy narrative by a young person tasting freedom and adventure for the first time, who is prepared to do anything to force the metropolis to yield them a writer’s living. There are numerous examples, for it was natural for young expatriates

to mine their own experiences of the capital in their first creative attempts, just as it was natural for those who eventually found success, like Dwyer, to write upbeat memoirs looking back on their early difficult days. (Finding memoirs from those who failed, however, is a different story.)

A classic of the genre, mentioned earlier, is Philip Lindsay's *I'd Live the Same Life Over*. When he finally followed his brother Jack to London in 1929, his account of his first two years there, written long afterward in wartime, gives a wonderfully vivid, if sentimental, picture of what must have been in the 1920s the experience of quite a few would-be writers who are now lost to history. It was a ramshackle, harum-scarum *vie de Bohème*, redeemed by friends—some rich and generous, like the expatriate dilettante poet Rupert Atkinson, but mostly themselves penny-a-line scribblers like Blasco Owens—always ready with a sofa, a beer, and a “loan.” Lindsay arrived in London penniless except for two shillings that a kindly priest had given him on landing, and at first had to resort to the doss-house in the crypt of St. Martin's in Trafalgar Square and, for tobacco, to picking butts out of the gutter. He spent some miserable weeks ranging up and down Fleet Street, like so many before and after him, being turned down by one editor after another as his little collection of cuttings grew dirtier and more ragged by the day. But eventually he made good with his many historical novels and a couple of film scripts based on them. He moved on the fringes of the film world for a while, earning, for example, £125 as technical adviser during some legal dispute over Alexander Korda's *The Private Life of Henry VIII*.

Like his brother, Lindsay he kept his shoulder to the wheel and mostly forgot about Australia for years at a time, but when his first marriage failed all his money went on drink, women, and self-destructive behavior on an heroic scale. Eight years after his arrival he had an attack of pleurisy after a week of binge drinking, yet he still managed to finish *The Bells of Rye* in bed while, according to his cousin Peter, the doctor sought quotes from an undertaker. He was living at the time in a cottage in the center of Rye, a small, quiet town unused to bohemians like Lindsay and his friends. “I personally saw you that weekend but you were so drunk you did not recognise me,” wrote his infuriated landlord. “You have during the past fortnight behaved with your friends in a disgraceful manner, you say you do not do certain actions such as vomit in the joint passage between your house and the next door neighbour, that it is not you who passed water out of the window but your friends. . . . You say you have no money and can't pay your rent, yet you have sufficient money to collect around you a set of undesirable and drunken companions. You shout and use filthy language and disturb decent living citizens round about.”⁶⁴ Ejected from the cottage, he was seriously ill again in May 1938 and hospitalized with a complaint he described

as "Heart. Too much booze and drug. Income tax." He continued in the same humorously defiant vein:

Ever since Jeanne's exit I've fluttered from wench to wench & as I disdain all but attractive ones it is an unbelievably expensive joy. But worth it. Well here I am, fucked, burnt & boozed out in a L.C.C. [i.e., a public] hospital taking green sedatives, white pills & injections of Vitamin B... Strange. Death's the one thing we can't conceive, we all have the idiotic feeling that we at least, the unique I, are immortal.⁵

Lindsay did continue to live until after the war as though he were immortal. He moved to another cottage in Beckley, also near Rye ("Like a true dog I return to my vomit") and from here he issued recklessly open-ended invitations to antipodean visitors to "Come whenever you like and stay as long as you like." Douglas Stewart of the *Bulletin*, who took up such an invitation, remembered him in print as "rather puffy and wrinkled by the time I met him, fair-haired, jolly, eager and cordial, with the typical Lindsay merry blue eyes and ready barking laughter; careless of money; and a mighty and most dissolute bohemian." In private, though, Stewart thought he was probably a mere shadow of what he had been once.⁶ Lindsay was keeping up a bold front, but the shades were beginning to gather. By this time his boozing companions were reformed or dead, and after a tedious day at the typewriter, he wrote to his old friend R. D. Fitzgerald, he was good for nothing but sitting in the pub and dulling himself with bad beer until bedtime.⁷ Also he was quarrelling with his brother over politics—he thought Jack's continuing blind adherence to Communism was by now absurd—and, ironically, with his own daughter Cressida over her erratic private life.

Despite the squalor, the illnesses, the benders, and the bailiffs, a book of his appeared almost every year from the 1930s to the 1950s, covering most historical periods. He wrote a number of potboilers too, some under pseudonyms, sending one of these, *The Iron Duke*, said to have been written in ten days from the film script, to his cousin "on condition you never read it." It was the medieval and Tudor worlds with their violence, sex, and color that most fascinated him. His obituarist in the *Times* said his books left little to the imagination, especially when he chose a congenial topic like the Great Plague, and a friend said admiringly that his wife had turned vegetarian after reading the torture scenes in *Here Comes the King*, the most successful of his stories.⁸ He shared the phenomenal productivity of his father and brother but not their longevity. He was only fifty-two when he died in 1958. His journalist cousin unfortunately did not write the memoir of him that he planned to do, but his brief pen-portrait captures the man: "A lovable, irresponsible, untidy, dynamic personality of tremendous enthusiasms;

a machine-gun conversationalist, completely devoid of class-consciousness and utterly lacking in property sense." He was capable of writing 10,000 words in a day and kept not one copy of his books.⁹

One of Lindsay's many drinking companions was the rough diamond Jack McLaren (b.1884), who had turned up in London in 1925, already middle-aged but determined to do better with his tales than he had done in Sydney, where he had published one racy novel and a stream of small contributions to the *Bulletin*. McLaren's own *Struggle* memoir proves he certainly had plenty of material in his head at the time of his arrival. Born the son of an eccentric minister in Melbourne who preached on street corners, he had had an adventurous time: he had wandered around the Pacific and had spent a lonely eight years on Cape York running a coconut plantation before moving down to Sydney in 1919. His experiences had given him a great collection of characters and anecdotes, and if his own account is true, he had little trouble getting his breezy yarns into print.

Like many another, he was initially impressed, on arrival in London, by the sheer number of publishers and magazines filled with stories of the sort he felt he could write. He lived in Chelsea, still a low-rent suburb in the 1920s, in an old fish-and-chip shop whose walls were covered in murals produced by an artist who had swapped his work for fish to feed his dog. McLaren had an unexpected struggle at first, being overwhelmed by the exuberance of the material around him. Used to solitude, he found "there was more colour and adventure in London than in all of the South Seas: more of drama in a busful of people going along the Strand than in all the beachcombers, cannibals and the rest that I had known." Certainly he tells of some curious incidents with a Hatton Garden jeweler, a pickpocket, and a hangman—if his memoir is to be believed. McLaren produced book after book, selling the film rights of one for hundreds of pounds but scraping just £35 for another. "Commercially, writing was assuredly a queer enterprise, queerer even than quaint business by which at times I had lived in the South Seas—trading by barter," he mused ingenuously. "There seemed to be no way at all by which the worth of an accumulation of words called a book could be computed."¹⁰ McLaren's twenty-odd books, most of them adventure novels, gave him some sort of a living, and he did more travelling. It is unlikely that he ever reconciled himself to urban life in Britain, and said he never wanted to own more than would fit into a suitcase; but he is another good example of a mediocre author who, given the richer and more varied outlets available in the metropolis, could just about make a tolerable living. During the war he worked on government publicity, and in his last lean years he wrote scripts for the BBC before dying at Brighton in 1954 at the age of sixty-nine. His is one of the many grey semisuccesses of expatriation, more skim milk than rich cream.

Careers like McLaren's, Lindsay's, or Dwyer's were not to be sniffed at by those who hoped to emulate them; but they pale in comparison with the tiny few who could reach the most profitable levels of the popular market for fiction. Their rewards in England could be truly princely. Rosa Praed, born in 1851, was the first native-born Australian author to carve out a lucrative career in England as a novelist of a higher grade. A daughter of the Queensland squattocracy, the critical turning-point of her life came when her husband sold up his dismal outback island property and took her to London. She was still only twenty-five when she took to the pen and published the first of her many novels, soon gaining an influential place with her Anglo-Australian fiction—which amounted to about half her output—and associating on equal terms with the likes of Sir Richard Burton, G. A. Sala, Rider Haggard, Madame Blavatsky, Browning, and Andrew Lang.

Despite the burden of a miserable marriage and a tragic private life, Praed was a consummately professional author. As soon as she got to London she started to exploit the advantages of her situation. She was the first real talent to understand the virtue of catering simultaneously for the different curiosities of both an Australian and a British readership. As far as the former was concerned, she understood that fiction could be produced and consumed not only as entertainment but also by supplying guidance about the social *mores* current in the wider world (meaning, usually, the upper reaches of London life). In her first novel, *An Australian Heroine* (1880), Praed brings to London a girl raised on a Queensland island in much the same condition of innocent seclusion as Miranda in *The Tempest*, except that her father is more of a Caliban than a Prospero. Although the naïve young heroine Esther Isherwood is taken into the cushioned, high-society world of her uncle Sir Emilius, Praed makes almost all her English characters snobs and egotists, especially Esther's husband, George Brand, who is a boor and a brute. In Esther's first bewildered and excited response to London, on the drive up from the docks, Praed offers the reader some small ironical contrasts between primitivism and civilization, no doubt based on her own recollections on arrival:

As the cab passed beneath Ludgate Hill Viaduct, a train went crashing overhead, and the poor little savage, accustomed to the desert solitudes of Mundoolan Island, could not repress a shriek of excited terror. . . .

The houses now looked loftier and more uniform and decorous. The yellow leaves from the trees in the squares fluttered down upon the street. Barrel organs ground mercilessly forth the popular airs, which were all unfamiliar to the ears of our little barbarian, and a gipsy woman sang "*Ah ché la morte*" in a cracked voice, beneath one of the tall houses in the quiet street; Esther noticed that a servant in livery came to the door and chucked her a penny, bidding her contemptuously "be off".¹¹

But this is a romance, after all—Esther and George eventually learn mutual tolerance—and even at this early point in her career Praed had learnt to keep her touch light. She never forgets the prejudices of her readership in both countries. In her next, sociopolitical, novel *Policy and Passion* (1881), set this time in Queensland, her heroine, the daring and dissatisfied Honoria Longleat, is offered a cigarette by the dashing Englishman Barrington. Should she accept it? She reminds him that in Trollope's novels ladies do not smoke. Is Trollope, she asks flirtatiously, still a better guide to feminine behavior at "home" than the fashionable but dubious heroines of Ouida? Barrington reassures her solemnly that things have moved on since Trollope's day, but she still declines the cigarette even though she is the daughter of the premier and out there in the bush there is no one to see.

Episodes like these taken from her first novels were introduced quite consciously. Praed knew exactly what she was doing. She sets out her stall in the preface to *Policy and Passion*, by asserting that the educative role of novels—her novels, at any rate—cut both ways. Any "Australian of the second generation" can learn all they need to know about British society from her novels, she says; at the same time, she aims to provide the same insights for British readers by "penetrating to the hidden sources of thought and action which govern the lives of his colonial brethren."¹² Which particular thoughts and actions she had in mind were sufficiently implied by her title: sex and power. It was a shrewd approach, pulling in a new audience of English readers who were intrigued about what those unbuttoned colonials got up to. With a promise like that, Praed's debut was assured. For the rest of her career there was always the slight whiff of the risqué about her books, to the point of causing her publisher a few anxious moments. When success came, as it soon did, she cast off her husband and set herself up in a luxurious house heated all year round to Queensland temperatures, with a potted wattle by her desk. "The whole scale of experience was hers: youth and beauty with lineage, joy, wealth, success," the admiring Miles Franklin said of her.¹³ No doubt Praed, the professional, was aware that the ability to write novels as social guidebooks to Australian modes of life was a wasting asset for the immigrant writer, which is what she became with the passage of time. Always ready to move on, Praed later, in the 1890s, made another successful corner in lady-like mystical romances, serving up time and again a witches' brew of vampirism, Theosophical doctrine, demonic possession, spiritualism, mesmerism, and other assorted gothic thrills that met the appetite of a large class of almost exclusively female readers. She died at Torquay in 1935, leaving £7,000.

In the next generation, Praed's remarkable success partly overlapped with, and was nearly matched by, the achievements of a transplant from Adelaide, Alice Rosman (1882–1961), who arrived on the London scene

in 1911. Rosman started out as a workaday journalist and editor, but she worked hard at romantic fiction and by the late 1920s had gained an immense international readership, allowing her to slough off her origins entirely and become the grande dame of a Bloomsbury salon. Like Praed, she began her career with a couple of Anglo-Australian novels with upper-middle-class settings, which retain a certain curiosity value today for the ingenuity with which they address the sensibilities and taste of readers in both countries. In her first attempt, *Miss Bryde of England* (1915), she pits a starchy, humorless young Englishwoman against the bohemian Norths, a cheerful Australian married couple, much to the advantage of the latter. Jim North has given up journalism to try to make a mark as a novelist and is finding it difficult. Another character says of the Norths: "People don't make a living writing good novels without a big struggle, and these two are facing that struggle now,"¹⁴ but Rosman herself advanced quickly in her understanding of her readership. Her next effort, *The Tower Wall* (1916), has a more complex plot and climbs several rungs up the social ladder. The opening scenes are set in patrician Adelaide. Julien Archer, the heroine, is the daughter of the state attorney-general. Even in the Adelaide of 1916 there must have been rather few teenage boys who addressed their father as "Pater" and whose young friends refer to officials as "wretched minions"; but presumably this is the milieu British readers wanted to see explored by antipodean novelists who had settled among them as Rosman had done. In this respect, and unlike Praed, who really was a product of the squatocracy, the tone of authority Rosman projects is quite factitious. She did not come from such a milieu herself. She was the daughter of a small-town accountant, and started her career by supplying Adelaide's gossip to the *Bulletin*.

When Julien Archer joins "the yearly exodus from the great young Continent over the seas"—every good Australian, we are told, is born with a wanderlust—she goes to live as a paying guest with a celebrity novelist, Frances Cowle, who lives in some style in Lavender Gardens, Knightsbridge. Certainly the daughter of an Adelaide politician suffers no social descent in such a lodging, for this lady's house is an "index, not only to material prosperity but to a high and fastidious taste." An example of this fastidiousness comes when, as mistress of the house, she forgets to "dress" and goes down to eat just as she is: a serious lapse of etiquette, even though she is dining alone. The excuse is that she is in a state of high emotion. The emotion is due to her being reminded that she is, in fact, Miss Archer's mother, thanks to a series of implausible deceptions dating from Julien's infancy.

Exactly like Rosa Praed, Rosman is adept at expressing just the right degree of scorn, where appropriate, to amuse without alienating readers in either hemisphere. She allows her heroine to be mildly contemptuous of the

leisurely “changed atmosphere” of her new English companions and relatives, who talk much but do little:

She came from a land where the man who is not a worker of one kind or another is regarded rather with suspicion than otherwise. Here, among the people with whom she had found herself, work seemed to be something alien and mysterious, to be avoided at all costs. She had believed Penelope’s father to be a scientist for instance, but she found this in reality meant that he spent an occasional day at the British Museum when he could spare time from his club.

For this reason, scornful Julien is attracted to the energetic Mrs. Cowle, and anticipates that if one knew her better “one might actually see the wheels go round.” Later she tries to do her bit to keep the wheels of the economy turning with a little light secretarial work and teaching in a working-class club. But of course the conventions of this sort of fiction mean that she is really waiting to get an offer from the right man, and criticism of the idle rich of Britain is kept muted. Julien is permitted to be quietly amused at her aunt’s claim that “everybody” leaves town in August. (“Julien thought of the crowded streets and smiled, but did not seek enlightenment on that point. It was one of the things she had learned in self-defence not to do.”) Yet we have already been told without apparent irony that, in Adelaide, each summer, Julien’s family moves to the cooler hills “with the rest of the world.”¹⁵ Truly, the British world is all one, in the imaginations of Anglo-Australian society novelists like Rosa Praed, Alice Rosman, and (later) Martin Boyd; just as long as one puts aside nine-tenths of its population.

Praed and Rosman were shrewd, professional authors, but their novels never rise above competent storytelling. Their readers did not expect them to. And yet the task of explaining Australia to England and vice versa was one where the expatriate experience could produce some surprises. In the 1930s one memorable contribution to this genre came from the unlikely pen of Angela Thirkell (1890–1961). At first sight Thirkell might well have been expected to produce high-society Anglo-Australian romances in her turn. She came from an extremely well-connected, affluent literary-artistic family, headquartered in Kensington—her relations included Kipling and Barrie; her father was a famous professor and her grandfather the painter Burne-Jones—but she left it all behind when she followed her Tasmanian second husband, a Gallipoli veteran, to Australia in 1920. Although Thirkell cut something of a dash in Melbourne society, her snobbish, malicious nature and High Tory attitudes made any real adjustment to the workingman’s paradise impossible. (She was heard to express the view, in piercingly upper-class tones, that the country was tailor-made for warrant officers.) After nine

years of the suburbs, and with her nascent literary ambitions unfulfilled, she used the same expedient as many another bored married woman for whom Britain meant escape. She set sail on a "holiday" and never returned. Once back at home she became famous for her light social comedies of upper-middle-class life and dismissed Australia from her thoughts: with one notable exception.

Thirkell had an eye for Anglo-Australian manners just as keen as Praed and Rosman before her, if rather more superficial; but she made up for that with her delightful wit. She used this devastatingly in her satirical account of a nightmare steamship voyage, *Trooper to the Southern Cross* (1934), which purports to be the memoir of Major Tom Bowen, an Australian army doctor who is returning home after the war. Bowen, who is obviously based on Thirkell's husband, is a man by nature sardonic, kind-hearted, decisive, practical, and honorable, but at the same time unimaginative, boring, philistine, and insufferably patronizing towards his put-upon English wife Celia. Thirkell imitates the idiolect and attitudes of his particular type of Australian at the time of the Great War wonderfully well. Or, to be more exact, she mocks the colonial stereotype that was then receding into history. Only occasionally does she go too far, as when Dr. Bowen mentions a swimmer at Bondi who is "a bit upset" when his "legs were nipped off by a shark." She must have learnt much from the Grossmiths's *Diary of a Nobody*, for her own Major Bowen in *Trooper* surely owes a good deal to the innocent, complacent clerk, Charles Pooter, in the *Diary*. In particular, Thirkell's technique of abstaining from the slightest hint of authorial commentary is very similar to the Grossmiths's. Her method is suggested in her treatment of Major Bowen's indulgence in what Thirkell detected as a national obsession with tomato sauce. He thinks little of the English product, and Celia (whose voice is never heard) soon falls into line:

Celia got me a bottle of sauce, and we had chops one night and some nice fried steaks of fish the next night, and what with that and the bacon and eggs at breakfast, the bottle was soon finished. So we had to get some more. Celia soon got the hang of it, and she makes it herself now, and it's nearly as good as the Mater's. My Aunt Minnie at Potts Point is a splendid worker, and she gave Celia some lovely bits of crochet work she had done. There was a cover for a tea cosy, and some doilies for cake, all beautifully crocheted, but the best of all was a white crochet cover for the tomato sauce bottle. You put the bottle in, and pulled it tight round the neck and tied it with a piece of ribbon, and it had the words "Tomato Sauce" worked into the crochet. I must say Celia did appreciate it enormously, and she put it away for fear of getting it dirty. So Aunt Minnie worked her two or three more. They can be boiled with the laundry on Mondays, and just give that artistic touch to the table that I like. And Celia deserves it all. She is the best little pal a man could have.¹⁶

No wonder that this small masterpiece is said to be admired by Barry Humphries. Thirkell's dissection of the Australian character seen from an English perspective is very different from Praed's or Rosman's, but it survives better than either.

As these various examples of literary success spread across six decades attest, there was no recipe for rising to the top in literary London other than native talent, a thick skin, the shrewdness to spot an opening in the market and meet it, and, underpinning all, a capacity for relentless, solitary work. But there were guidebooks, or books that might be read in that way by the optimistic who wanted to tread the same path. Two interesting examples are expatriates' novels that appeared in London in the same year, 1899. They are *Daniel Whyte*, by Alec Dawson, originally an emigrant to Australia, and *Love Made Manifest*, by Guy Boothby, born in Adelaide. Both are undoubtedly autobiographical, and both offer sobering yet ultimately uplifting accounts of their heroes' determination to elbow their way forward despite the competition.¹⁷ Each one takes the reader by the hand from the very dockside after the disorientating arrival. Boothby's hero Claude de Carnyon has spent fifteen years in Australia writing books and plays and painting pictures without being noticed very much—the narrator is very bitter about this. It's time to move, and the destination is obvious. At the age of thirty, he scrapes together the money for a London "campaign." The position of Dawson's Daniel Whyte is a little different. He has been in London before so knows his way around, but his problem is that he has arrived with only £9 to his name. The first need for both men is for a room, and both direct themselves to the obvious quarter:

Now if there is one part of London, north of Oxford Street, which to my mind is more depressing than another, it is that little bit of Town bounded on the top by St Pancras Station, on the south by Russell Square, on the east by the Foundling Hospital, and on the west by Tottenham Court Road. And perhaps of all the dingy thoroughfares that here abound, the most depressing, dirtiest, and dingiest, is that dignified by the magnificent appellation of Great Coram Street. Here there is absolutely nothing to cheer the eye.¹⁸

This is, of course, the heart of Bloomsbury, the haunt of struggling penny-a-liners clustered around the incomparable resource of the British Museum Reading Room. Bloomsbury by then had become what Fleet Street had been in the previous century: around this time it was being described colorfully as "the present home of temperance hotels, dipsomaniacs, demi-reps, swell mobsmen, unrecognised genius, the great middle rank of theatrical folk, coloured missionaries, students, maiden ladies, pug dogs, the irrepressible organ-grinder, and decayed gentry."¹⁹ For a "second floor back" room over

a ham-and-beef shop, Whyte lays out £8 in advance, nearly all he has. The room is a "fairly lofty apartment, panelled all over in dark wood, narrow and ill-lighted, though its two windows were tall," and for his money he gets "all found" (presumably all his meals, attendance, and laundry) for two months.²⁰

Bloomsbury may then have been the grimy home of the eccentric, the alcoholic, the morally dubious, and actors down on their luck, but it was no slum. As time went on some arriving Australians could no longer afford it, and had to find their lodgings in the East End, or move northward out to Holloway or south to the scruffier parts of Chelsea. For even by the turn of the century, when these two fictional impressions are set, Bloomsbury was starting to rise in the world. In 1902 the artist Lionel Lindsay was impressed to find not only that a polite policeman on the beat there could tell him instantly where to get a good clean room, but that such a thing was available close to the museum for what he thought was a reasonable eight shillings a week. He might have run into Louise Mack, who was even then living round the corner in an attic in Keppel Street. Eight shillings was, in fact, quite expensive. A room in a genuine slum could be had for half that. When another trio of artists arrived in 1909—Will and Ruby Dyson, and her brother Norman—they moved on quickly to more modest quarters. By then Virginia Stephen (Woolf) and her siblings had set up their salon in Gordon Square, putting their stamp on the area forever. Certainly Bloomsbury still had its mournful streets, described in 1908 as "hideous, dingy repetitions of a depressing initial pattern."²¹

The streets were still the same streets twenty years later, but by then the atmosphere was quite transformed. They now housed tolerably well-off new arrivals of literary bent. The future archaeologist Gordon Childe lived in a Bloomsbury clubhouse in Cartwright Gardens for five years from 1922, perhaps the same one that Christina Stead would be living in six years later and that she used as a setting in *For Love Alone*. Childe lived there while trying to find employment as an archaeologist, having come to England because his Marxist politics plus, possibly, his homosexuality, had seen him ejected from his Sydney University post. Childe eventually spent most of his career as an academic in Edinburgh, making his name with his investigation of the Skara Brae Neolithic site on the Orkneys (although the site is far more ancient than he thought). He also achieved popular fame with his lighter works of ancient history like *Man Makes Himself*. Childe would return to Australia for the first time after his retirement in 1957, only to jump to his death in the Blue Mountains that same year, which was the year after the Hungarian uprising.

All this lay far in the future when Childe wrote his first big book, *The Dawn of European Civilisation*, while living in Cartwright Gardens. It is a

curious thought that Childe was working there so studiously, night after night, on this seminal work that revolutionized the understanding of the prehistory of Europe while, nearby, others of his countrymen—with whom the unsociable Childe would have had nothing in common—were transforming the area into a fashionable-bohemian literary quarter, famous for its riotous pub life, relaxed sexual mores, and internecine quarrels. The young journalists Leslie and Coralie Rees lived on the edge of Bloomsbury during their first desperate days in 1929, where one night they were disturbed by a naked prostitute being thrown into the street outside; P. R. Stephensen stayed there briefly when he arrived to take up his Rhodes scholarship in 1924; the Fanfrolico Press had its offices at 5 Bloomsbury Square in 1926–29; Alan Moorehead stayed in Mecklenburgh Square when he first arrived in 1936; and Alice Rosman, Philip Lindsay, Florence James, and Nettie Palmer all lived at different times within a stone's throw of the miserable rooms of the fictional heroes Carnyon and Whyte. Such are the continuities of London's literary topography over time.

To return to our guidebook novels. It is made clear to the reader that neither squalor nor glamour must be allowed to intrude on an author in a hurry—in fiction or in life. Having shouldered two big trunks and a Gladstone bag from the station piece by piece to save a cab fare, Daniel Whyte goes out the same afternoon and buys a thousand sheets of cheap paper, an inkstand, some blotting-paper, a penholder, and a box of “J” nibs. Now he is equipped for the fight. “His material awaited the master's life-giving touch. The great veiled world of story, which only the master can truly explore, lay at Daniel's feet.”²²

Claude de Carnyon is more advanced than this. He too buys pen and ink on the first day, but he is not starting from scratch. He is ready to post off to a “famous publisher” the best out of “a trunkful” of manuscripts that have accompanied him from Australia. The submission is declined with thanks. Two further manuscripts are also declined. Carnyon has been too bloodied by his dealings with literary commerce to be depressed about that. Without bothering to repack them, he instantly he redirects the whole lot to new publishers, and sends off more in their wake. At last comes a result. He gets an offer of £50 for the copyright of one of them, cash down. This was indeed the standard fee offered for many years to a new author by second-class publishers. Even in 1932 it was all Cassell's paid Philip Lindsay for his historical novel, *Panama is Burning*, written after his move to England, though by then there was the hope of small royalties on top of the cash. Produce two or three such novels a year (if you could) and it made a sparse living. We hear that Carnyon's novel sells five or six hundred copies before it is whelmed under by fresher arrivals. Again, that was about average for a minor work with some reasonable reviews to spur it on. Rosa Praed's *Policy and Passion*

of 1881, her second novel and her first with an exclusively Australian setting, sold under 600 copies of the first edition, though a quick new edition sold twice that.

Meanwhile, Daniel Whyte is making up for his slower start. On the last day of May, the day of his arrival, he drafts two short stories. In each of the thirty days of June he composes one more story to add to his growing hoard. Then it is time to market his wares. Seeing by chance the advertisement of a literary agent, he takes his bunch of stories, amounting now to 600 pages of manuscript, to this seedy character, who gives him just the same price, cash down, as Carnyon has been paid: £50. The agent points out cheerily that for one month's work Whyte is earning at the rate of £600 a year. He does not say that it is also about thirty shillings a story, nor that he himself is going to be able to sell each one of them to the magazines for about six guineas each. Thus the reader is given some insight into the economics of London literary production at the turn of the century. Still, the £50 is enough to elate Whyte, who celebrates by buying his landlady a gorgeous tea-cozy as a present. At least he is on his way.

Carnyon too finds that the main benefit of his first novel is not the sales but the access it gives to the periodicals market, where the earnings were much better, if one were versatile and productive. He moves to a Camden Town studio, still not a particularly good address but more acceptable for a rising author than a Bloomsbury boardinghouse. Then he writes *God's Microcosms*, a clever novel on a daring social issue: reviewers condemn it as blasphemous and atheistical. (Boothby does not bother to invent what *God's Microcosms* is about, but he is trading on the fact that this was the era of Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* and, perhaps, the aftermath of the Oscar Wilde trials.) It sells furiously. He writes a brilliant play for the West End. He is made. The insight that had first come to him in Rotten Row, Hyde Park, where the fashionable could be seen parading themselves daily, is now realized in full:

"Yes, my friend," he said to himself, as he watched a smart mail phaeton driven by a popular novelist go by, "some day you are going to drive in this park in exactly the self-same style; and perhaps another poor literary devil leaning upon these rails may see you and derive some sort of encouragement from the look of fatted contentment upon your face. Yes, it's got to come—the good time has certainly got to come."²³

And come it did for his creator as well. Boothby did much better than Dawson. He became an enormously popular novelist who sold as well in Australia as in England. He was born in Adelaide in 1867 into a good colonial family and as a young man worked in the town clerk's office, varying

his labors with the production of a comic opera in conjunction with Cecil Sharp, the folk-song expert, who was having a spell in Adelaide. Dissatisfied, Boothby left his job in 1891, spent a year or more wandering around the country and in Asia, and returned to Adelaide rich only in experience. Now the die was cast. He took ship again and arrived in England, probably in 1894, filled with a hard determination to succeed as an author at any cost. He wrote tales first for the *Windsor Magazine*, and success came quickly. An interview with him in the magazine in 1896 included this remarkable exchange:

“How long, may I ask, have you followed literature as a profession?”

“Two years. Just now I am at work on my seventeenth novel.”²⁴

This was no mere posturing. Boothby mastered the manufacture of fiction on a grand scale. By starting to dictate to secretaries or wax recorders at an unearthly hour each morning, his output was regularly 6,000 words a day. On one occasion, he boasted, he had dictated the 20,000 words of a serial at a single sitting. He produced novels at the rate of four or even six a year, the most popular being the *Dr Nikola* series, starring a villain with hypnotic eyes and owner of a laboratory containing, for no discernible purpose, “a dozen enormous bottles, each of which contained what looked, to me, only too much like human specimens pickled in some light-coloured fluid resembling spirits of wine.”²⁵ These books are utterly without distinction, and were excoriated even by middlebrow critics. Boothby’s prose style is cliché-ridden and full of solecisms, his characterization is feeble, and his plots rely on wild coincidences. All his books offer is a fast succession of sensational events. They are a reminder of just how bad the popular novel of that day could be, before film and radio took away much of its audience; but a reminder too of just how large and indiscriminating and rewarding the potential audience was.

To be fair, Boothby himself had no elevated sense of the merit of his products, and played a game with interviewers in which he pointedly would talk about anything except his books. His motto, and attitude to literature, was reported in various forms. A friend reported a conversation with him thus: “I give the public what it wants,” he said; and, with a glance round his luxurious home, “it gives me what I want.”²⁶ Boothby spent his enormous income up to the hilt, establishing himself in a succession of ever-grander country estates, maintaining an 800-ton steam launch on the Thames, breeding exotic fish, and surrounding himself with bulldogs and expensive horseflesh. The census of 1901 shows him living at Kempton Court, Sunbury, with his English wife and three children, plus a private secretary, a cook, four other servants, a monthly nurse, a kennel man, and a butler. It

was all a long way from his former job as secretary to the mayor of Adelaide. But it did not last. Boothby died in 1905 at the age of thirty-seven, and the yacht, the fish, the race-horses, and everything else went to pay his debts. A line of fifty volumes in cheap but flashy bindings moldering away in library repositories is his sole memorial, but his short career had shown that a determined Australian could compete with the best of them at the bottom end of the market.

No doubt many young hopefuls in Australia read the mediocre but optimistic *Daniel Whyte* and *Love Made Manifest* around the turn of the century and told themselves they were capable of doing just as well or better than Dawson or Boothby. Perhaps one who did so was the young Winifred James, then aged eighteen, especially if she knew that Boothby came from Adelaide. After running a tea shop in that city, she left in 1905, at the end of her twenties, and soon found how hard it was to emulate her predecessors' brash confidence—whether real or feigned—that failure was not an option. In her own misery and loneliness, James tried to find the raw material of a first novel:

What chance have you, a wretched, miserable, terrified atom, in this pitiless race? Who, with his own fortune to engineer, is going to stop and listen to your weak puling cry for recognition—much less lend you a hand? Who cares whether you are writing a twopenny-ha'penny book and can't get on with it for want of air?

You are only of use if you are a marketable quantity. You can't be a marketable quantity unless you keep sane, and how can you hope to keep sane in this screaming whirlpool?

I say to myself, "Betty, my girl, this is not the way to get your foot on the neck of it. Range yourself." But it is no use. I want to get out of this great brick box before the lid closes down completely. The winter is coming on, and I, who dread the cold so horribly, and have had three months of it at the beginning of the year—not the worse three months either—feel that half-a-year of it on end in the top flat of newly-built mansions, with no companion but the wind moaning up the staircase, will finish everything.²⁷

Despite these forebodings, *Bachelor Betty* did not do too badly; Constable reprinted it several times within a few months. James made her way in London journalism after diversions in her career that took her to Panama and various other places that need not be followed here. Eventually she made a living as a newspaper columnist and by turning out platitudinous books full of gushing moral uplift promoting the ideal of empire loyalty, with titles like *A Man for England*. She returned to Australia only to die, at the outbreak of the Second World War.

So far we have spoken of those whose "weak puling cry for recognition" was eventually heard and rewarded. What proportion they were of the whole

it is hard to say. What is certain is that it was very easy to fail, and the penalty for doing so could be severe indeed. There was no welfare safety-net except for joining the one-in-five native Londoners who, in 1904, ended their days in a parish workhouse. Succumbing to malnutrition or dying of exposure on the winter streets was still a very possible fate long after the turn of the century. Immigrant writers were in brutal competition with locals who knew the milieu far better than colonial new chums, and were lightning-quick in responding to a fickle public's changing taste. There was little joy in having all the rights of a British subject if they meant only to the right to sink into the gutter or the right to a pauper's funeral.

"She gives them gold or Charon's fare / As suits her whim" groaned Victor Daley, apostrophizing the capital in "When London Calls." One who very nearly sailed with Charon across the Styx into oblivion but recovered triumphantly to win gold was Oscar Asche, an actor and playwright-producer who left, first for Norway and then England, in 1890, aged twenty-nine. Had he not recovered, no doubt he would have never written his autobiography, and if he had not done that, we would have lost some colorful details of what it meant to live a London life on the brink. At first Asche had a very lean time of it. When he first arrived he had a good deal of "resting" between modest engagements and was so poor he slept in the open air for weeks on end. "I slept on the Embankment at night. In the day-time I went to Lord's or the Oval to watch the cricket. A late supper at night at the coffee-stalls, and I was all right, except for the rain. I got so soaked one night that I had to spend some money on a mackintosh." The loneliness and enforced isolation of the metropolis eroded his self-confidence. "The loneliness of the bush! The loneliness of London, with its teeming millions, is loneliness with a vengeance." As a variation he would walk about all night and doze in the parks in the day, and visit museums and galleries. He reflected gloomily that "one can see so much and educate oneself at very little cost in London. It is the aloofness of the people that strikes a stranger and makes him feel lonely. Try and start a conversation, and the addressee regards you as a pick-pocket." For food, Asche relied on charity. He found the destitute could line up at the rear entrance of the Grand Hotel on Northumberland Avenue. "Here we passed in line and were handed paper parcels, 'dips in the lucky-bag', containing some remnant of food, the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. Discarded dishes, cast-away cutlets, refused rissoles, etc.—and these we used to carry off and consume alfresco." A little later, Asche was reduced to a single shilling in his pocket; yet later still, when the tide had turned, there would be times "when I could not guess within ten thousand pounds what my bank-balance was. I might have been over-drawn, for all I knew." This was in the glory days of his famous musical spectacular, *Chu Chin Chow*, which he wrote, directed, and acted in. It was a great success,

running for nearly five years, from 1916 to 1921, at His Majesty's, and made him £200,000 in royalties alone—or so he said. Apart from Nellie Melba's, Asche's three tours of Australia, made in a procession of Rolls-Royces, were the acme of the expatriate's triumphal return. But it all disappeared long before the end, on greyhounds, gambling, income tax, and a farm. He died in 1936 leaving £20.²⁸

But that was still a little way in the future when Asche wrote his life story in 1929, so he gave it an upward trajectory. Not surprisingly, there exist almost no coherent, first-hand narratives of really grievous failure in London, even though there were plenty of salutary stories passed back to Australia about those who made the trip but failed to make the grade, or even, in some cases, failed to keep body and soul together at all. One such casualty was the poet-nurse Grace Jennings Carmichael (b.1867). Abandoned by her husband, she was consigned to a workhouse with her three young sons, and died a pauper there in 1904, aged thirty-six. Six years later, after an outcry, her children were eventually retrieved and repatriated by private subscription. The grim lesson was well taken. Henry Lawson, not surprisingly, identified with her fate, and wrote a poem about her after his own dismal return, describing how "A lonely woman, fought alone / The bitter fight in London town!"²⁹ But plenty of others besides Carmichael simply vanished from sight and eventually died unnoticed and unmourned.

For that reason, an unpublished memoir, *The Quest*, by a would-be author-journalist, Reginald Carrington, is uniquely valuable in being a detailed and unvarnished account of the author's inability to establish himself there over a period of five years, from 1906 to 1911, when he was in his twenties. Almost nothing is known of Carrington other than that he was born around 1882, was active as a journalist and editor for many years after his return, and was still alive in 1959. He must have composed his account, which is written in the third person, at some time after his return, but there is no evidence that he tried to publish it. Perhaps he wrote it as a private act of psychological exorcism. His object in writing it was, he said, to give a sense of "the real salt and sting" of what it meant to fail in literary London. In that, if in nothing else, he succeeded.³⁰

Carrington's passage, steerage class, in the White Star liner *Runic*, cost him just £19, and he arrived with £12, promptly spending some of that by posting off the tips for the ship's stewards that he had promised them while on board. At first he had all the common romantic notions about London, convincing himself that in this global marketplace of the talents he could not fail. He surmised that every single street in its 120 square miles has been notable for something or other at some time, and so might furnish him with article material. While waiting his opportunity, he got a clerk's job for thirty shillings a week, bought himself the necessary top hat but dispensed with

underclothes. During a pilgrimage to Stratford on Avon, a gypsy told him he had a lucky face, and when he wrote this up as an anecdote *TP's Weekly*, a light magazine, paid him a guinea for it. On the strength of that, he gave up clerking as beneath him, and then matters started to deteriorate. He quickly arrived at the painful but unremarkable truth that "London was a fine place with money but without it no picture could conjure up its miseries." Carrington tried hard. He pestered the editors of the *Daily Express*, *Answers*, the *Globe*, the *Evening News*, the *Times*, the *English Illustrated Magazine* and *Punch* for work, and sent out fourteen freelance contributions, of which, he says with nice ambiguity, only eight were returned. St. Loe Strachey of the *Spectator* turned down a poem, but in so kindly a manner that Carrington did not have the heart to trouble him again with more offerings. He got some brief casual work on the *Daily Mail* and the *Tribune*, and had a few more scraps published, but in the entire five years the only continuous journalistic work he had was a couple of months on a newspaper in Berlin. Rather typically he was dismissed when he did not learn German adequately. Sixteen hundred job applications later, he admitted defeat. When he finally arrived back at St Kilda in mid-1911, the last sentence of his narrative records laconically that "in his pocket was a threepenny piece."

Carrington's determination to make a literary career was marred by two difficulties, bad enough separately but disastrous when combined. He had no talent and he was a hopeless dilettante, full, as he said himself, of "far off and nebulous ambitions." (Although he was not entirely stupid: he had the sense to turn down an offer to publish a book of verse for £21, with three-quarters of the "profits" to go to the author.) Among his hare-brained schemes was marketing a board game of his own invention called "Blackfellow," where tokens of policemen went around a board, chasing an Aborigine. Then he tried to get endorsed as a Conservative candidate, and at another time offered to ride across the United States on horseback to promote emigration, suggesting a remuneration of a mere £400 a year.

Carrington apparently made no effort to get to know any of his fellow countrymen whose time in London plowing their own lonely furrows overlapped with his own: Ambrose Pratt, Jack Abbott, Vance Palmer, James Dwyer. His London adventure had long been over when another hopeless inadequate turned up there to try his luck: this was Vernon Knowles (b.1899). As a shy homosexual youth with uncompromisingly high aesthetic tastes and an uncomprehending family, Knowles was a complete fish out of water in Adelaide. He left as soon as he could, having found a short initial success when a set of his fantastical tales, *The Street of Queer Houses*, was published in both New York and London in 1924–25. After he arrived Knowles tried to build on this success with a second volume of fey tales, *Here and Otherwhere*, as well as something quite different: a novel in realistic vein, *Beads of Coloured*

Days. Beads is partly autobiographical, partly wish-fulfilment fantasy. The hero, Alec Holt, is a sensitive, naïve young Englishman, raised by sympathetic parents, who wants to be a poet but comes to realize that his métier is translating from French. He marries unhappily. Sexual difficulties are delicately hinted at, and his wife is jealous of his male friendships. Soon she dies of pneumonia. The setting is an unconvincing bohemian world, with some scenes of brittle gaiety that ring false. The hero is set moving in the sort of caring, supportive London literary circles that, one feels, Knowles would have liked to belong to but almost certainly didn't. *Beads* attracted no attention. In a later even feeblar effort, *Pitiful Dust*, Christopher Gray is a thirtyish intellectual fellow with a sufficient private income living in a cozy country cottage with a cherished housekeeper and a cat. He toys with a little reviewing and light article-writing. Even that is neglected in favor of ambiguous relationships with two women. One of these leaves him because she is bored, and the other throws herself off a cliff. Christopher returns with some relief to his cat and his cottage. Neither novel has any Australian content, perhaps because Knowles was saving material for a dreamy memoir of his Adelaide childhood, *Eternity in an Hour*. He went on to publish some more poetry and tales and apparently made some sort of a living doing semi-literary hack work. By 1938, however, close upon his fortieth year, he turned up back in Adelaide claiming to be destitute.

There now followed a remarkable event. It amounted to a public recognition that the best aid the Australian taxpayer might give to a struggling author was to pay him to go to Britain for good. For, upon application to the Commonwealth Literary Fund, Knowles was given a lump sum of £60. Nothing more was required of him than simply to return to London and stay there. So back he went. He remains the unique case of a government-subsidized, reverse remittance-man. But he was a bad investment. He died in England in miserable circumstances, having produced nothing else of substance in the thirty years after his sponsored departure except a minor critical book for Newnes and a last collection of poems, *Love is My Enemy*. His squalid basement flat in Clapham, which was vividly described after his death by the National Library's representative who visited it with a view to buying his papers, symbolizes very well what it meant to slip into obscurity in the capital.³¹ Undoubtedly there were many failures other than Knowles or Carrington who have left no trace at all. They must have been many other hopefuls who in the end paid their fare to Charon the ferryman and vanished even more completely than they into oblivion.

CHAPTER 5

WHO ARE YOU? NO ONE: THE HACKING JOURNALIST IN LONDON

You arrive at your destination in wonder at your coming. Why are you here? What do you seek? Work? A chance? A hearing? Why should you expect any of these? Who are you? No one. What are you worth? Nothing. Who wants you? Nobody.

Louise Mack (1902)¹

IN 1909 THE ENGLISH JOURNALIST PHILIP GIBBS WAS IN HIS EARLY THIRTIES and had already known both failure and success. That year he published a semiautobiographical novel, *The Street of Adventure*, drawing on his varied experiences. It was an immediate bestseller. The street of the title is Fleet Street. Shy, diffident Frank Luttrell has tried school-teaching after Oxford but he is bored. He determines to try the life of a freelance journalist in London. His friend is horrified:

I thought Frank was too delicate a soul to be bespattered in the squalor of Fleet Street. I pointed out to him that the profession of letters has been invaded by the amateur; that every barrister without a brief, every curate with a little leisure, every elementary schoolmaster, every modern lady with or without a past, every soldier who has fought through a campaign, every man with a long memory and every boy with a touch of imagination, is writing short stories, autobiographies or “special articles” for the magazines and newspapers.

The one type that does not figure in this colourful list is, we note, the colonial outsider. To be sure, Frank Luttrell is competing with all those briefless barristers, the curates, the schoolmasters and the adventuresses; but he is,

after all, English-born and an Oxford graduate. So he thinks he knows better than his friend, and installs himself in a room in Holborn at a pound a week ("an expensive luxury") from which he manages to sell just three articles in a month. Soon he is desperately lonely, in debt, and "wiping the cold sweat from his forehead" as the landlord comes banging on the door. Doing what he swore he would never do, he gets a reporter's job on a newspaper—Oxford helps here too—a chance that he seizes "like a shipwrecked mariner who had floated ashore at the last gasp"; but the paper eventually folds, throwing the entire staff out on the street. Left kicking his heels, Luttrell occupies himself by writing a novel, but Gibbs is too realistic to make this the dream solution to his hero's problem. All it earns is £70, and he sells the copyright of its successor for little more. Since that one has taken six months to write he concludes, rather too sweepingly, that "certainly there was no living to be made by novel-writing."² Eventually he takes another reporting job for the same pay as before, and feels lucky to get it. So the "adventure" peters out.

Gibbs's generally light but cynical tone is curiously at variance with the romantic title of his novel, thereby undercutting its more gloomy sentiments. Gibbs's own later career would satisfy any literary romantic. A more upright man it would be hard to find. A sincere, practising Catholic, he gave his time generously to good causes, was a fearless war correspondent who was knighted for his dispatches from the front, wrote about fifty novels, and was a man of affairs who seems to have been incapable of penning a dull sentence. Here was a classical instance of a writer who managed to combine literature and reporting in a career anyone could be proud of. *The Street of Adventure* was read everywhere and later turned into a successful film. It was possible for any eager young Australian who was planning his escape to reach Gibbs's last page with his belief intact—indeed reinforced—that for him the street just might be paved with gold.

Reality soon intervened. For centuries London had been gobbling literary talent, and not infrequently chewing it up and spitting it out again. As we shall see, estimates much more brutal than Gibbs's set the chances of a newcomer, especially a colonial, elbowing himself into a place at the authorial table at practically zero. When he or she moved to London, the Australian writer whose only resource was the pen plunged into a world offering great riches for a tiny few, a substantial living for some, a threadbare existence for many. It was a world where, in late-Victorian times, George Eliot received £7,000 for one novel and Conan Doyle £600 for a single serial episode of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. But it was also a world where George Gissing, with five novels in print and a better-than-moderate reputation, accepted a paltry £50 for the entire copyright of his sixth, a lengthy three-decker, from the skinflint publisher Smith, Elder.

The publishing world had a very clear sense of what kinds of literary products it was willing to send to market. Only the most idealistic and therefore usually noncommercial publisher was willing to risk money on anything adventurous or experimental. Poetry, of course, was a nonstarter without some sort of subsidy: the age of Tennyson and Browning was long over. Nor could writers of fiction expect to prosper materially from sales if they insisted on adhering to the standards of "art" literature associated, from the 1920s onward, with modernism. Those who arrived from Australia with the intention of pursuing proudly their own aesthetic ideals, and earning their own appreciative readership no matter how long it took, as Henry Handel Richardson did, could not live without permanent support any more than similarly inclined British writers could. The support had to come from either a spouse or remittances from home (like Woolf and James), or from moneyed patrons (like Joyce). Otherwise they were eventually forced to compromise by going downmarket, or securing a pension (as Joseph Conrad had to do). The young novelist Chester Cobb (b.1899) used a small legacy to go to England in 1921 expressly to try out his ideas in experimental fiction. The two results, *Mr Moffatt* and *Days of Disillusion*, both of them written and published in the wake of *Ulysses*, use extended interior monologues and explore diffusely metaphysical themes. They were reviewed respectfully but did not sell. Cobb gave up, turned to chicken farming and editing a rural magazine, and died young at Oxford in 1943. At least he did not have to crawl back home.

Higher up the scale of achievement, even after *Ultima Thule* had had a surprising sale of 100,000 copies in America, Richardson still assessed her average earnings over a lifetime in Germany and England at just one shilling a week, and admitted what was obvious enough: that she would have starved without her husband's support. There was for many years little demand for the controversial or challenging, and especially not in the potentially lucrative magazine short-story market. As early as 1902 Henry Lawson took back home the news that "simple domestic yarns and true sketches of the better sides of human nature, of man, woman and child nature, go best now. They don't want the other man's wife in England—she's done." Lawson's last sentence alludes to the New Woman fictions of the 1890s, which by then had fallen out of favour.³ He was probably thinking of works like Rosa Praed's daring best seller *The Bond of Wedlock* (1887), or *A Yellow Aster* (1894) by "Iota" (Kathleen Caffyn), or perhaps *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894) by Mona Caird. As it happens, all three of these women had antipodean connections. Caffyn actually wrote *A Yellow Aster* in Australia, where she lived for a few years, but it has no local content. Mona Caird, the daughter of an inventor, also spent time in Australia as a child. But all three made their names in Britain and died there. The New Woman, in her first manifestation, was extinct by the time Lawson arrived.

Though the espousal of “simple domestic yarns” hardly squares with Lawson’s own practice in London—a few of the stories in *Joe Wilson and His Mates* that he wrote there are among his most subtle work—it was a shrewd enough assessment. Fifteen years later Vance Palmer, though he had higher ambitions, was supplying this same kind of unassuming product on demand even to A. R. Orage’s modernist *New Age* magazine. Palmer did well because he was versatile enough to meet many markets. He proclaimed airily, when he first arrived in 1905, that “there were so many papers that almost any literate article or story could find a home if it were sent round often enough.”⁴ But it wasn’t quite as simple as that: at the very least, one needed stamina. Palmer himself claimed that he wrote eighty-one short stories in his first nine months in London, plus many articles.

What other remedies were there for those who wanted to keep a toehold in the world of London letters? Vance Palmer was not the first to discover it: journalism. “He realised now that he could not write every day, or even every week; that the hiatus between the selling of a story and the receiving of five to ten pounds for it, was to be measured in months, and months not a few; and that the work of finding acceptance of a story was sometimes tedious and prolonged. ‘Something in the shape of an income I must have,’ he thought; ‘and how to get it?’ Fleet Street was not a tempting prospect to the young man.”⁵ That last sentiment of a fictional antipodean arrival, Daniel Whyte, was echoed over the decades by many others; but needs must when the devil of poverty drove. Whatever their primary ambitions as authors, few expatriates who needed to pay their way could avoid contact with journalism at one level or another.

There are many rooms in the house of journalism. There were cases of staff journalists, particularly the more hard-bitten news reporters, building fine careers for themselves on Fleet Street. Reporters and subeditors in Australasia were nearly always peripatetic workers in this period, shifting from one provincial paper to another all around the Pacific, as well as to and from England. (There was no national paper in Australia, whereas a remarkable range originated from London, suiting every political taste.) Journalists expected to be mobile. It was so from quite an early date. For example, Leon Brodzky, who renamed himself at Northcliffe’s urging to Spencer Brodney, was at first an active journalist in Melbourne and then editor of the short-lived *Weekly Dispatch* in London. After four years back in Australian journalism, he finally became the editor, and later the proprietor, of two New York magazines and lived out the rest of his long life in the United States. That was a typical career. Another more famous example is Martin Donohoe, who cut his teeth as a crime reporter on the Sydney *Evening News*, where he covered the infamous “lemon syrup” case and helped expose the remarkable de Rougement fraud when that story broke in the English papers in 1898.

He shifted to the *Daily Chronicle* just in time to be sent to South Africa to cover the opening stages of the Boer War, and thereafter enjoyed scoop after scoop in places as far afield as Japan, Portugal, and Turkey. During the Great War he toured Russia, addressing soldiers and "exhorting them to get on with their job" for which he was reportedly rewarded with "kisses from large, bearded Russian officers."⁶ Given the imperialistic politics of the *Daily Chronicle*, getting on with the job presumably meant winning the war, not completing the Bolshevik revolution, then in its most chaotic stage.

Donohoe's was a stellar career, and he was just one of several foreign correspondents who by shifting to London, earned fame and fortune by reporting from the world's trouble spots and, in due course, from the front lines in both world wars. It seems part of the Australian genius to produce foreign correspondents, and then to lose them to other employers in England. (Or to lose them permanently: fourteen of its war correspondents were killed on duty during the Second World War.) Though it is something of a caricature, Ian Fleming painted the type well in his *You Only Live Twice*. James Bond's blunt-speaking mate Dikko Henderson is an affectionate portrait of the larger-than-life Richard Hughes, the *Sunday Times* correspondent who was based for many years in Japan and Hong Kong, and was one of the first interpreters of Asian affairs for Australian readers. Other Australians who detached themselves more or less permanently from their homeland in the 1930s to become foreign correspondents on Fleet Street, where they covered the conflicts of the earlier twentieth century, include Noel Monks, who left in 1935 in time to cover Mussolini's Abyssinian war; the restless, furiously hard-working Alan Moorehead; and the eternally controversial Wilfred Burchett. Chester Wilmot, Moorehead's colleague and friend, was another star war correspondent who later returned to London to work for the BBC and ten years later was killed in one of the Comet jet crashes.

But these were the most glamorous and toughest of the antipodean adventurer-journalists. Others of more timorous disposition could have a rough time when they turned up unheralded in London and had to go cold-calling along Fleet Street in search of work. Getting even the humblest kind of reporting or editorial work was a very competitive business for the outsider early in the century. Even Jules Archibald of the *Bulletin* found on a visit in 1883 that the Street was unimpressed by him and impenetrable to him; and like many others he was disgusted by the attitude of the plutocracy toward the poor. He was glad to return. Twenty-odd years later, Keith Murdoch, father of Rupert, armed himself with a sheaf of introductions from Syme of the *Age*, from church leaders, and even a note from the Prime Minister, but on arrival he found they cut very little ice. He did almost get a job on the *Pall Mall Gazette*, where Australians had a foothold already, but failed because of his stammer. He gave up and went home after eighteen months

of misery. His managerial gifts and subsequent rise to fame only started after he had returned to work again on the *Age*, though he had a triumphant period in Europe later on as a war reporter.⁷ A more promising pathway for the staff journalist was to get a transfer to England from a local paper, as did Guy Innes, who was sent off there to set up the Melbourne *Herald's* cable service in 1923, and stayed for the rest of his life. He was a newspaperman of the old school, a great admirer of Kipling, and the producer of large quantities of verse. He continued to send poems back to the *Bulletin* nearly to the end of his life, but wrote nothing in book form. If he had any broader literary aspirations, he never pursued them.

A sensible decision, perhaps. Would-be journalists of a more literary bent—the ones who really fancied themselves as novelists, dramatists, or even poets—had a very tough job making a niche for themselves unless they had exceptionally marketable talents. The most savagely realistic study of an expatriated journalist's struggle to make his way in London may be found in a forgotten but powerful and well-written novel of 1914, *The Record of Nicholas Freydon*. Subtitled *An Autobiography*, it employs the common device of that fictional genre. That is to say, it has an "editor" who supplies a "prefatory note" disclaiming any editorial interference in offering his "friend's work" to the public. In a closing note, we learn further that the "editor" has received the manuscript from Freydon's housekeeper in Australia, complete to within two days of the writer's death.

Since the *Record* was anonymous and had a documentary feel, it encouraged much speculation that it really was the authentic autobiography of an embittered Australian literary journalist's failure to make any headway in England. Even as recently as 1982 the poet Rosemary Dobson, in an article titled "The Riddle of Nicholas Freydon," was able to flirt with that possibility, although she could easily have discovered that it was in fact by an obscure author, Alec Dawson, whose novel *Daniel Whyte* has been mentioned in earlier chapters. At least as early as 1930 the historian W. K. Hancock knew something of Dawson and rightly called him an "Australiate Englishman" who "flits uneasily between two hemispheres."⁸ It's true that little else is known about Dawson except what his books have to tell; but that is quite a lot, for he used parts of his life story, in different combinations of incident, in at least four of his novels.

Dawson was born in England in 1872 and went to sea as an apprentice on a merchantman, jumped ship in San Francisco, and drifted down the Pacific Slope to Australia, where he spent all his formative years. He worked on various provincial newspapers before shifting to Sydney.⁹ He left probably around 1897, about the time his literary career seems to have started. He was a seasoned author with about sixteen novels and travel books to his credit before the *Record*. One of the earliest of them, *The Story of Ronald Kestrel*

(1900), offers a sunnier version of the expatriate writer's life in London than does *Nicholas Freydon*, which was written after Dawson had had another spell of indeterminate length in Australia at some point just before the Great War. In the earlier more optimistic novel, Ronald Kestrel goes to England intent, like so many others, on building a reputation. He has a small annuity, so is not desperately poor. Nevertheless, he has some setbacks: his first two novels fall dead from the press and he is forced into freelance journalism, a trade he detests:

"Freelance" is a pitiful expression in its literary and journalistic sense; a term which brings sad thoughts into the mind of any man who knows the widely-varying ground it covers, a ground in which some beautiful natures grown sordid and sour, some great talents wilt and are belittled, and a few strong spirits win through to better things, or wrest competence from the things they have.¹⁰

Dawson's own eventual fate sixteen years later matched this description rather well, although not necessarily because of any "wilt" in his talents, nor because he had grown "sordid and sour," but rather because the war had grim consequences for him. Afire with patriotic zeal, he enlisted immediately, despite being by then in his forties, and was invalided out after being gassed. Although he wrote a good deal about the war and its aftereffects, the fact that he apparently published nothing in the last twenty years of his life may imply that his health was permanently wrecked. He died at St. Leonard's in Sussex, practically forgotten. He never returned to the Australian bush to cultivate his soul, as he allows two of his heroes to do.

When *The Record of Nicholas Freydon* appeared without a name on the title page in the first year of the war it caused quite a furore. The jingoistic sentiments with which it closes were sufficient in the epochal year of its publication to recommend it to the public of both countries. No one connected its theme with that of Dawson's earlier books, so he was not suspected. The quality of the writing suggested an established author, and the leading contender was thought to be the Englishman Morley Roberts. One idea was that the *Record* might be, as an American reviewer put it, "a composite biography, in which Morley Roberts has used his own Australian experiences and the London experiences of Mr Gissing."¹¹ This was a fair guess. Roberts was nearly the same age as Freydon, whose birth date is given as 1860. Roberts had visited Australia briefly several times, and had used it in his stories.

There was another indication of Roberts's involvement. He had already blurred fact and fiction himself by publishing in 1912 a thinly disguised memoir of his friend George Gissing, who had died nine years earlier. He was the first to put into the public arena some of the more colorful details of

Gissing's career, including his prison sentence for theft, his two disastrous marriages, his struggles to prosper as an author in the 1880s and '90s, and the fact that he lived for years, very unwillingly, among the London poor, which he made good use of in his slum novels like *The Nether World*. Critics noticed that Freydon is made to praise Gissing extravagantly, and indeed Freydon's final attempt to find mental tranquillity by giving up his London life and returning to an Australian bush hut is transparently based on *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, Gissing's own contribution to the same genre of fictional memoir. Freydon, like Ryecroft, expressly calls himself an "author at grass," very happy to lay down his pen at last and take his ease in solitary retirement, anticipating his own early death.

In fact this was the second time that Dawson had drawn ideas from Gissing's works, and also the second time he used Australia as the ultimate retreat. His earlier hero, Ronald Kestrel, gets married when some of his short fiction finds an audience. An admirer says of one such piece: "I think it's amazingly restrained and clever. There is something fearfully quiet about it, quiet and yet over-whelming, as though a man were to slowly force a long dagger right through your body without any change of expression on his own face, and without saying a word."¹² With praise like this buoying him up, Kestrel and his wife move to a luxurious flat in Russell Square. But then comes catastrophe—crippling writers' block, a situation surely copied from the situation of Edwin Reardon in Gissing's *New Grub Street*, where that condition is analyzed in remorseless detail. After a year of futile effort, the Kestrels flee to Australia and with some friends hack out a bush literary commune from the wilderness near Port Stephens. Here Kestrel's creative zest returns, and his lyrical letters back home persuade his literary agent and eventually even his publisher to emigrate. Gissing's Edwin Reardon has no such bolt-hole: he dies miserably of self-induced pneumonia in a hotel room. Clearly for the expatriated Dawson, if he may be called so, Australia lingered in his imagination as a land of lost content. On the other hand, it is no less true that it is squalid London, not Australia, that fired his creativity most: a familiar story. Certainly Gissing's most vitriolic denunciations of the London poor—he was no social reformer—are no more extreme than the phrases of savage disgust that Dawson puts into the mouth of the newly arrived Nicholas Freydon.

In the *Record* Freydon first emigrates to Australia as a ten-year-old with his father, himself a failed journalist, who vainly advises his son to have "nothing to do with this accursed trade of ink-spilling. Literary work! God save the mark!"¹³ Their first year is idyllic, as father and son make their home on a beached derelict barque on the New South Wales coast. But when his father dies Freydon is sent to an orphanage. At fifteen, encouraged by a visiting artist who advises him to learn shorthand, he escapes and

makes for Sydney. At first he works as a clerk, turning out business letters of "fluent suavity." After a year he gets a job as a reporter, where he is quite a success, especially with his innovation of doing interviews, "at a time when the 'interview' was a thing practically unknown in Australian journalism." The date now is the early 1880s. A callow love affair failing, he resolves to accumulate savings of £200 over and above his fare and then take ship for the big adventure, the "migration oversea." It takes him three years and nine months to save the sum, living modestly and chastely. Unfortunately he is mugged in a Sydney alleyway on leaving the bank with the cash, and loses it all. But he is still only twenty-one, and soon gets an offer to work his passage as a purser's clerk. He lands with a meagre £20, "not only having no claim upon any single creature in these islands, but having no faintest knowledge of any one among them." His first impression is similar to very many others: sheer dismay.

The first impression received by me was that the England I had come to was a quite astonishingly dingy land. The people seemed to me to have a dingy pallor, like the table-linen of the cheaper sort of lodging-house. They looked, not so much ill as unwashed, not so much poor as cross, hiped, tired, worried, and annoyed about something. . . . They must laugh or, at any rate, smile sometimes, I thought. This is where *Punch* comes from. It is the land of Dickens. It is, in short, Merry England.

Where to live in Merry England, while planning his first foray into journalism? Not for Freydon even the modest comforts of Bloomsbury, where, in fact and fiction, so many new arrivals congregated in the superior boarding-houses with their enticing window-advertisements offering "Piano, h. & c." He takes a slum room off that "long unlovely highway," Seven Sisters Road, South Tottenham, for four and sixpence a week. Undeterred by the voracious insect life inside the room and the drunken brawls going on outside, he falls asleep on his first night in good spirits.

The very phrase "free-lance" appealed to my sense of the romantic. "All the clever fellows are free-lancers, you know, in the Old Country." I recalled many such statements made to me in Sydney. . . . It should be as a free agent, an unknown adventurer in Grub Street, that I would win my journalistic and literary spurs in the Old World. Other men had succeeded. . . .

Musing in this hopeful vein I fell asleep, with never a hint of a presentiment of what did actually lie before me.

It is the last comfortable night he has for a long time. The horrible reality of his first two years in London, he concedes, looking back, "would be a task to alarm a Zola." Dawson, through Nicholas Freydon, reserves his most

splenetic attacks for the worst of the slum-dwellers he lives with; people so debased that "it might literally be said that you could not walk upon pavement they had trodden without risk of physical contamination." They are "the maggots bred out of the sore upon which our modern industrialism is based." They are the "festerling spawn of human vermin that litters many of the mean streets of London." For them, we hear, "the only really suitable and humane institution, I told myself a hundred times, would be a place of compulsory euthanasia—comfortably equipped lethal cubicles. For some there would be little need of the compulsory element." Here again is the fantasy of "curing" the degenerate life of London by the most drastic of eugenical solutions that, as described earlier, some Australians took directly from the prescriptions of many British luminaries of the day, from H. G. Wells to Virginia Woolf.

We may allow Freydon the excuse that much of his spleen arises from his desperate struggle for bread. In his first year we see him quite literally dying a slow death from malnutrition. Truly does Freydon assert that the worst aspect of poverty is "the dull, deadening, sickly sensation which comes of sustained work during weeks of bread and butter (or dripping) diet, and none too much of that": a diet that fairly saps one's manhood. He is reduced to humiliating stratagems (and, here, surely, the author himself is standing forth plainly). On one painful occasion, hoping to buttonhole an editor, he shadows him into a hotel dining room, where he is obliged to buy a plate of soup whose price alone condemns him to nothing but bread for two days. Even then he lacks the nerve to address his quarry, who, having consumed half a sovereign's worth of lunch, vanishes beyond pursuit into another hall for coffee and cigars. Freydon writes 300 articles, sketches and stories in that first year and earns a grand total of £20. Most are rejected.

Very gradually things improve. By the time he is twenty-four, he is making a fairly dependable £120 or more a year. Some volumes of short stories bring his name regularly before the public, and then he gets a staff position on an old-fashioned literary journal sounding much like the *Athenaeum*, worth £300 a year. But, as is common in such accounts, "youth, folly, vanity," mixed with "chivalrous generosity" intervenes: he marries his landlady's abused daughter who, also as usual, turns out to be an idle spendthrift and sot. After her early death, Freydon retreats to Dorking and settles down to the gruelling round of the professional writer, and this pattern continues for six years. We have reached the early 1890s.

When the end of a book was reached, there came the long and wearing process of its revision. Then interviews with publishers, the correction of proof sheets, the excogitation of writings for magazines—fuel for the fire that kept my pot a-boiling. There were intervals of acute mental weariness, and there

were intervals of acute bodily distress. But the intervals of reformed living, when they came at all, were too brief and spasmodic to make a stronger or a healthier man of me.

Another catastrophic and abortive love affair intervenes, but it awakens some political interests in Freydon, and this lasts for quite some years, bringing him to the end of his forties, by which time he is living well, still unmarried, earning his £700 to £1000 a year. He is quite successful but dissatisfied. The year now is 1910. "The desires of my youth were dead; the energies of my youth were dulled; the health and physical standard of my early manhood were greatly and for ever lowered. The enthusiasms of my youth had given place not to cynicism but to weary sadness." After twenty-five years in London, with 2,000 pounds in the bank, he is looking for a means of escape. Throwing aside any further literary ambition, he sets sail again—by steamer this time, and in the best cabin money can buy—for that distant coast where his happiest year had been spent. After another minor shipboard romance he buys a two-room gunyah in the middle of virgin bushland, lives alone, and settles down, in the short time remaining to him, to a life of endless musing and rereading all his old favorites: Hardy, Gissing, Kipling, Wells. And there he dies alone. In his closing note, however, the "editor" reports discovering an open-dated ticket back to England, bought a month before his death. Freydon had intended to go back after all. "England!" the *Record* closes. "Of all the place names, the names of countries that the world has known, was ever one so simply magic as this—England! Surely not. How the tongue caresses it!" It is a mystery exactly why Dawson puts so much weight on the savage misanthropy of his hero and his loathing of so many aspects of London life. Could he have felt it himself? After all, his hyperpatriotism over the war and love of his birth country was showing itself at the very same time in polemics like *How to Help Lord Kitchener*—Dawson's answer being to find some forceful means of persuading half a million men to head straight for the recruiting offices. Be that as it may, there exists no more penetrating account than the *Record* of a bottom-up look at the business of London journalism around the turn of the century. Nicholas Freydon's experiences, and very probably his creator's, must have been those of dozens of would-be literary journalists from the other side of the world who came to test their mettle on the Street of Adventure.

Not all were disappointed. Although one could not guess it from the early part of the *Record*, Nicholas Freydon arrives in England at just the right time, the early 1880s, to benefit from the enormous expansion in demand for every kind of literary product. He is plunged into the media environment of *Tit-Bits*, *Answers*, and other cheap, immensely profitable papers: at one point there were fourteen weeklies and three dailies from the Harmsworth

stable alone on the newsstands. It was the heyday of the New Journalism. We recall that Freydon gets his first break in Sydney doing interviews, something that Dawson probably did in real life. The interview was then a new ingredient in all the print media of the English-speaking world. The veteran English journalist Raymond Blathwayt, looking back over his career from the vantage point of 1917, not long after Dawson's book appeared, recorded how he too had had the brainwave of interviewing writers and writing puff pieces about them for the newspapers. Authorial vanity made his job easy, at first anyway. "On one Monday I was practically starving; on the following Monday the cheques had begun that delightful flow which they have never altogether ceased ever since. It was as though I had gone into an oil district and at once started a 'gusher'.... Never again, I suppose, certainly not within the working life of the young people of the present day, will such a golden era, journalistically speaking, present itself as it presented itself to me."¹⁴ Hostility to persistent and aggressive interviewers set in eventually, but before that happened Blathwayt had moved on to the even more fertile fields of Hollywood.

Interviewing was in any case only one kind of new opportunity. The demand for all kinds of general interest material was insatiable and an army of freelancers like Freydon and his many real-life equivalents had sprung up to supply it. Few grew rich, but the rewards were infinitely better than in Australia. There were so many outlets for work. The reader had a choice of well over 2,000 weekly and monthly titles on the newsstands, and for a while London supported more than a dozen morning and evening newspapers. Although circulations were smaller and more local than today, the practice of syndicating material to provincial and overseas papers, which was common after 1890, added another source of income. Having a novel serialized first could triple or even quadruple the returns from it. The real stars could profit even further from a second run of the serial, *after* their book had appeared. The novelist and president of the writers' trade union, the Society of Authors, Walter Besant, saw plenty of openings in the New Journalism. The number of papers "is simply enormous; there seems no end to them," he crowed in 1892. Some of the weekly penny papers had circulations in the millions, and all were vying to get the best fiction, the most striking articles. "They offer," said Besant,

a means of subsistence—not a mere pittance, but a handsome income—to hundreds of writers. Out of one office alone there is poured every week a mass of fiction representing as much bulk as an ordinary three-volume novel. The daily papers with their leading articles; the high-class weeklies, such as the *Saturday Review*, the *Spectator*, the *Athenaeum*, the *Guardian*, the *Speaker*, and a few others, with their leaders political and social and their reviews, give

occupation to a large number of the best literary men and women, and the popular weeklies employ a much larger number of the rank and file.¹⁵

Besant plays down the fact that the competition among the “rank and file” was ferocious. Hopeful new arrivals were up against native-born prodigies like Arthur St. John Adcock, who boasted that he never had fewer than twenty manuscripts going around editors simultaneously, and never allowed a rejected piece to lie on his table overnight. Expatriates trying to penetrate the freelance world soon discovered what kind of Darwinian world this was. Arthur Adams, who knew all about it, apostrophized the Street as the aorta of the universe in one of his *London Streets* poems, imagining sarcastically how:

There, uninspired, yet with the dower
Of mightier mechanic power,
Some bent, obscure Euripides
Builds the loud drama of the hour!¹⁶

The first expatriate, bent, obscure “Euripides” to leave a substantial record of his experiences in the street was Arthur Patchett Martin (b.1851). Despite having founded and edited the *Melbourne Review* for six years—though he actually made his living working for the Post Office—Martin knew nothing whatever of Fleet Street conditions when he first arrived in 1883, admitting years later that he entered it in a state of “infantile simplicity.” His career thereafter followed a trajectory that would become very familiar. As a young man Martin had been a bosom companion of Alfred Deakin, the intellectual future prime minister. At that point Martin had been known more for his wit, indolent good humour and sexual escapades than any real literary application, at least according to Deakin’s first biographer.¹⁷ But when he found it convenient to move countries after a divorce scandal, London soon toughened Martin up. His literary ambitions disintegrated after he had tried a book of essays and poems that only a vanity publisher would touch. It sold fewer than forty copies. He took off his “singing robes,” threw away his harp, and seized “a journalist’s quill.” He wrote anything for anyone who would pay. That meant paragraphs on the aristocracy for society papers, speeches for provincial aldermen, and on one occasion “a most terribly florid and rhetorical address on ‘Enthusiasm’ which I wrote in a Bloomsbury lodging house from ‘notes’ on my unpaid bills. It was delivered to a crowded and delighted audience of Christian young men in Liverpool. My price was £10 cash.”¹⁸ Then he helped to run the *Melbourne Age’s* branch office, sleeping on a sofa while his colleague occupied the floor using a volume of the *London Directory* as a pillow. The *Age* allowed only a third of the wordage of

its competitor, the *Argus*, a meanness that required heroic feats of compression in their cables; nevertheless, if the *Age's* dour proprietor, David Syme, discovered any deficiencies, he mailed a carping list of omissions that the hard-working pair got a month or two later. The hours were murderous, starting at four in the morning when they had to grab the morning papers and gut their contents for the first urgent telegram transmissions at six, before starting the daily news round.

Patchett Martin moved on to better things eventually, becoming a booster for all things Australian at the *Pall Mall Gazette*. He was editor of a very short-lived journal, *Literary Opinion*, in 1891–92—or so he claimed. Actually he was probably only a contributor. Fifteen years after arriving he professed to have little to complain of, though he could never have been very prosperous. Those with whom he corresponded in Australia thought he was putting on a brave face, and that his gruelling English life had saddened and embittered him. He died young in 1902 and his wife had to solicit financial help from friends at home in his last illness.

Just before Patchett Martin died, there arrived in London another very different person, but one just as filled with literary ambitions and just as determined to force the capital to yield her a living, come what may. This was the pretty, vivacious Louise Mack, then aged thirty-one, late of the *Bulletin*. It was the winter of 1901–92. The feelings she recorded when hurrying distractedly in pursuit of urgent employment, down the narrow Street of Adventure with its bustling hansom cabs and horse buses and St. Paul's floating spectrally in the freezing fog up ahead on Ludgate Hill, must have found an echo in many another homesick breast:

Above all, there is something about the buildings that tells you what a mere atom you are. Office upon office looks down on you. You gaze upwards from storey to storey. To think of making an impression on them! At every higher flight you lose so much of your courage.

They steal from you all your need for your battle. They dissipate your will. They weaken your intention. They convince you of your unimportance.¹⁹

For a while the last paragraph seemed literally true. Mack grew very poor in a Bloomsbury attic while trying to finish a novel and later intimated that she had toyed with suicide in the dark days after her arrival. It was a severe descent for someone who had been a cosseted contributor—almost the girl mascot—at the *Bulletin* in her twenties and in charge of its Woman's Letter up until the moment she left. She had had one novel published in England in 1896, but it had received only a handful of lukewarm reviews there, and was forgotten by the time she left both Sydney and her marriage in April 1901. This decision to throw herself on to London's overcrowded market was an

adventurous step indeed, for she had even less to offer than the very few women who had gone before her. She also had had more opportunity than most to read the disconcerting news seeping back to the *Bulletin* offices. Just months before she left, her own page quoted an Australian woman then working on a London daily paper. "You couldn't imagine the misery of this life—or its loneliness! There are crowds of young and old girls knocking out decent livings on such despised publications as *Home Notes*, *Home Chat*, etc, but *what* a life. . . . The loneliness of London life is bad enough to a man, but it is ghastly to a woman. It is not necessary to tell you ability is *not* the main thing necessary; it is push, self-confidence."²⁰

Mack herself lacked neither of those qualities. What saved her was her willingness to swallow her higher ambitions and put her considerable energy into "the great wild land of serial fiction." Or, to put it mundanely, her immediate success came when she found work scribbling romantic tales for the Harmsworth Press.²¹ And she quickly attracted male attention. She charmed the notorious editor W. T. Stead, who had an eye for a pretty face, just as she had aroused the lust of A. G. Stephens back in Australia. In those days the envious Stephens had confided to his diary, after a boating trip with her and her new husband, that she gave signs of needing "a man who bruised, crushed, thrashed her . . . subject to gusts of sex passion probably"; clearly feeling he, rather than the milksop lawyer Mr. Creed, was the man for the job.²²

Mack was almost certainly one of the reasons why, after her departure, Stephens himself dashed off on an otherwise pointless trip to England for some months, in mid-1902. Little is known of this for sure: Stephens covered his tracks well. But what is certain is that the putative triangle provided a minor novelist, A. Rene Goring-Thomas, himself a contributor to the *Bulletin*, with some juicy fodder after he left Australia for good in 1904. In 1911, in England, Goring-Thomas published *The Lass with the Delicate Air*, set entirely in London and Paris. *The Lass* is a feline satire that recycles some of the details of the Mack marriage. She is represented as "Benny Miller," Stephens as "George Arthur," a novelist, and Creed as "John Fitzgerald," a barrister and opium addict. Although the novel is careful to avoid any Australian content or allusions at all, there are several mischievous touches for those in the know. For instance "Benny" chimes with "Lennie," one of Mack's earlier fictional heroines, and there are certainly other allusions that are now impossible to identify precisely. Goring-Thomas was careful not to descend to actual slander. George Arthur sounds and acts more like a willowy, decadent 1890s aesthete than the virile A. G. Stephens, who was once described as looking like a Viking ashore from sea-raiding, and it is he who is pursued by Benny rather than the other way round. If Benny is intended to be a plausible version of Louise Mack, then it is certainly an extremely

spiteful one. Benny is a fraud and a liar about money, and an adventuress who at one point dresses up as a high-class prostitute to try pick up men in the Bois de Boulogne. The unkindest cut of all is that she is exposed as a plagiarist, copying out madrigals in the British Museum library and rephrasing them as her own poems.

It is rather a puzzle what audience Goring-Thomas thought he was addressing. If it was an expatriate audience in England (the novel was apparently never reviewed in Australia), then it must have been a very well-informed one to decode the events of ten years earlier. How many would have spotted the joke against Arthur George Stephens when one character asks innocently whether George Arthur is a "regular name," commenting that "it seems to me to be kind of unfinished; it wants a Smith or Brown to follow it up, like putting a stamp on an envelope, my dear"?²³ At any rate, this whole episode mutely confirms that spicy Anglo-Australian literary gossip had no difficulty in spanning the hemispheres. There was no escaping it and it could be highly destructive. Mack's predecessor on Fleet Street, Patchett Martin, had suffered from the same thing. It was said of him by his fiery friend David Mickle, who was close to the events, that fleeing the divorce case in which Martin had become embroiled proved to be no solution, even at a distance of thousands of kilometers, for "the scandal he had awakened in Melbourne followed him and blackened his life."²⁴

Whatever her relations with the importunate, visiting Stephens, Mack shook him off and was soon in the thick of things, attending Stead's parties and making better money than all her ex-colleagues on the *Bulletin* put together. She sent back ecstatic doggerel and breathless causeries about her new life, full of gossip about the people she was meeting at dinners. There was Richard Whiteing, the slum novelist; Clement Shorter, then editor of three papers; and his forceful wife Dora Sigerson, Irish and pro-Boer, spotted by Mack one evening refusing to stand for a toast to the King. Of another marital writing team, Marie Connor Leighton and her husband, she recorded wistfully: "Said that they make a great deal of money."²⁵ One resentful recipient of such news back in Sydney thought that her ex-colleague was still displaying the vivid imagination so useful for a hackette scribbling storyettes.

Mack was no fool, despite her girlish manner and overwrought style. She displayed nerve, too, when she chose to stay behind and wait for the German investment in order to record her impressions of the siege of Antwerp in 1914. She was described as the only female war correspondent left behind enemy lines, at a time when (according to her at least) the Kaiser had ordered all such to be shot as spies. After she made it back safely to England and had written up her experiences, she embarked on a quick lecture tour to Australia the following year, where she figured as a celebrity sufficiently

well-known to appear in newspaper advertisements for Rexona soap, claiming it had magically preserved her peach-bloom complexion during those difficult days at the trenches.

In her sixties, very poor and near the end of her life, Mack revisited her early struggles in London at the turn of the century in her novel *Teens Triumphant*. (The misleading title plays on that of an earlier success of hers, which had been for young adult readers, which this one was not.) Even more autobiographical than the rest of her fiction, this makes it plain that, at least in retrospect, Mack was fully aware of the price she had paid for her success. Her heroine, young Lennie Leighton, naïve and romantic, is living in an attic on next to nothing, finishing her first work, which is apparently a rhapsody on the pleasures of London. Few readers would have noticed that one long chunk Mack quotes from Lennie's manuscript to illustrate her brilliance is coyly recycled from Mack's own novel *An Australian Girl in London* of thirty years earlier.

Thinking, wrongly, that her book has been rejected by a publisher, and desperate for money, Lennie finds herself climbing the stairs to the offices of the "Mammonite Press" hoping for a trial as a writer of serials. The offices are obviously those of the *Daily Mail* and "Mammonite" a thin disguise for the Amalgamated Press, already lampooned by P. G. Wodehouse as the "Mammoth Publishing Company" in several of his novels of the 1920s. Lennie is perfectly well aware what she is doing. "She was going to cease to be true to herself. She was going to turn herself into a machine that wrote for money." She has already had advice from the Weddings, a couple from Canada who are gruesomely successful at what they call a "cash-and-carry business," the manufacture of romantic serials.

Mack, like her heroine, had been in the right place at the right time. The *Mail*, then a new and instantly popular arrival on the Street, was almost the first daily newspaper to run serials, and its editor, Alfred Harmsworth (Lord Northcliffe), insisted that he would not do as others did, and buy novels from well-known authors to be cut up into lengths. No, a *Mail* serial had to be written from scratch in that form, ending with a new crisis every day, and the newspaper was willing to give a trial to anyone who could meet its onerous demands.

"Get this into your head," said Percy Wedding, more solemnly than ever; "they *want* your stuff, if you make it suit them. . . . They'll begin with a guinea a thousand, but if your stories send up their circulations they will have no hesitation (as long as you're firm) in going even to five guineas a thousand. That'll bring you in twenty guineas a week straight away, and they'll pay you as you go along. As soon as you're settled on your plot, and have done the first three instalments, they'll begin sending you your weekly cheques, and if you

are popular you can go on and on for ever, one story following another as fast as you are able to do them, and the money rolling in all the time. The openings are innumerable. Every year some fresh paper is started by Mammonite, either a weekly or a monthly. They all sell. They all have about a million readers. And they all *must* have *Fiction!* And that's our tip about making *lots* of money in London by writing. You can easily make eighty pounds a week."

Once the *Mail's* brutally demanding fiction editor has inculcated his requirements (how to grab the Sympathy of the Readers in the first 10,000 words; when to bring in the Mystery, the Domestic Interest, the Love Interest, and the Allusion to the Minor Mystery), Lennie proves a dab hand at turning the stuff out: the Love-after-Marriage serial, the Murder or the Theft story—whatever is needed. Barbara Baynton, whose artistic integrity and inherited wealth would never have let her bow to anyone, said scornfully that Mack's idea of a good line, in cobbling together a serial for the *Mail*, was this sort of thing: "Where had she left her gold pen, with its heavily jewelled handle?"²⁶ But it would be a mistake to suppose Mack was unaware of the absurdity of what she was doing. What she thought of all those tales that she had churned out herself in her thirties is sufficiently indicated by young Lennie's reaction when the editor issues her with a plot outline to scrutinize. "It was about some pearls that had been stolen. She was astounded. She could scarcely believe that anyone could repeat such utter futility, much less accept it for print."²⁷ Perhaps so, but very soon the messenger boys are clamoring for her copy, the cash is pouring into her bank at the rate of £2,000 a year and out again just as quickly, and Lennie is on a treadmill.

At the close of *Teens Triumphant*, Lennie is rescued from her exhausting life by her rich lover, and after a brief interlude in Italy, the married couple return to a saner, slower life in Australia. This part is a fantasy resolution. There was perhaps, temporarily, a rich lover for Louise Mack, but she continued to make her own independent way. She lived in Florence for some years working on an English paper in rather mysterious circumstances, then she went back to London working for Northcliffe again, living in high style at the Adelphi, and then returned at last to Australia. Mr. Creed having conveniently drunk himself to death at Iron Knob in 1915, she married a much younger man, spent lavishly, and travelled widely as a lecturer, embroidering fantastically her European experiences and personal history, showing films purportedly of her big game hunting in central Africa, growing ever more eccentric and describing herself modestly as "the greatest woman speaker in the world."²⁸ Game to the end—her last job was as the agony aunt in a women's magazine, offering advice to the lovelorn from the perspective of a "woman of the world"—she died in Sydney in 1935. She had not lived the kind of life that had seemed to be ahead of her when she started out as a

young bride in a humble Chatswood cottage, and expatriation had supplied it all.

Louise Mack was not the only Australian to catch the eye of Harmsworth and to labor for him on the *Daily Mail*. A journalist who was treated even more generously than Mack—at least to start with—was Ambrose Pratt, another of those remarkably versatile figures produced by Australia at the end of the Victorian era. Urbane, clever, and debonair, Pratt started out as a solicitor, but like many another he found life in his native place too dull to resist trying authordom overseas. He went to London in his twenty-fourth year, arriving in 1898. He wrote numerous potboiling adventure novels and a batch of fast-moving short stories for the *Strand* and other magazines over the next seven years in England. He did not have to struggle overmuch: his works, with titles like *The Living Mummy*, were immediately popular in both countries. Like Guy Boothby, Pratt had no scruples about going all out for sensation. A fantastical account of Sydney larrikinism that Pratt somehow inveigled the staid *Blackwood's* magazine into printing helped to get him talked about. Pratt claimed to have insider knowledge of the infamous Pushes, gained from one of their “kings” whom he had befriended during his legal work. Pratt managed to make the Mafia sound like a tea party compared to one Push, in which discipline was maintained with a savage punishment called “the Sock,” and a neophyte had to prove himself worthy in an initiation ritual that involved kicking a selected victim to death. Infuriated denials shot across the world from the Sydney police and the magistracy, but they were too late. Sensational or humorous revelations of rough Australian life from the pens of expatriates always went down well in the Old Country, and Pratt was one of the best at delivering them. Shamelessly, he worked up the same article material into a novel. Some years later in Australia, during a libel trial where Pratt was plaintiff, he was forced to admit under cross-examination that he had deliberately expanded a few grains of fact into a sensational tale. But the court was obviously sympathetic, and by then he had long since secured an honorable place at the journalists’ table. And he won his libel action, too.

Pratt’s penchant for tall stories, or “De Rougement tales” as a phrase then briefly in vogue had it, was not primarily responsible for his employment by the *Daily Mail*. He first came to Harmsworth’s attention by a curious circumstance. Before leaving Australia he had been commissioned by a wholesaler to buy a thousand British-made watches for export and to oversee their shipment home. To Pratt’s incredulity, the manufacturer in Coventry declined to fill the order on the grounds that they never dealt with new customers and never increased their annual production. (Not surprisingly, the watch industry of Coventry collapsed soon afterwards.) Pratt wrote a mocking letter to the *Daily Mail* drawing attention to this state of affairs. The

enraged public response encouraged Harmsworth, who had been impressed by Pratt's first two novels, to offer him a roving commission to travel anywhere, with a guarantee to take any articles resulting. All went well for a time, and even after Pratt returned to Australia in 1904, he continued to write for the *Mail*. But it went sour when he returned a *Mail* cheque and resigned, remarking injudiciously that he intended to aim for a higher-quality, more influential readership in future. Infuriated by this gesture of defiant superiority, Harmsworth never forgave him.²⁹ Later Pratt worked as a war correspondent and was together with Louise Mack at the Siege of Antwerp. The two spent one night huddled together in the basement of a hotel with German shells crashing overhead. Later still he had a distinguished career in business and political circles and as an orientalist—he was one of the very few public figures to oppose the White Australia policy—and eventually he turned to work on the conservation of native fauna.

This episode suggests, yet again, that contact with the British newspaper world could be a bruising experience, even though it could confer great if rather equivocal success. What might be regarded as success was to some extent a matter of expectations and ambition as well as native talent. Gibbs's Frank Luttrell may have fallen below his own standard as an Oxford man, but he does earn a weekly pound or two from his articles. It was not enough, obviously, to maintain a bourgeois standard of living, but tens of thousands of families—poor, certainly, but not wholly impoverished—lived on a pound a week. Plenty of writers who retreated to country cottages within a 100 km or so radius of London scraped by on little more than that well into the 1930s. And there were uplifting cases of energetic Australians doing better than the native-born British in the same line of work, despite the competition. An example is Haddon Chambers (1860–1921), an ex-public servant. He made a fortune eventually as a dramatist specializing in the “well-made” play, but when he first arrived in London as a young man (for the second and last time, in 1882, aged twenty-three), he started as a writer of short stories and literary journalism successful enough to keep him independent. Like Ambrose Pratt a little later, he found that cultivating a horrid imagination was the way forward. One of his stories, “In Cold Blood,” was gruesome enough to attract public protests. Writing in the third person, he told how important this start was to him:

He was once sorely tempted to exchange his vicariously paid freedom for a staff appointment on a popular journal. Only his almost fierce love of personal liberty saved him. He had already fled from the fettersome restrictions of the Civil Service of his native New South Wales to the comparative independence of bush life, and as a literary free lance he enjoyed an immunity from control that he refused to barter away for a regular income.³⁰

Chambers's fortune started to be made with his first big stage success, *Captain Swift*, in 1888, which is set in London but has three stereotypical Australian characters. Initially, however, journalism did not serve him badly. A valiant attempt has been made to claim Chambers as a name in "Australian" theatre history, despite the fact that not one of the rest of his many plays has any Australian content whatever. The ground for the claim is that these other plays do contain outsider figures or have "Western" American settings, which might be thought of as "scenarios [which] could easily be read as substituting for Australia."³¹ This is a desperate plea and a good example of the "no surrender" syndrome afflicting some biographers, which will be taken up in a later chapter. In truth, Chambers's only discernible connection with his homeland after his first play was staged is that he was presumed to be one of Nellie Melba's many lovers.

Success, or at least contentment, might come to expatriate literary journalists in other ways. They might not prosper as Chambers did, but they could hope to strike off the fetters of regular office hours and enjoy the same "immunity from control" that meant so much to him. This was one of the most tempting aspects of London journalism and nonfictional freelance work. In England alone was it possible to benefit from highly specialized markets by building a network of fruitful relationships and enjoying the sense of being among sympathetic spirits. The fragmented nature of the market did hold the promise of a lifestyle inconceivable at home, even if the monetary rewards were modest and exiguous. A good example of this type is Frederic Manning, author of what is recognized now as one of the best (though for a long time forgotten) Great War novels, *Her Privates We* (1929). Scion of an affluent Sydney family, Manning left for the second time, and this time permanently, in July 1903, at the age of twenty-one. His interests were almost exclusively in the obscurest recesses of classical philosophy and literature. Unashamedly dilatory, by temperament a fastidious aesthete and confirmed bachelor, Manning lived an isolated life in a country cottage, reviewing for the *Spectator* and happily turning out erudite essays for T. S. Eliot's heavily subsidized *Criterion* magazine for its handful of readers, supplementing these agreeable labors with small remittances from home. Despite his war experiences at the bottom of the military pyramid (he was hardly officer material), it is hard to imagine anyone less fitted for the rough and tumble of antipodean literary life in the 1920s and '30s. As his biographer says, "Early and deliberately he had detached himself from his homeland...opting for an English identity and literary career suitable to that identity."³² In fact, England was the only place someone like Manning could have *had* a literary career of the kind he craved.

The state of affairs that nourished Chambers, Manning, Patchett Martin, Louise Mack, and even (in the end) Nicholas Freydon and a host of others,

real and imaginary, lasted for about fifty years. Eventually the combined effects of the Slump, radio, the cinema, and glossy picture papers killed off many of the reviewing opportunities, as well as most of the magazines that printed short fiction and light articles. In his never-published manuscript novel *Clean Earth*, written in 1930 near the end of his London sojourn, P. R. Stephensen has his mouthpiece character Peter Villiers, when down on his luck, desperately scribbling a “woman-interest” piece of 400 words called “OUR PRECOCIOUS CHILDREN, by a Schoolmaster,” which he sends off to the *Daily Mail*. To his astonishment a cheque for five guineas comes back. But this is a flash in the pan; the *Mail* knows what it wants and another dozen articles from Villiers are all turned down. One of Villiers’s friends who is slipping into poverty bewails the reduction in the work available to freelancers, who are being replaced by celebrity puff pieces and regular columnists on the staff payroll. Stephensen knew this was happening when he wrote *Clean Earth*; indeed, it may have helped persuade him to repatriate himself. Newspapers merged and merged again; long-familiar names like the *Daily News* vanished; the literary-journalistic milieu contracted, then swelled out in a new shape. But the market was still huge, compared to Australia’s, and there were always opportunities somewhere for the talented and eager. For seventy years or more, Fleet Street and its environs was for most new arrivals the epicentre of literary patronage, especially for the ones who hoped to leapfrog from reportage or churning out serial fiction into a “real” literary career. A few made this transition; most did not.

CHAPTER 6

THE DEAR OLD MOTHER COUNTRY: RICHARDSON'S *THE WAY HOME* AND STEAD'S *FOR LOVE ALONE*

Mahony looked up at the familiar constellations and thought of those others, long missed, that he was soon to see again.—Over! This page of his history was turned and done with; and he had every reason to feel thankful. For many and many a man, though escaping with his life, had left youth and health and hope on these difficult shores. He had got off scot-free. Still in his prime, his faculties green, his zest for living unimpaired, he was heading for the dear old mother country—for home.

Henry Handel Richardson (1917)¹

In some way the endless walking, walking, meant England. She was walking her way to England. In three years to the day, less Sunday and Christmas Day and one or two other holidays, she would have walked 2,772 miles and by the time she sailed she would have walked just 3,000 miles.

Christina Stead (1944)²

“THEY SHRANK FROM THE LAND THEY WERE GOING TO,” SAYS THE NARRATOR in Christina Stead’s *For Love Alone*, speaking of those who like the heroine Teresa Hawkins are preparing to migrate to England. Why go there, of all the places in the world? For was not that country “a land of tyranny denounced by English patriots and abandoned by their own grandfathers, a land of unrest, the land of Dickens, poor seamstresses in Poultry and mud-spattered Watling

Street, a London, cloud-sunk, an adamantine island chained to the shifting bank of the Channel, the city of Limehouse and Jack the Ripper”?

For Stead it was an important artistic goal to find a new twist on the soothing notion of England as “Home.” She knew herself that expatriation to London at any date before the Second World War required exceptional determination; and, once arrived, there followed the problem of making something out of the actual experience of “being in” England. This could be a tricky matter for those writers who wanted, like Stead, to exploit their new situation for creative purposes. (As we have seen, not all did; the immigrant type wished to dissolve into the new environment like sugar into tea.)

There are rather few creative products from this period that are deeply analytical, as opposed to being interestingly descriptive, about English life as it appears from an Australian perspective. The reason has been sufficiently illustrated already: England was too familiar to the imagination. London was comprehended, at least in outline, long before the train from the Southampton docks pulled in at Waterloo. This is surely responsible for the curiously vapid and peevish tone of the reflections of most arrivals, even relatively sophisticated ones; for example, Miles Franklin’s whinging about the wattle in the flower shops being poor stuff from France, with the balls about half the “usual” size.³ Most of the *aperçus* about Britain have been repeated across the generations for a century or more, like the warmth of the beer, the rapacity of landladies, or the charge levied by even the best hotels to fill a bathtub. (The joke that Britons find a hiding-place for their cash under the soap-dish has a long history. It is not entirely fatuous. When the stylish new Victoria Hotel opened on Northumberland Avenue in 1887, it had four bathrooms for 500 patrons.⁴)

The truth is that the people who came to inspect the British Isles, and to sharpen their pens to record what they found, were almost exclusively Anglo-Celts. A voyage of 20,000 kilometers brought them to a place where the institutions were familiar, the culture well understood, as least as mediated through literature, and the practicalities of life devoid of any piquant contrasts. Until the mass immigrations after the Second World War, virtually every white person in the country had British ancestry, and those who left their adopted country to return to their origins were, in familial terms, doubly expatriates. Most had parents or grandparents, cousins, uncles, or aunts still living in the British Isles with whom they were in touch. And since nearly all writers came of well-educated bourgeois stock, they had been steeped in English history and literature from birth. The upper-class education received by Martin Boyd was so focused on the British Isles that as a child he was embarrassed to discover that the subject “history” encompassed events that had happened in France as well.⁵ A generation later, in the 1930s, and much lower down the social scale, the journalist Phillip Knightley

stood on a giant map in the playground of his Sans Souci primary school on Empire Day (May 24) and recited from memory the name of each country and capital city of the British Empire.⁶

It was hardly possible for Australians to think of England as American anglophiles did, as an intriguingly foreign place from which they had been sundered for generations. The United States has been an independent country for a long time, and it is a long time too since it suffered from the degree of postcolonial psychological dependency that Australians displayed through much of the twentieth century. It is true that some Americans took the idea of expatriation to England very seriously in the early part of the century. At various times Oliver Wendell Holmes, Hawthorne, Emerson, Longfellow, Edith Wharton, and even the supremely American Mark Twain considered living permanently there. For Henry James, that devoted anglophile, living in England was more than an inclination; it became an artistic duty and obligation. In the realm of *belles lettres*, it must be conceded that no Australian writer came within *cooee* of the degree of subtle insight into English life that is revealed in the essays of James's *English Hours*, which he wrote at various times between 1888 and 1905, after he had become a permanent expatriate himself. Equally, no one left private journals as full of savagely witty observations on London women and London food as Nathaniel Hawthorne. A few, like the ebullient journalist Randolph Bedford, did approximate the zest of these Americans, and Australian responses to London certainly did cover a broad spectrum; but no one caught and exploited the full, rich, romantic, Jamesian ambiguity about the capital:

It is not a pleasant place; it is not agreeable, or cheerful, or easy, or exempt from reproach. It is only magnificent. You can draw up a tremendous list of reasons why it should be insupportable. The fogs, the smoke, the dirt, the darkness, the wet, the distances, the ugliness, the brutal size of the place... [but] it is the biggest aggregation of human life—the most complete compendium of the world.⁷

England sparked his creativity from the very start, in short stories like “A London Life” and that supreme example of English Gothic, *The Turn of the Screw*. Some Australians, perhaps, really did feel on the pulse the throb of James’s much-meditated, much-discussed “complex fate” of being raised in one culture and being creative in another; but if they did, they could not articulate it very thoroughly or at length. Henry James told his brother that “I can’t look at the English-American world, or feel about them, any more, save as a big Anglo-Saxon total, destined to such an amount of melting together that an insistence on their differences becomes more and more idle and pedantic.”⁸ The vehemence with which James speaks tells its own story.

It is clear that he hardly expects his brother to believe him, and he is clearly thinking of the "melting together" as something that may happen in the indeterminate future, something to which he can contribute. But it would never have occurred to most Australians contemporary with Henry James, or those who came long after him, to view themselves as being anything *other* than part of the "Anglo-Saxon total," or to see any need to "melt together" as a deliberate endeavor. For Americans, London was the city a few days' sailing away on the other side of the Atlantic. But psychically speaking, London for Australians was closer than that. Most expatriates ignored the notion, still regularly foisted on them by critic-historians today, that their condition necessarily obliged them to "live two lives." They said the notion was simply meaningless for them. It had been so since the First Fleet. As K. S. Inglis once put it, emigrants to Australia found themselves arriving at the least unfamiliar of the new Britains. The converse was no less true.

But there are exceptions. Three very different novels of the early-middle twentieth century stand out as dealing effectively with the individual's private experience of expatriation: Henry Handel Richardson's *The Way Home* (1925), which is the second part of her *Fortunes of Richard Mahony* trilogy, Christina Stead's *For Love Alone* (1944), and Martin Boyd's *Lucinda Brayford* (1946). In no case are their main characters established literary figures themselves, but all three are intensely autobiographical.

The reputation today of each of these works, among critics if not readers, has been stable now for at least four decades. Back in 1971, for instance, Brian Kiernan included the first two in his collection of seven essays about novels that he considered to be "the most original, imaginative and relevant Australian novels in terms of the images of life they create." (Kiernan was particularly insistent that where the creators of these masterworks were domiciled was only a side issue when it came to evaluating their products, which was a slightly provocative attitude at that time.) In 1974, A. D. Hope agreed that Richardson and Boyd merited that same honor, but he substituted Helen Simpson, also an expatriate, for Stead, something that few would accept today.⁹ For better or worse, these particular novels have become classics of Australian letters, with all that implies.

The three have a number of features in common. All were by expatriates of long standing who did all their best work overseas. Richardson left Australia when she was eighteen and the other two in their later twenties. At the time when their novels appeared none of the three had any plans to return, and only Stead did so permanently, in old age and with her work done. Richardson and Boyd lived out all the latter part of their lives in Europe, wrote all their books there, and died in Hastings and Rome, respectively.

Coincidentally, two of the prime motives adduced earlier as driving most writers to go and live in England—that is, to become a member of a rich

and living tradition, and to make a better living—did not apply with much force to these three. Richardson's only real intimates during her active career were her husband and a sympathetic school friend and correspondent back in Australia. Christina Stead for much of her life lived an itinerant existence with her husband in hotel rooms and cheap lodgings, and although she knew many writers and intellectuals as acquaintances, she belonged to no network of like-minded writers and put down roots nowhere specifically. As for Martin Boyd, he disliked the company of writers, never went to their conferences or gatherings, gave no interviews, rarely spoke publicly of his work or tried to promote it, and repeatedly changed from home to home in three different countries. Certainly the mournful account by Boyd's biographer of his last, lonely years in Rome lend some point to Norman Lindsay's dictum about the advisability of an artist's sticking to his own desk in his own country. Yet only Boyd had the luxury of complete flexibility in his domicile. Both Richardson and Stead had marital commitments keeping them overseas for many years, and neither repudiated their homeland entirely in the way Boyd did after his final return to Europe.

Another point in common is that all three authors were middle-aged when their novels appeared—Richardson was fifty-five, Stead forty-two, and Boyd fifty-three—and all had respectable backlists and established if rather narrow reputations. Richardson was known for *Maurice Guest*, *The Getting of Wisdom*, and *Australia Felix*; Stead for *Seven Poor Men of Sydney* and *The Man Who Loved Children*; Boyd for his family saga *The Montforts* and a series of brittle social comedies of the 1930s like *The Lemon Tree*. All three in their lifetimes appealed to a critically sophisticated rather than a popular readership, although individual works of theirs enjoyed quite big sales at various times.

The most remarkable aspect of the reputations of all three was that their Australian readership at the time of publication of these novels, and for years afterward, was minuscule. Richardson's *The Way Home* had such a lackluster reception that Vance Palmer told the *Bulletin's* readers he suspected that it had sold no more than twenty copies locally in the first few years after its appearance, which is probably correct since the global sales were under a thousand.¹⁰ That is not really surprising. His wife Nettie reported that when *The Way Home* appeared, *Australia Felix*, the first volume of the trilogy—without which the second part made little sense—was so forgotten that she herself had found the only copy she had ever seen outside a library while rummaging in the basement of a Brisbane draper's store.

Richardson cared little about this. She worked slowly and meticulously, never with an eye on sales and never with much concern for her readers' expectations. *Australia Felix* had certainly not been rushed into print. Most of it was written long before it appeared in 1917, in the gloomiest year of the

Great War. Although it is obvious at the end of *Australia Felix* that a sequel is to follow—because Mahony's belief that he is sailing away from his despised colonial life for good is obviously a delusion—it was eight years before *The Way Home* followed. By that time most of its few readers would have been mystified by the appearance of characters like Purdy Smith, with whom they were clearly expected to be acquainted already. Finally there came *Ultima Thule* in 1929, of which so little was expected that, at first, her husband paid for it to be published. Its success in America astonished Richardson herself, and was cemented at last by the issue of the trilogy, revised, in one volume in 1930.

Again, Stead's fiction was hardly known by anybody, and rarely discussed; so rarely, indeed, that in a standard literary history of Australia, edited by Geoffrey Dutton in the 1960s, her entire output is granted just nine lines of commentary and does not mention *For Love Alone* even in passing.¹¹ There were no local editions of any of her books until mid-decade, partly explained by the fact that she published nothing of her own over the long period 1952–65, when she was living mostly in London, although she wrote a great deal there.

As for Boyd, after releasing *The Montforts*, which had quite a good sale in Australia because it fictionalizes his family's move to their new country, he vanished so completely from critical awareness that few of those who came across the comic fiction he wrote in the 1930s could have been aware he was not English. There was little in these works to tell them so. *Lucinda Brayford* sold hundreds of thousands of copies in the Northern Hemisphere, and had nine reviews in Sweden alone on publication, but not a single Australian paper so much as noticed it, and there was no sustained critical reaction to it for some years.¹² Even today neither Stead's work nor Boyd's can be read in properly edited editions, a serious handicap in the two cases of *For Love Alone* and *Lucinda Brayford* as both are intensely allusive; the first sometimes mystifyingly so.

Another way in which these are comparable is that all three turned their backs on the "bush narrative" tradition in favor of European models. That is to say, none is concerned with adding to nativist Australian literature in the *Bulletin*-approved, Australian-legend tradition running, say, from Furphy to Vance Palmer to Xavier Herbert and beyond. Although two of them, the novels by Richardson and Boyd, do belong to the "family chronicle" or "saga" subgenre, which was one of the main forms taken by the Australian novel at that point in its evolution, all three are cosmopolitan in outlook and setting. Apart from central London and Australia (that is to say, Sydney, the expensive suburbs of Melbourne, the Riverina, coastal Victoria), they set their scenes variously in Devon, the Midlands, the European capitals of the Grand Tour, Provence, and inside grand English country estates. Due partly

to their own cast of mind and partly to the circumstances of their lives, these authors modeled their work on products of the European literary canon, especially the fiction of France, Britain, Germany, and Russia. Their masters were Goethe, Mann, Dostoevsky, and Flaubert in Richardson's case; Balzac, Hugo, and Maupassant in Stead's; and possibly Waugh, Galsworthy, Maugham, and Anthony Powell in Boyd's. Furthermore, the action in each case is displaced into the past: *The Way Home* by a half-century or more; *For Love Alone* by more than a decade; *Lucinda Brayford* by a variable period, but for long stretches up to fifty years or so. This permits the kind of historical detachment and social enquiry that in different ways interested all these novelists.

Apart from these commonalities, these three novels are utterly distinct in tone, technique, and characterization. Since they are all highly autobiographical, they are suffused with their authors' literary personalities, and these were as different as they could well be. *The Way Home* is documentary in its realism, coolly judged and scrupulously detached even when dealing with the grimdest subject matter such as the long-drawn death agonies of John Turnham or, worse still, the first premonitory signs of Richard Mahony's descent into syphilitic paralysis and insanity. Nothing is hurried; the plot unfolds with a leisurely amplitude. Unlike Richardson's earlier *Maurice Guest* it has no romantic or sexual passion of any kind, if we except Mahony's clumsy flirtations with a couple of women, nor does the content lend itself to humor, though there are a few scenes of caustic wit in it, as when Mary Mahony, irritated by the credulity of her husband, gets a hand free and wrecks a séance:

She made a grab, and just as expected, found the medium—easily recognisable by her bulk—crouched on her knees inside the circle, with a long feather whisk in her hand. In the dark, and in utter silence, a struggle went on between them, she holding fast, the medium wriggling this way and that, and ultimately, by lying almost flat on the floor, contriving to wrench herself free. Not a word did Mary say.

Mahony is infuriated when they are expelled from the psychic circle, but Mary's sturdy response is only "I knew her by her figure. What's more, I distinctly felt the big wart she has on the side of her chin."¹³ It is an amusing scene, but it is also a signal sign of Richardson's detachment that one would never guess from it that her own belief in spiritualism was unshakable.

If *The Way Home* is Apollonian, *For Love Alone* is Dionysian. Sexual passion reverberates through it. Its theme is the redemptive power of love—love frustrated in Sydney and fulfilled in London—and it is an odd mixture of minute factuality and wild romanticism. It is sometimes overexcited and

overblown in style, bursting with its appetite for experience, erotic and otherwise, and sometimes inchoate in its urge to capture pure sensation. Stead herself paid tribute to the “awful blind strength” of the creative drive in her own case, and even her most admiring critics admit her evident impatience with “superficial coherence or anything like a polished finish.”¹⁴ This is eminently true of *For Love Alone*. There are sentences, even a few paragraphs, of impenetrable and probably wilful obscurity. Its narrative consists mostly, but not entirely, of the heroine’s stream of consciousness, although it is frequently an unreliable, self-deceiving narrative, and it is leavened by drily mocking comments from an implied narrator, who speaks of Teresa Hawkins as “the girl.” Though the title was not the author’s choice, it is suitably ambiguous. Is it to be read as: All for love and the world well lost? Or is it that ill-advised love is likely to end in abandonment? And what kind of love is worth having that preordains solitude?

Finally, *Lucinda Brayford* is different again: an old-fashioned title for an “old-fashioned” narrative. Blending elements of the family chronicle and the *Bildungsroman*, it is resolutely traditional in its technique and presentation of character, for Boyd detested the modernists and all their experimentalism. Galsworthy and Somerset Maugham’s *Of Human Bondage* are perhaps the closest British analogues of this work. Boyd uses the same sort of contrived flatness, where narrative drive takes precedence over subtlety of analysis. “Back to the Story” was the title of one of the first very positive reviews, in the *Times Literary Supplement*, and it is apt. This is a novel driven by plot, where one wants to know, more than anything, what is going to happen next. Boyd takes a canvas of generous proportions in time and space—the action covers roughly the period 1875–1945, and there is a large cast—but the narrative moves along briskly despite many witty authorial asides.

Taken together, the three novels illustrate how very differently the same basic material, the experience and meaning of expatriation, could be treated. All three novelists to some degree believed, or at least asserted publicly, that they were and had always been Australian writers living abroad; and certainly all were interested, in very different ways and for very different purposes, in using their art to investigate what that status meant in practice. The epigraph to Richardson’s *The Way Home* (in full, from Virgil, it is *coelum, non animum, mutant, qui trans mare currunt*) is applicable to Stead’s and Boyd’s novels too, but with a great difference. Richardson is intent on proving how true the tag is, whereas the other two novelists’ main characters implicitly deny its truth. For them, both the climate and their natures do change radically when they voyage overseas. Despite her repeated wish to do so, Boyd’s heroine, Lucinda Vane, never returns to her birth country after her departure as Hugo Brayford’s young bride; nor is there any sign in *For*

Love Alone that Teresa Hawkins will ever be returning either. Europe transforms these two and claims them for good.

Richard Mahony's case is very different. He cannot escape his own nature and is just the same nervous, pompous, restless man in Buddlecombe that he has been in Ballarat. A malcontent and a wanderer, the experience of crossing from one side of the world to the other no fewer than five times does nothing to satisfy him. Neither in one world nor the other is he ever at home, and the minute examination of this condition marks *The Way Home* as the first really thorough exploration of this dilemma for the expatriate. Although it becomes clear (but not in *The Way Home* except in retrospect) that Mahony's restless voyaging is a symptom of advancing tertiary syphilis, the disease really serves as a metaphor. The germs eating away at his brain are really the spirochetes of alienation and exclusion, and he dies, symbolically at least, of deracination. Although it is set in the 1860s and '70s, and Mahony, despite being given to poetical and rhetorical effusions verging on the ridiculous, is not a literary man, it is very much a product of the 1920s and has, implicitly, much to say about the contemporary situation of the expatriate, and from a less usual perspective.

At first sight, Richardson's sundering from her birth country was much more total than either Stead's or Boyd's. After leaving, or being taken away, at the age of eighteen, she saw Australia only once more, and that was just a research visit in 1912 that she handled in a brisk few weeks, and it seemed to leave no particular mark on her. Yet she was distinctly one of the metic type. She never became emotionally reconciled to living overseas, as many passages in her letters prove. She was exiled—the more appropriate term in her case—by marriage, and lived in England uninterrupted for forty-two years, much longer than either Boyd or Stead. By the time she was widowed the effort of returning, though she did consider it, was beyond her.

Her relationship with Australian literature, and her sense of her own place in it, remained rather ambiguous throughout her life. She told her American editor W. W. Norton, after all of *The Fortunes* trilogy had appeared, that she had no wish to be "marked for life as an 'Australian writer' (though of course I keep this private)." One can speculate about what specific anxiety she had in mind with that bracketed "of course."¹⁵ She went further than this privately, with her friend Mary Kernot, saying that "[Mahony] was planned to be chiefly the study of a character. That it plays in Australia is—not exactly chance...but just as a background as needed, & into which the story is woven." Though the idea of separating Mahony from Australia sounds ridiculous, Richardson surely wanted to insist that *The Fortunes* was, for its time, sui generis, a "European" book, outside the evolving pattern of what she called, perhaps a little maliciously, "struggling" native literature. So, by implication, she meant that it was such a work as only an outsider steeped in nineteenth-

century European literature could have written, and that was the scale against which she expected to be measured.¹⁶ Her guiding masters were Jacobsen, Stendhal, Tolstoy, and, above all, surely, Flaubert. At one point in his essay on the *Fortunes*, Brian Kiernan asks: "If, as seems her intention, Richardson is detached from Mahony, what is *her* attitude towards him at this moment?"¹⁷ But surely that is to misunderstand Richardson's method. Her intent was to have *no* attitude. Richardson learnt from Flaubert and other nineteenth-century European naturalists a tough discipline of detachment and impassivity. She never acts the apologist, never approves or condemns, never succumbs to the temptation of adding a smart authorial aside for the delectation of the implied reader, and has always an unflinching eye for the salient detail. The long-drawn-out decline and death of Mahony in the last volume is prefigured here with the harrowing description of the death from liver cancer of John Turnham, where the narrative fudges nothing. The episode does show Dr. Mahony at his best, always solicitous of his patient's comfort. "Cried Mahony, watching John's fruitless efforts: 'The day will come, I'm sure of it, when we shall agree to the incurable sufferer being put painlessly away. We need a lethal chamber, and not for dumb brutes alone.'" The resolute avoidance, in this lengthy episode, of any hint of authorial commentary shows Richardson's Flaubertian method at its most aloof. Indeed, this scene surely was inspired by the drawn-out agonies of Emma Bovary after she takes the arsenic, and perhaps still more by Tolstoy's chilling novella *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (1886), especially in the attitude of the friends and relations who gradually lose interest and stop calling when Turnham baffles them by not dying on cue.

If Richardson did not want to be marked as an Australian writer, some of the critics in her homeland have been quite ready to grant her wish. *The Fortunes*, though an acknowledged classic of Australian literature—bearing in mind that Nettie Palmer, no fool, thought it merited the Nobel Prize—has come in for more severe criticism, even from its admirers, than anything by Stead or Boyd. The criticism has centered on its narrative method and its erratic style. By 1960, thirty years after the final version of the trilogy had appeared, it was being damned with faint praise by a local critic as a "minor achievement in our literary history," specifically because of these weaknesses.¹⁸ Ten years later even Kiernan, who, as mentioned above, put it on his list of the seven most distinguished of all Australian novels, felt obliged to call its style "lame and frequently false," admitting that despite its other excellencies there remains the "unanswerable charge that much of the book is indifferently written."¹⁹ Other admirers have drawn pained attention to "the curiously stilted, crippled syntax and banal, cliché laden diction," and the author's "inability to master consistently the mechanics and ordinary felicities of language."²⁰ The proem to *The Way Home*, in particular, has been a focus of unease. Technically it is simple third-person subjective narrative:

Here, the familiar atmosphere of his childhood laps [Mahony] round; and he breathes it greedily—even while he marvels how time has stood still for the home-keepers, and asks himself if he can ever again be one of them. All the tempestuous years of his youth and manhood lie between. He has fought fire-spewing dragons, suffered shipwreck in Sargasso, bent the knee at strange shrines. And the sense of an older, tired wisdom, which makes of him the ancient, of them the young and untried, completes the breach. How, knowing what he knows, can he placidly live through the home day, with its small, safe monotony?

The extravagant imagery—fire-spewing dragons, Sargasso shipwreck, and worshipping strange gods—is disconcerting. One wonders whether Richardson took her cue from the “Nausicaa” episode of *Ulysses*, published three years earlier—the episode that is told almost entirely in the hyperbolic clichés of romantic fiction. But while there is no doubt what Joyce is doing—and *not* boring or exhausting the reader is never a consideration for Joyce in *Ulysses*—the same is not at all clear in the case of Richardson. Obviously the poem is intended to represent Mahony’s fatuously romantic response to his first sight of England. In the rhetorical question that closes the quotation above, there comes his first glimmer of renewed discontent that very soon will be darkening his mood yet again. But even Richardson’s admirers have had to concede that the Proem is preposterously overwritten.

The extravagance is the more peculiar in that Richardson cultivates an air of documentary realism in the succeeding pages. One way in which she achieves this is by doing what Boyd was to do twenty years later. Having got her characters to England, she ingeniously interweaves historical people and events into their private lives, leaving the reader to work out some of the chronology. Mary Mahony’s casual reference, during their first weeks in London, to “Then that concert . . . the Nightingale, I forget her name . . .” fixes the date to the late 1860s, when Jenny Lind, the Swedish Nightingale, was near the end of her career but still giving small concerts in London. She retired in 1870. Similarly, on the second trip, we learn that the famous physical medium D. D. Home is not available in London for séances, since he “had already retired, on his marriage, into private life, much to Richard’s disappointment.” Home, who was dying from tuberculosis and claimed his supernatural powers were waning, had married for the second time in October 1871.

In a less extravagant form than in the Proem, the narrative style throughout *The Way Home* is omniscient third person, but it smoothly blends an impersonal running commentary with a distinctive species of interior monologue. In capturing the internal musings of its characters—and very much space is taken up by the private, even secretive, musings of Richard and Mary—the style is molded to the person’s mode of thought, insofar as

thought is expressible in coherent literate sentences. (This was, of course, the very convention being tested to breaking-point at that time, by the great modernist writers Richardson took little interest in.) Mahony's pompous, mannered vocabulary is well captured, not only in what Nettie Palmer identified as the "stiff Latinized phrases" of his conversation, but also in the rendition of his thoughts.²¹ For example:

[Mahony] found insufferable the obsequious attitude of mind it spoke to in those concerned. Long residence in a land where every honest man was the equal of his neighbour had unfitted him for the genuflexions of the English middle-classes before the footstools of the great. But he had given up trying to make himself or his views intelligible. For all that those about him understood, he might as well have been speaking Chinese; while any reference to the position and income he had turned his back on, called to their eyes a look of doubt, and even disbelief.

Not only does this rendition convey Mahony's querulous, overemphatic and mildly paranoid manner of thinking; it also is a mute comment on his lack of self-perception, because his own snobbery is very much to the fore on other occasions. Mahony's mode of thought is contrasted with his wife's breathless, colloquial, original, and self-aware habit of mind, as in her reaction to her husband's overwrought account of his contretemps with a competitor doctor:

Distressed though she felt at this return for Richard's kindness, Mary was also unpleasantly worked on by his interlarded "My good man!" and the general hoity-toity air of his narration. What a peppery fellow he was! How could he ever expect to succeed, and be popular?

These two sentences weave omniscient narrative and Mary's interior monologue so tightly together that the junctions between the two are blurred. Probably she would never use a word like "interlarded," but the idiom of the rest is pitch-perfect. The sentences of her ruminations frequently contain no main verb, something Mahony would never permit himself, not even in his thoughts.

It would be disingenuous to claim that this is a complete answer to the defects of Richardson's style. Indeed, her employment of interior monologue is the element of her style that has been most criticized:

Often the tiredness and Victorian sentimentality of the prose style results, I think, from Richardson's attempt to capture the idiom of the characters themselves... the narrative has a disconcerting habit of drifting: taking on, without warning, the characteristic idiom of the character it discusses.²²

If capturing the idiom of characters' thoughts without warning is thought to be disconcerting, then clearly all those modernists' experiments in unmediated interior monologue, which were going on contemporaneously with Richardson's own productive years, have passed this reader by. But even a more astute critic, though he is prepared to give full weight to the "dramatically functional 'banality' that helps to project the characters of Richard and Mary," still does not believe it compensates for "her unintentionally damaging novelesque."²³ One factor, easily overlooked, is that some of the quirks of Richardson's style may be explained, though not justified, by the possibility that her grasp of Australian-English syntax had become weakened over the years when German was practically her native tongue. Some of her sentences cast in the subjunctive mood or requiring the conditional tense seem to argue for this.²⁴

Still, for present purposes, these shortcomings are inconsequential, since our concern is the narrower one of Richardson's ability to dramatize all the ironies inherent in her title *The Way Home*. This, the second part of the trilogy, uses as scaffolding—no more than that—a slice of the life of the author's father Walter Richardson, an Anglo-Irish physician who had emigrated to Australia in 1852, at the time of the gold rush. At first he was a miner, then a storekeeper at the Victorian diggings, but was unsuccessful at both. By 1867 he had turned doctor again, married Mary Bailey, a young migrant, and grown quite prosperous at Ballarat. Richardson drew some of the raw material of *The Fortunes* from this family history, especially the letters passing between her parents and her other relatives, although anyone who has read through the transcripts of those letters, which are too allusive, elliptical, and fragmentary to be very interesting, will be surprised at how radically Richardson's imagination has fleshed them out. The Richardsons left for England on the clipper *Red Jacket* in January 1867 and they arrived in London in May. (Whether they at first intended to stay permanently is not quite clear from the letters, nor are the reasons for their departure made very plain either.) Dr. Richardson worked, not in Leicester and Dorset as in the novel, but in Eccles, near Manchester, and at Rawcliffe in Yorkshire, where he bought a practice. He and Mary also made a European tour. By the following September they had had enough of England and, buoyed by excellent financial news about their investments, returned to Melbourne. "Ettie" Richardson, their first child, was born prematurely on January 3, 1870. Thanks to his lucky speculations her father established himself again at St. Kilda, living in a rather grand style and giving himself over to intellectual pursuits, especially spiritualism. The family of four left again in April 1873, this time for a rich man's Grand Tour. After arriving in June they travelled in Italy, where they heard the devastating news of the bank crashes and their partial ruin. Dr. Richardson rushed back (travelling overland to pick up the boat) and arrived in Melbourne in August 1874.

These are the last events transmuted into fiction in *The Way Home*. In real life there followed the events on which are based the third volume of the trilogy, *Ultima Thule*. Richardson's wife and daughters joined him in December 1874, by which time he had secured what remained of his fortune and, at the age of nearly fifty, had tried to resume his medical practice in a recklessly large new house at Hawthorne. It was a further indication of his growing mental instability and misjudgment. His practice never flourished and there began his terrible decline as syphilis took hold of him. He died in 1879, when his daughter was nine. Her memories of him as a man and father, as opposed to the fear and shame his condition visited on the family, must have been sparse.

There is no need to trace Dr. Richardson's tragic life any further. It is much-trodden ground, and in any case his daughter so transformed the family documents to which she had access that searching for parallelisms between life and art is pointless. (Dorothy Green once went so far as to suggest that it might have been better if the notebooks Richardson kept of materials for *Australia Felix* had been destroyed to eliminate this sort of futile speculation.) Certain it is that her creation, Dr. Mahony, is a very much more complex piece of psychological analysis than anything that can be extracted from the records still available of Dr. Richardson's professional and private life.²⁵ When Boyd wrote *Lucinda Brayford* he could draw on his own memories of his childhood for the earlier parts; Richardson, by contrast, had to rely entirely on documents and imagination in constructing the world of her parents' younger days. She was only three at the time of her parents' second return to England, and her own experience of expatriation as a young adult was not in London. She spent her first sixteen years in Germany. She went from there to live in London in 1904, and so could not draw on her own impressions as a raw new arrival in the city.

The events of *The Way Home* cover the eight years 1867–75 and form a straightforward narrative of Dr. Mahony's futile attempts to find a lasting "home" for himself—twice back in England and once back in Australia. At the age of forty-two, laboring under the belief that he is wasting his time in Ballarat and irritated by the rawness of colonial life, he and his wife sell up and leave for England meaning never to return. Richardson's opening scene is set in 1868, on board their clipper as it approaches the English coast, ninety days out from Melbourne, and it starts with a colloquy among the thirty "runaways," or returning emigrants. Nearly all of them are glad to have shaken the Australian dust off their feet, whether they are "Midases" who have made their pile and are returning to spend the proceeds, or poor failures who see the land of their exile through "the smoked glasses of hate." They act as a chorus of opinion like the rustics in a Thomas Hardy novel—with Dorset dialect to match—cursing the "onnatcheral country"

they have escaped from. So all but two are in a joyful mood, one of them confessing "to an odd itch to see again the grime and squalor of London town: the shiny black mud that served as mortar to the paving-stones; the beds of slush into which, on a rainy day, the crossing-sweepers voluptuously plunged their brooms; the smoke-stained buildings; monuments tarred with the dirt of ages." Out of them all, there are just two dissidents: one man who has returned temporarily to collect his relatives, and that other oddity, Dr. Mahony himself. He is "the only half-tint on the palette," whose thoughts even before the clipper docks starts to define the theme of *The Way Home*. Within thirty pages he, and the reader, know that repatriation is not going to be the blessing it seemed to be in Ballarat. Twice he buys a medical practice without much forethought and twice he fails to establish himself, both for unfortunate external reasons and because he is his own worst enemy. The practice he buys in Leicester on a mere impulse, to be close to his wife's relatives, is a fraud, and never pays. When he flees Leicester and settles next at a new practice in the Devon village of Buddlecombe (a thinly disguised Lyme Regis), he is treated, in his own haughty and stiff-necked mind at least, as a raw colonial and his wife is snubbed. From the start he chafes at the caste system of an English provincial town, with its claustrophobia, snobberies, and the sadistic relish taken in putting newcomers in their place.

We understand, but only in retrospect, that Mahony's egotism, his irritability, and his wild mood swings already mark him as a sick man. Richard and his long-suffering wife Mary abandon their quest for a new home and return to Australia. A bright future seems to await: a lucky investment he has made in a gold mine enriches him and enables him to set himself up as a figure of influence in Melbourne society, in a house he calls Ultima Thule because of its remote position on Port Phillip Bay. He engages in rather random intellectual pursuits, grows angry because those around him won't credit séance phenomena, and tends to retreat into occultism—alchemy and astrology—another warning signal of his mental decay. A son, Cuffy, and twin daughters, the "Dumplings," are born. Restless again, Mahony burns his boats, sells, almost without meaning to, his grand house, and takes the family of five to Europe once more. A rich man could cross the world in fine style in the 1860s. A maid and two nurses for the children accompany them along with a truckload of luggage, and their three cabins are furnished, carpeted and curtained for the voyage by the best shops in Melbourne. Their first dreary months in Kensington are seen partly from the point of view of the infant Cuffy, presumably reflecting Richardson's own childhood memories. Perhaps she too suffered, once back home, from her school friends' irritation, as Cuffy does when he retails stories of "boats with hoods, too, and men who stood up in them to row with a single oar. . . . Cuffy, throughout his later boyhood, swung like a pendulum between fact and dream, and was sadly torn in consequence." *The*

Way Home ends in Venice, with the news of the catastrophic loss of Mahony's capital. He rushes back to Melbourne alone, via Egypt, leaving Mary, yet again, to pick up the pieces. The abrupt ending is a serious structural weakness, but it caused Richardson little concern. It arose from her late decision to turn the *Fortunes* into a trilogy. In her own words, she simply "trimmed the edges as best I could," and dispatched it to Heinemann.²⁶ At least this casual surgery makes it clear that more is to come.

There is a mournful aphorism to the effect that, for the exile, the foreign land does not become his homeland; it is his homeland that becomes foreign. But even if the first half of this is true—and it was demonstrably false for most expatriates—the second half hardly matters if one intends never to return. As we have seen repeatedly, the malaise that is supposed to trouble the exile—alienation, estrangement, deracination, or whatever depressing label one cares to use—meant little or nothing to most Australians' experience of Britain. In the months after their arrival, even if they found the going difficult economically, they were at least reassured and comforted by the similarities in everyday life. Newcomers simply took a train from the docks, rented a lodging, admired or detested the great city, cursed the weather, made friends when they could, and got down to work. They might be cheated, might know the miseries of unemployment, might suffer from writer's block or from their inability to meet the market with their wares; but very rarely did they suffer from the feeling they were not among their own kin and living in a society that worked by the same rules as they were used to at home. Certainly there were small differences. The freezing disdain, the formality of manners, thought to be so typical of the British professional classes, sometimes offended arrivals in their first months. One businessman early in the century said feelingly that simple friendship was as rare in the City of London as icebergs in Hades.²⁷ Money, even if one had it, might be a problem. It was said that shops and hotels, once they had picked up a colonial accent, would not only refuse a check, but would not even break a visitor's banknote without checking its number with the police. (Jack Abbott's down-and-out hero has just this problem when he finds a £5 note stuck to his shoe. He solves it by buying a cheap ticket at a railway station, one place where a large-denomination bill could not be refused.) Still, by and large, Australians took it for granted that, whatever material difficulties awaited them, they would be welcomed back into the fold, and usually they were right. Getting to grips with the English, in the trickier terrain of understanding and obeying the unspoken codes of behavior and manners in the different social classes, is rarely discussed; or if commented on, rarely rises above the level of platitude or mild humor.

But perhaps that is because most expatriates were nearly always keen, young, flexible people with their lives ahead of them. They expected to

be deferential and to be patronized to some degree, and were not overly offended. But Richardson took as her subject something less usual: the situation of a middle-aged professional man who goes back to find a job, not spend a colonial fortune, and she explores how that particular status appears to the cousins and colleagues who have remained at home. Dr. Mahony thinks he is repatriating himself joyfully to England—just in time—but quickly learns that in fact all he has managed to do is to expatriate himself from Australia. Early in their stay in England, he tries to persuade his wife that “since the fates have pitched us here, here we must stay and work our vein, until we’ve laid the gold bare.” Despite himself, his very metaphor betrays the fact that his thoughts, like every cell in his body, now belong irreversibly to his adopted country.

So, rather unusually, Richardson set herself the task of dramatizing the truth of the aphorism about the homeland becoming foreign. She explores, not the pleasing semifamiliarity of England, which was the common stuff of fiction in her day, but rather the puzzling impenetrability of its society to outsiders, where the really binding rules are the shared unspoken ones: those “invisible but cast-iron barriers with which the various cliques hedged themselves round.” Dr. Mahony is in love with the myth of England (though Irish by origin) and thinks of himself, at the outset, as a lucky man who has managed to get back home before it is too late. The tragicomedy lies not exactly in Mahony’s dawning recognition of his plight—he starts to have second thoughts very soon after landing—but in the way one scene after another rings the changes on the unenviable situation he has got into. The novel is a series of vignettes, each exploring the ironies of the title, dramatizing not just the disillusionment, but the flaring resentment of the failing, thin-skinned repatriate. Mahony is very quick to take offence, but even a more phlegmatic man would have found it hard to tolerate the slings and arrows of scorn directed at him when he is unable to swallow the covert insults and contemptuous stares of the stay-at-homes.

When buying his first medical practice, in Leicester, Mahony, who is only too ready to be dazzled by aristocratic notice, swallows eagerly the bit of gossip that his predecessor’s services were once requested by the nobility of “Castle Bellevue” (no doubt Belvoir Castle in Leicestershire, home to the Manners family since the sixteenth century). Too late, he learns that all this had amounted to was being called to the Castle’s tradesmen’s entrance to bandage a servant’s twisted ankle. This is not the status he had enjoyed in Ballarat. He is shocked to discover that, as a returned colonial who needs to find work, anyone of any rank feels licensed to despise him. Every possible indignity that might be heaped on the head of the exile—for so he soon comes to think of himself—falls on Mahony’s. Again and again he is forced to chew on the bitter cud of being patronized by everybody, from his

upper-class patients to the silly pharmacist Bealby, who despises him and lets it show. Mahony is appalled to realize that “actually the old fool seemed to think he, Mahony, would be bettering himself by settling in Leicester!”

“England, doctor, old England!” Bealby lectures him patronisingly:

“There’s no place like it. Home, home, sweet home!” At which Mahony, who had himself, aloud and in secret, rung changes on this theme, regarded the speaker—his paunch, due to insufficient exercise; his sheeplike, inexperienced old face; his dark little living-room; and darker still, mysterious, provincial manner—looked, and knew that he did not, in the very least, mean the same thing any more.

Even the stableman enjoys baiting the returned colonial. When the man is civilly insolent in accusing the doctor of overworking his hired horse, Mahony is flustered, denies it, and falls headlong into the verbal trap:

“For where I come from—“ At the repetition of the phrase he bit his lip.

“Aye, surr, ahl very well, I dessay, for a country—Australy, as I unnerstand,” answered Jopson unmoved. “But ‘twouldn’t do ‘ere, surr—in England. Thic’s a civilized country.”

The fact that Dr. Mahony is a considerable snob himself makes things even worse. He is ever eager to fix his position on the social ladder, and have everyone recognize it. He is shattered by overhearing the spiteful judgment that his wife is not presentable as a lady, not so much for the insult to Mary, but for what it implies about his own dignified self: that he has married down. Used to being among “the Upper-ten of a township,” he finds his amour propre rubbed raw, realizing, too late, that in English provincial towns in the central Victorian decades the doctor rates little higher than the vet or the barber. A few wrong diagnoses, a false step or two, a whispering campaign, and even a far more resolute man than Mahony could be expelled without mercy, as Dr. Lydgate finds out in *Middlemarch*.

Mahony cannot be dismissed as merely paranoid. Richardson, perhaps out of her own experience, makes us believe the repatriate’s plight is real enough. When on his first stay in Britain he visits Edinburgh, the city where he trained, he cuts a sorry figure among the new crop of eager bustling young interns. He feels like a ghost haunting past scenes and becomes aware that the “shining lights of his own day” have now become “crabbed old invalids.” They are not named but they can be identified, for two of the colossi of Scottish medicine from the correct period fit this description. Surely the doctors in question are James Syme, famous for his willingness to attempt heroic surgery on desperate but fully conscious patients, and James Young Simpson, who discovered the anesthetic power of chloroform in his thirties.

Both men were past their prime by the late 1860s. Simpson was crippled by sciatica well before his death in 1870, and Syme died the same year after a paralytic stroke. Time has passed them by, and Dr. Mahony knows it. Glasgow is the new center of excellence, the place where “young” Joseph Lister’s promotion of simple antiseptics are producing dramatic improvements in the control of infection. (This reference dates Mahony’s visit to before 1869, as Lister moved to Edinburgh in that year.) Mahony toys with going to Glasgow to see Lister’s work for himself, but he never does because he too disheartened when his vague attempts to reestablish some professional contacts are rebuffed—at least in his perception—making him painfully aware that in these men’s eyes he has become an almost laughable figure; just an “untrumpeted doctor from the backwoods.” It is yet another slight that poor Mahony has to endure. The multiple small pains, the lesser scrapes and niggles, of the Australian repatriate who just cannot survive the patronizing sneers of his ex-countrymen by keeping his mouth shut had never before been so vividly expressed.

Like most historical fictions, and especially ones as autobiographical as this, *The Way Home* tells as much about the era that produced it as the one in which it is set. Though overtly it recreates the vanished mid-Victorian age, poor Dr. Mahony’s experiences must have been a common experience for those “going home,” in the 1920s no less than the 1870s, and no one documented them more thoroughly than Richardson. Whether she suffered personally from any of these indignities cannot be known, although there are plenty of hints that her attachment to English life, let alone English writers, was not strong. For, if she defined herself as outside the circle of Australian literature, she stayed outside the circle of English literature as well. She admitted to little admiration for any contemporary author and had no interest in joining any literary school. She maintained no salon, rarely attended functions (an award ceremony for her at Australia House prostrated her for two days), had few friends, and saw no reason to extend her exposure to regional English life beyond the home counties. Unlike nearly all other expatriates, she found no inspiration in the multifarious life of London, except for participating tentatively in the suffragette movement and attending spiritualist séances. Although she lived for so long in the heart of the city, she set few scenes in any of her works there. It is true that even in her last decade, she was still insisting that after a lifetime’s absence she was not “any the less a good Australian. This I’ve always considered myself, even though the circumstances of my life have kept me in England.” But in support of this, she evidenced, pointedly, not her books’ contents, nor her friendships with any congenial Australians, but her fondness for tennis and swimming.²⁸

In the opening pages of *The Way Home*, she gets a laugh out of Mary Mahony’s ingenuous response to her first sight of the green fields of Kent:

With an exclamation of pleasure she cried: "Oh, Richard—how pretty! How...how *tidy*! It looks like...like"—she hesitated, searching her memory for the trimmest spot she knew; and ended—"doesn't it?...just like the Melbourne Botanic Gardens."

Amusingly naïve, yes; and thematically it sounds a first warning signal in Mahony's mind that his return might fall short of his expectations and that England might not be the paradise he seeks. Still, Richardson herself makes an observation no less trite in her autobiography that "many a time during those first weeks did I wish myself home again, back in a land which, whatever its defects, was at least bright and sunny, and *clean*. Here, even when there was no fog, it never seemed to be properly day."²⁹ Did Richardson really think this was worth recording, in the late 1940s, after forty years in London and Hastings? Obviously she did. Her autobiography was written in wartime, with the first symptoms of mortal disease upon her, and she had never ceased to inveigh against the weather throughout her adult life. "I only half live, in this pestiferous climate" is one of hundreds of similar laments in her letters.³⁰ Richard Mahony's absurd summation of England as being the land where the fruit doesn't ripen is the same sort of peevish observation that Richardson herself was prone to make. But perhaps the truth is that, given her depressive personality, nowhere would have suited her entirely—just like Mahony. She never really fitted into English life and withdrew from it as much as possible when she found its codes baffling, and surely it is that same feeling that helped shape *The Way Home*.

Twenty years after Richardson, Christina Stead in *For Love Alone* offered another, very different take on the expatriate experience, specifically in the second half of the novel, "Port of Registry: London." This powerfully obsessive work, usually considered Stead's finest novel after *The Man Who Loved Children*, evokes London life from an angle of vision very different to either Richardson or Boyd's *Lucinda Brayford*, the latter novel appearing almost contemporaneously with Stead's own. The three share some similarities, to be sure. All three play with the trope of England as home, and Stead's prologue to *For Love Alone*, which is titled "Sea People," echoes the dithyrambic proem of *The Way Home* and is no less disconcerting than the original. From its very first half-sentence "Sea People" shifts the third-person point of view forward in time, past the midpoint in the chronology of the novel, then swivels round with an unexpected choice of verb and tense to look back and tell us about the implied reader, thus: "In the part of the world Teresa *came from* [not as the temporal sequencing of tenses demands, "lives in"], winter is in July and spring brides marry in September." Then it immediately after it adds to the vertiginous effect by referring to the populated hemisphere "*far above*" Teresa "as it is shown on *maps drawn upside-down* by old-world

cartographers." The phrase "far above" and the sarcastic remark about conventionally north-oriented maps do make a judgment on what this cartographic superiority seems to imply about the antipodes, but it is not quite clear where the sarcasm is being directed. Whatever interpretation be taken, this is a novel that at once declares its queasy relationship with the Old World, but its approach is highly original. In it, not just the map, but also the conventional view of the Australian at large, is drawn upside down.

For Love Alone is, if possible, even more strongly autobiographical than the other two novels. The heroine, Teresa Hawkins, is Stead's portrayal of her earlier self; one who observed, or took part in, many of the scenes of the novel. Stead insisted briskly and unequivocally on this many times, in interviews and letters, and there is no reason to doubt it. Indeed, her biographer speculates that Stead used some of the words of real letters to work off old animosities, and it is this element that gives the fictionalized parts "an illicit punch."³¹ The central situation is Teresa Hawkins's long infatuation with Jonathan Crow, a contemptible pedant, misogynist, emotional abuser, racist, and bore who practices his pet theory that "the impatient girls" are the ones he fancies, the same ones who always come back "to the rein and whip." Crow is a version, as everyone in her Sydney circle knew, on Keith Duncan, an economist and sociologist who had won a travelling scholarship to London. Stead had a sadomasochistic relationship with him in both countries before they finally shook free of each other. (Early editions carried the nervous disclaimer "no character in this novel has any living counterpart." Legal advisers doubtless insisted on its being put so emphatically because it was so manifestly untrue.) There is a good deal of irony at the innocent Teresa's expense in the limited third-person narrative in which much of *For Love Alone* is told, though the irony is varied now and again with curt authorial judgments on Teresa's self-pity and emotional masochism. But these do not disguise the disconcerting readiness to use fiction to settle old private scores.

Oddly, while it is usually first novels that are the most autobiographical, *For Love Alone* was Stead's fifth to appear. It was written, or at least completed, in 1942–43 while she was living in New York and Hollywood. It is set some years earlier, at the onset of the Spanish Civil War, and much of the incidental detail is drawn from a period even earlier still, namely Stead's own adolescent years, which culminated in her departure from Australia in March 1928, and her first short stay in London, which lasted only for months, from May to February 1928–29. Parts of it may have been drafted in 1932 or even soon after her arrival, as early as 1929.³² As critics have noted, all this leads to minor anachronisms of fact and tone, ones that are more apparent in the London half of the novel than the Sydney one. When Jonathan Crow leaves for London, some of his fellow scholars are heading for

medical schools and universities in Germany. And they are doing so without any qualms, "for few thought then that Hitler's regime would last more than a month or so longer. It was a madness of the year." The "mad" year in question must be 1933, when Hitler obliterated democracy in Germany, but when the scene shifts to London, the mood is that of the still rather frenetic atmosphere of the late 1920s when Stead had arrived herself, just before the Slump, not the much grimmer mood in the middle of the next decade when everyone suspected war was coming.

The first long stretch of the novel is set in the humid, subtropical Sydney of the interwar years, where we discover a young woman of nineteen being driven half-mad by her avid and unassuaged desires. These scenes are remarkably explicit for the time of writing, so much so that it is hard to credit that Stead and the much more reserved Martin Boyd were writing in the same decade. Teresa is both stimulated and frightened by what she glimpses in her nighttime walks on the harborside cliffs of The Gap. These are metamorphosed by her half-comprehending imagination into a "strange battlefield, the bodies stretched out, contorted, with sounds of the dying under the fierce high moon. She did not know what the sounds were, but she knew children would be conceived this night." She longs herself for the "night of the senses," and, lying in her virginal bed, is filled with erotic, perverse, even depraved fantasies centering on Old World cruelties ("butcheries, black masses, Sabbaths haunted by flying corpses and old wives' gatherings in hidden valleys; routs of black horses, drawings and quarterings, impalements, cannibalism from Grimm, brothels from Shakespeare. All this gave her unutterable pleasure"). It is pleasure mingled with the pain of deprivation, for she knows well that her bloody visions are of "a country from which she, a born citizen, was exiled."

The word "country" should be understood generically, meaning anywhere in Europe. Teresa's is a pagan appetite, a reaction against the lack of freedom in her life. It is her private sense of being the cuckoo in the nest that drives her outward: her separation from the vigorous male life of her father and two brothers, the pathos of her downtrodden sister's plight, and most of all her own sexual and emotional frustrations. Hers is the expatriates' lust in its most uncompromising form, but it not specifically a lust for London. Nor is it a quest for literary fame. Unlike Dr. Mahony of *The Way Home* and Lucinda Brayford in Boyd's novel, she does have some vague interests in that direction, but they do not figure in her plans originally. Her first literary activity in London is in typography—copying decorative alphabets. It is not until she is well-established in her business life that we discover she is drafting a book possibly to be called "The Testament of Women" or "The Seven Houses."³³ There is nothing corresponding to *Seven Poor Men of Sydney* that Stead herself drafted during her first London months. The motive behind

expatriation in *For Love Alone* is not literary achievement, nor the abandonment of Australia itself, but the quest for self-realization.

Taking flight, in the novel as in Stead's own life, is not the same as escape. Self-realization means avoiding "the marriage-sleep that lasted to the grave"; avoiding stultifying respectability, sexual sobriety, oppressive relatives, and the fear of being left anchored in the cove of one's birth, in Stead's memorable simile, "like a rowboat whose owner had died." Before she was able to engineer her own departure, the young Stead would go to the art gallery to gaze at a painting hanging there still: Evariste-Vital Luminais's *The Sons of Clovis II*. The canvas is large and the scene portrayed arresting and mysteriously unpleasant, so much so that it was removed from public view at one time.³⁴ Its subject is drawn from an obscure episode in medieval French history. King Clovis's queen had their two wretched sons hamstrung (or, in a gorier version, had their nerves of their legs burned out) for plotting against their father. In the picture we see them lying side by side like invalids on a makeshift barge with their useless legs horribly bandaged, deathly pale, about to be cast adrift on what is supposed to be the river Seine but looks more like a stagnant mere. For Stead this dramatic painting was a discomfiting, potent image of entrapment and stasis, her own condition as an ambitious Australian as she saw it then; and she spoke of the painting in interviews and uses it as a metaphor in at least two of her novels. She told an interviewer that she felt "a great feeling of loyalty" toward the victims, and that she dreamed up the notion that they had been treated in that fashion "so that they wouldn't inherit."³⁵

The idea of securing one's rights, or losing them by weakness and indecision, is critical to the meaning of *For Love Alone*. But, emphatically and unusually, it is *not* escape from Australia as such. Unlike the authors of so many memoirs and pseudomemoirs of the period, or the authors' fictional avatars, Stead never once identifies the vacuity of Australian life itself as the problem. It was not an issue for her. In two interviews years apart she indignantly rejected the suggestion that either she or her heroine left to escape the insularity of their homeland: "No! That's not an interpretation that I care for. . . . It's just the impulse of a young adult to wander."³⁶ Unlike Dr. Mahony and Lucinda Brayford, Teresa does not for a moment think of herself as returning home to England, not even metaphorically. Her real destination is a condition, not any particular place:

In a few months, she would leave them for ever, this herd trampling shoulder to shoulder in its home march. . . . She would sail the seas, leave her invisible track on countries, learn in great universities, know what was said in foreign tongues, starve in cities, tramp, perhaps shoeless, along side roads, perhaps suffer every misery, but she would know life.

Her surname alludes, we notice, to that of an Elizabethan privateer and of a proud hunting bird—not an eater of carrion, like Crow. But that does not obviate the self-mockery at work here, and a certain amount of posturing, too. These sentiments are not to be taken at face value. Stead was reconstructing the self-deceiving thought processes of a callow girl in the grip of an absurd obsession, and doing so from the standpoint of a seasoned expatriate of some fifteen years' standing. But the mild air of ridicule from the implied narrator should not hide the seriousness of Teresa's quest, which in its day had been Stead's quest too.

For Love Alone divides roughly into two halves, set in Sydney and London. The title of the second half, "Port of Registry: London," is a metaphorical pun. Teresa Hawkins leaves Australia to join her would-be lover, Jonathan Crow. Teresa, like her ship, is apparently bound for London—which she hopes will be her home port, or place of refuge. (Manuscript evidence suggests that Stead at first planned a tripartite structure, giving the voyage a section to itself. She may have restructured the middle section later as a short story.) Teresa sails under the flag of convenience that is her dubious love affair, and that is doomed before she leaves. She is sailing on what she sees only too clearly later as being a "buffoon Odyssey," but Teresa has little in common with Homer's Ulysses. She is much more akin to the aged hero of Tennyson's monologue, who leaves Ithaca to drink life to the lees, to follow knowledge like a sinking star and to make one last throw of the dice. For "port of registry" has another metaphorical implication. It is often a legal fiction. A ship may never visit the home port inscribed on its stern. In the same way Teresa has no loyalty to London, no romantic preconceptions about it, and her prevision of the city is less than flattering. She goes into no literary raptures over it. It is not a place of pilgrimage, as it was for so many. Her interest in it is strictly practical:

It was simple enough. It was for this that she was studying at night. "There is office work all over the world." She saw the significance of the maps of the British Empire showing the world strung on a chain of pink, all the pink was Britain's. In every one of those pink patches, no matter what the colour or kind of men there, nor the customs of the native women, she could get a job, she was a citizen there. There were advertisements in the Sydney papers for typists to go to Nauru, Cocos, Shanghai, British Columbia, and these could be just jumping-off places.

Teresa's creator herself moved on by moving away, to Paris, very quickly after her arrival. So it is not surprising that the conventional fictional rendition of the expatriates' London, replete with all its literary and historical associations, gets short shrift in Stead's hands. Teresa is no tourist. By the time she has saved the fare and made the voyage, it is May, the northern spring of

1936.³⁷ When she arrives in pursuit of Crow, she is most anxious to learn about hors d'oeuvres, contraception, and Bloomsbury bedsits. She takes a close, if virginally nervous, interest in Crow's room, inspecting its shabby furnishings and especially the unmade bed. Such rooms, familiar to many generations of arrivals, are seen through Crow's predatory eyes as sites of easy seduction:

A little front room... with half-drawn curtains, a lamp, the gas-fire going, a kettle on the gas-ring on the hearth, the shilling gas-meter and the rest of Bloomsbury one-room comforts, the cupboard, the bed with an Indian spread over it in the background, a pale-headed girl attentive to his confidences.

Teresa is interested in these things too. What she is not interested in are double-decker buses, Fleet Street, or St. Paul's; she has read all about them, and they are not what she is there for. "She looked at nothing. It was nothing to her that she was in England. She had never wanted to see England. It was Johnny she was seeing." This lack of interest in the conventional aspects of her destination has led some readers barely to notice the change of countries, or, if it is noticed, to regard it as unimportant or not well-realized. One lengthy essay on the novel glides over the shift of scene to London without mentioning the transition at all.³⁸ Critical commentary tends to focus on the first half, partly because this is often judged to be the better achieved section and partly because Stead's best critics have been Australian themselves. It has been said, with some truth, that the London half loses strength and concentration, suffering from a certain diffuseness of effect. Exception has been taken, for example, to

the absence of the same command of sensuous and natural detail, the magnificently rendered landscape of the Australian descriptions. In this novel Christina Stead seems far less at home in London than when she is dealing with her native Sydney. The English scenes are convincing enough, but they have the air of being slightly dutiful as well; they lack the exuberance and almost extravagant vitality of some of the earlier descriptions.³⁹

There is something in this. Certainly the two halves read rather differently, and the second seems to shift into a different imaginative gear, one lacking the exuberance and extravagant vitality of the first.

Nevertheless, in its idiosyncratic way no Australian novel of the period makes a richer use of its central London setting. For one thing, there is the concentrated focus: only two scenes take place outside a very narrow region of the capital. For another, Stead's fictional topography is a curious blend of the symbolic and the minutely naturalistic. Like *The Way Home* and *Lucinda Brayford*, *For Love Alone* shares in the heritage of nineteenth-

century realism, its narrative method and character-construction being familiar enough to anyone raised on Flaubert, Tolstoy, and Dickens. But it takes documentary realism to extremes. Few novels, for instance, give the house numbers of the (real) London streets where characters live; but this one does, and in one case describes an existing and identifiable house. Stead, like so many other Australians of her day, lived in Bloomsbury for most of her short time in London. Her first stay there spanned only nine months, from her arrival in May 1928 until her departure for Paris with her lover in mid-February 1929. She lived at first in a clubhouse and later, in early December, moved to a larger shared bedsit further down Cartwright Gardens, right on the corner of Marchmont Street. In the novel *Cartwright Gardens* is unnamed but is unmistakably identified as a row of boarding houses. She houses Jonathan Crow across the road at 92 Marchmont Street, and the doorway of this property, with its "half-moon fanlight" intact, today still looks directly into the crescent of the Gardens, exactly as described.

Further, Stead's London is a city experienced on foot. Much of the "Port of Registry" section is a restless pedestrians' circling around the narrow ambit between Euston Road and its three railway stations, and south-west of there, into the northern fringes of Bloomsbury itself. Both Teresa and Quick are great walkers, and the latter to an unsympathetic eye is a bit of a stalker too:

He went on faster, now started to come back in a rough square by Richmond Road, Liverpool Road, into the Pentonville Road again, and so back to King's Cross. He found a little shop where he could get some coffee, grey, lukewarm, and set out again desperately up the Euston Road, thinking he would go to Baker Street to Canuto's and get something decent to eat. Nearly there, he turned round again, plunging towards Bloomsbury, which he had been skirting for so long. . . . He came down Gower Street and turned into Torrington Square to go by the British Museum. When out of the square, he retraced his steps. Now he remembered the address that haunted him—it was his secretary's. The girl had moved to Euston Road. Since he had already looked at all the addresses in London that he knew, merely as a pastime, he would now add hers to the list.

Teresa is placed very precisely at "15A Euston Road," an address specific enough to sound real. Her room is in a house in an alley nearly opposite King's Cross station, a notoriously sleazy, poverty-ridden area that registers her marginal status, literally, literarily, and metaphorically. On one corner of the alley is a chemist's selling pamphlets on contraception and, no doubt, "rubber goods" themselves, and on the other is a tobacconist selling bawdy picture postcards. When they first pause here, Jonathan and Teresa are

discussing, in an objective way, the effect of birth control on the poor, but the personal issues here are clear enough:

In silence they passed King's Cross Station, crossed the road and stood in a paved drive-way between two small shops, a chemist's, which exhibited some of the very pamphlets in question, and a tobacconist's which had put out two racks of coarse penny postcards. The girl was afraid he was going to make her go into this chemist's, and in misery, wanted to run away. She began to tremble. A house was set back, behind the chemist's and was entered by a door under an arch some way down and a lamp shone there. It looked pleasant and quiet.

Like much else in the novel, some of these details are definitely factual; others are apparently invented. There is today, and was at the time of the novel, no such "paved drive-way" existing between shops on the south side of Euston Road, and no such address as "15A." Nor were there any adjacent newsagent's and chemist's shops anywhere along the section of the road almost opposite King's Cross station. On the other hand, in the summer of 1928, Stead herself did live for a while on or just off the Euston Road. At a guess, it was in Argyle Street opposite the stations, because a dairy, mentioned in the novel, was then on the corner of this street.⁴⁰

Some have found this documentary realism excessive and unassimilated, because purposeless. Michael Wilding, writing at the time when Stead was first being reprinted in Australia, was the first to register a protest that in places "documentation becomes a substitute for creation." He writes rather harshly but not unfairly:

Even for a reader who knows Sydney, these passages hardly succeed; the need to create a mental map, to correlate names with street signs, dissipates the attention. To someone unfamiliar with the city the details can only be boring. They are not at all evocative; they are supported by hardly any description or imaging. The streets and views may have been meaningful to Christina Stead, but nothing is communicated to the reader except a provincial lack of proportion, a lack of realization that places need to be created, not just names; the centre of one's world is not the world's centre.⁴¹

His complaint is that not enough is described and too much is merely enumerated. It is a shrewd hit, but Wilding's point can be extended: readers need to create a mental map for the London section even more than they do for the Sydney one. Indeed, without some working knowledge of London's topography the novel cannot yield all its meaning. There is a notable instance of this as early as Teresa's second evening after her arrival in the city. She spends it with Crow in his room in Marchmont Street. At the end

of the evening Crow ungallantly leaves Teresa to walk home by herself late at night to her new lodging. From his front door he watches her departing figure moving away from him "till the curve of the crescent hid it from sight" and it gives him "a bizarre pleasure to imagine her walking alone, perhaps a little frightened, through the streets and strange squares to her room." His pleasure is not just bizarre but downright sadistic. Stead relies on the reader's knowledge of Bloomsbury's topography to understand that he has deliberately let her go off in the wrong direction, roughly north around the curve of Cartwright Gardens and up toward Euston Road. In order to get to her room in Torrington Square, which is well to the south-west of her departure point, she is going to have to loop right round to get there. It is fitting enough. Crow has been toying with her all evening, and soon as she has gone he is first found writing to another Australian woman half-inviting her to London, and then rounding off the day by having sex with the housemaid. Yet this same scene has a figurative as well as a documentary dimension. Crow muses:

What was she thinking? That love was like the stars? He burst out laughing uneasily, as he shut the front door. "She doesn't see the Freudian symbolism," he thought to himself as he climbed the stairs.

What is the "Freudian symbolism" of the stars? Presumably Crow is thinking of the myth of Danae, impregnated by Zeus disguised as a shower of gold, sometimes varied poetically to stars, as in Tennyson's lyric "Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal": "Now lies the earth all Danae to the stars." In *For Love Alone* it is part of a pattern of imagery involving stars, milk, and fertilizing semen. The fecund imagery of Sydney, on land, at sea, and in the fierce clarity of the antipodean sky ("Overhead, the other part of the Milky Way, with its great stars and nebulae, spouts thick as cow's milk from the udder") contrasts strongly with the sterile automatism of the automatic milk vendor set in a door at the end of Teresa's street, "where, during the night, milk poured out from a little cow's head when you put in sixpence." This is another detail that is characteristic of Stead's method. It combines close social documentation with symbolism based on what has been called "a continuous interpenetration of people and places, landscape and feeling, private events and public."⁴²

Of course, such a fictional tactic was entirely familiar to Stead, since Joyce had perfected the method in *Ulysses*, a work Stead greatly admired; and it had then infused most modernist texts in the wake of that great original long before Stead was writing. *For Love Alone* has plenty of Joycean moments, quite apart from the quest theme. James Quick is a Jew and an outsider, like Leopold Bloom, and one thread in his stream of consciousness

is surely indebted to the rich orientalism evident in the Lotus Eaters chapter of *Ulysses*: "As [Quick] went back to work it came back to him—Burne-Jones's girl in a grape-coloured robe." This is the first of two allusions to a certain painting that is never identified. The second comes later when Quick dreams of a girl dressed in blue as a Madonna, hanging in a frame with her knees showing. Both allusions are deliberate teases, but clearly refer to the same painting, and the one in question can only be Burne-Jones's *King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid*, painted in 1884 and shown at the Tate Gallery since 1900. Here Quick is casting himself as the King seated adoringly at the foot of his Maid. This vague orientalism refers both backward and forward to another scene where Quick visits the Euston Road house where Teresa has gone to live. (In a typical, minor piece of prevarication, this is not made apparent: the reader is left to deduce that it is in the same laneway where she has lingered with Crow earlier, wondering anxiously whether sex is on the agenda.) On the second occasion we see it through James Quick's eyes, when he goes to look at it during one of his peregrinations around the city. For him it is not a "pleasant and quiet" abode as it has seemed to Teresa earlier, but "a slum, a rattletrap in a hell of noise." He tries to guess which is her room:

He looked down an alley between two small shops. Euston Road steamed and roared behind him. A house was set back above a chemist's shop and it was entered by a new-painted street door, which opened under an archway. He stood looking upwards. Perhaps that one he now saw, the room carried on the arch, like a howdah on an elephant.

While it does not matter in the present context what exact mix of the documentary and the symbolic is present in such scenes, Wilding is probably correct that these tiny details had some private, indeed probably some intimate, significance for Stead, given that her sexual relationship with her boss William Blake ("James Quick" in the novel) began in the months after her arrival.

Perhaps this personal dimension is also partly responsible for the fact that, despite being described with almost excessive specificity, Stead's London is also a place of evasion and mystery, where much is veiled and left unexplained. Formally, it denies closure and cheats romantic expectations, especially the expectation of a simplistic happy ending. Unlike *The Way Home*, which unwinds to its foregone conclusion with clockwork precision, or the carefully contrived parallel scenes on Clare College bridge, which open and close *Lucinda Brayford*, *For Love Alone* denies the reader any closure at all. Teresa's brief affair with Harry Girton, when she is fully committed to Quick, is itself unexpected, and the ending simply tails off

like a section of real life. The closing assertion, "It's dreadful to think that it will go on being repeated for ever, he—and me! What is there to stop it?" is, when read impersonally as is surely intended, a shrugging truism, a fatalistic acceptance of the human condition. The lovers do not run off to Spain to fight Fascism, they do not continue their affair, and they do not die. This is a text full of deliberate confusions, puns, and sly allusions; allusions cultural, artistic, and, as we have seen, topographical as well. Quick's limerick about the "young man from Cape Horn / Who wished he had never been born" is left incomplete. Although, after pausing to consider whether it is seemly, he does deliver the final line to Teresa, the reader is left in the dark. Few at the time would have known, or would have had any means of finding out, that the last line of this limerick is: "That the end of the rubber was torn." James Quick's obscene jokes and raunchy limericks tease the reader just as they perplex and disturb Teresa.

The character most symbolically identified with London is Crow, a creature spawned from the murky days and the dank slimy pavements. After a residence of three years, Crow, as first discovered by Teresa on her arrival, has got over his first gloom at finding the girls dowdy, the shops dingy, and opinions smug. The intervening years have transformed him from the "snarling, prejudiced, morbid youth" of Sydney to the "handsome, sardonic, and well-dressed man" of the capital, who, among other things, has learnt how to bribe a policeman to get a small favor. In Teresa's eyes he is thrillingly knowledgeable about vice and crime in the capital, though we soon discover, as she does not, that his life is in truth dull, and all his vice amounts to is paying waitresses and maids for cheap sex. He has been swallowed by the city. Stead herself had a strong animus against London that several short return visits there in the gathering gloom of the 1930s, before she left for America, did nothing to dispel. Although later in life Stead was again to live in the city for years, she never grew accustomed to it. She developed a theory that it was because it floated on a foundation of mud and gravel, unlike cities founded on bedrock, like Paris and Sydney.⁴³ Arcane though this theory might be, the symbolism of the second half of *For Love Alone* owes much to it. Compared to the steamy, fertile town Teresa has left behind, London itself, in the midst of the Depression, partakes of Jonathan Crow's nature and is just as cold and choking as the clay he lives on top of.

Although the narrative never leaves England, it is made clear enough that London, for Teresa Hawkins, is just a waypoint. Of the two men who become her lovers, both are carefully represented as detachable from London. James Quick, a cosmopolitan financier, is just as alien to the city as she is; and the second, Harry Girtton, is a member of the International Brigades heading for the Spanish Civil War. But if London is just a waypoint, the wider sphere of the Northern Hemisphere is not. In this broader sense *For Love Alone* is a

novel of immigrant experience. Teresa's immediate calm acceptance of the new scene means that, although when she first arrives she is the innocent abroad, she does not maintain the role for long. The novel expresses none of the frightening disorientations—personal, social, topographical—regularly experienced by the Australian characters in *Lucinda Brayford*. It has none of the effect of a double focus on both England and Australia. Once the scene shifts to England, Australia vanishes over the horizon for good, virtually ceasing to exist for either heroine or reader. Stead's angle of vision is quite different to either Richardson's or Boyd's. These two are interested in the plight of metic expatriates who never become fully reconciled to their change of country. Richardson achieved this geographically, by repeated journeying from one country to the other and by having Dr. Mahony always looking over his shoulder at the country left behind. Boyd has a more subtle strategy: in *Lucinda Brayford* Australia persists, in his metaphor, as a bright undercoat flowing and fading as it is overlaid by English experiences. To this novel we turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

ALWAYS THE FEELING OF AUSTRALIA IN THE AIR: MARTIN BOYD'S *LUCINDA BRAYFORD*

"I don't think you're very patriotic," said Lucinda.

"I certainly hope not," said Paul. "Like every civilised man unless he is a Chinese, my home is in all Europe."

Martin Boyd (1946)

"MY INNER DIVISION, IF I HAVE ONE, IS THE AGE-LONG ONE OF THE EUROPEAN, between the Mediterranean and the north."¹ With this uncompromising sentence the novelist Martin Boyd (1893–1972) elided Australia from his own history. He repudiated the assumption that expatriation was significant to him because, quite simply, it was not his condition. We note Boyd's personal geographical orientation. He sees the "division" entirely from the perspective of a European. Australians, it implies, may have issues of identity, but deciding whether their spiritual homeland is north or south of the Alps cannot be one of them.

This sweeping assertion has to be seen in context to be meaningful. Boyd made it in 1965 in the second, more considered of his two autobiographies. He was then in his seventies and living in Rome, where, he liked to say, he had ended up closer to his own birthplace, Switzerland, than he had ever been before in any of his many other residences. The comment did not come out of the blue. Boyd was aware that it had been a critical bone of contention for years whether or not his novels suffer from their creator's "double alienation"; that is to say, the putative alienation resulting from a voluntary uprooting from Australia, combined with an unrealistic

sentimentality about the virtues of European life. The claim was that this factor had ultimately disabled his art, or at least had prevented it from coming to full fruition. Kathleen Fitzpatrick, in a lecture in 1953, was the first to speak of Boyd's having been "crippled" by his deracinated condition. A few years later, A. A. Phillips diagnosed Boyd as an "extreme sufferer" from the "cultural cringe," because he did not know enough about Australian life and history beyond the limits of his own family to use such material without disparaging it.² The same line of attack persisted into the 1960s, and Boyd, on the other side of the world, had been monitoring it. It had already drawn his ire more than once. He responded angrily when Leonie Kramer mused in print in June 1963 that "Boyd has lived abroad so long, and is in so many respects so European in his outlook, that some critics—H. M. Green, for example—find it difficult to receive him into the company of Australian writers." She added judiciously that "his cheerful acceptance of the role of expatriate strengthens the literary misgivings."³ In the same year, Brenda Niall, who eventually became Boyd's biographer, asserted that his inability to come to terms with his double inheritance had "prevented him from becoming a major figure among Australian novelists," although she conceded that it had also lent his work a "depth and complexity" rarely found elsewhere.⁴

All this had proved too much for Boyd. In a letter in response he asserted (surely with his tongue partly in his cheek?) that "my 'complex fate' and the obscure psychological diseases which have impaired my talents, simply boil down to my dislike of long voyages, and their crippling expense."⁵ He thought all this talk of difficulties and misgivings and disablement was "rabid to the point of xenophobia," adding for good measure in an article of 1964, to which he gave the acid title "Dubious Cartography,"

I do not know that I am admitted to the company of English writers. No one bothers about it. I do not believe either that anyone in Australia who reads my books cares twopence whether I am admitted to the company of Australian writers. They are either entertained, illuminated or bored, and that is all that concerns them.⁶

The comment in the following year about the Eurocentric nature of his "inner division" was therefore the culmination of charges and countercharges, and was, perhaps excusably, deliberately inflammatory in its phrasing.

After Boyd's death there was a certain amount of backtracking in critical opinion and the whole dispute seems now to have been a sterile one. Whatever judgment time will ultimately pass on Boyd's achievement as a novelist, it's indisputable that he was, in every meaningful way, an Australian writer whose long personal experience of expatriation was absolutely central

to his creative imagination. All his important works look back and forth between Australia and England: *Lucinda Brayford* (1946), obviously; but even more so, if possible, the "Langton" series of novels (which lies outside our period).

There is a telling contrast to be made here between Boyd on the one hand and Richardson and Stead on the other. Anyone familiar with Henry Handel Richardson's biography will find it credible that she could have written *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* and her other books in the suburban solitude of Melbourne, rather than in her luxurious house with its soundproof study and felt-soled servants near Regent's Park. No prolonged residence abroad was very necessary for her art. She lived as a near recluse anyway, and when she wanted Australian historical material for her book she set off, collected it efficiently and quickly, and returned home without more ado. Had she been based in Melbourne she could have done the same thing in reverse. When she sends Richard Mahony doctoring in Leicester, for instance, it is obvious that she had either never been there or else found it uninteresting. For her it is just a conveniently generic Midlands industrial town, chosen because her mother's family came from there. The scenes set there have no sense at all of a specific place and, to write them, a visit to a library anywhere would have sufficed. Again, although it is not likely that Christina Stead would have developed very far in the way she did without the benefit of her wandering cosmopolitan manner of life, only one of her novels exploits the idea of expatriation specifically, and most of the time her homeland slipped below the horizon of her imagination.

But with Boyd the case is very different. Although late in life he disdained and disclaimed the label of expatriate, the fact is that such was his condition, one might say, even before birth. His parents were artists who were wandering in Europe at the time, and as the pregnancy reached its term they went to Switzerland so that the baby could have British, and therefore Australian, nationality. Restless movement, coupled with the desire to reconcile the various components of his inheritance in creative work, marked all of his life and work afterward.

Boyd spent his first twenty years in Melbourne in family circumstances where the need to take up a career and earn a living was not an issue. Indeed, he frankly admitted that in his early days, "I think we believed that people who worked were not really gentlemen." His parents were artists by vocation but they lived at ease on an allowance from his mother's family, the à Becketts, whose fortune derived originally from ancestors who included both a chief justice of Victoria and a wealthy ex-convict brewer. Both sides of the family were equally at home in Australia and Britain, and the à Becketts owned a fine country house, Penleigh in Wiltshire, though it had to be sold soon after Boyd's birth. It appears as Crittenden in *Lucinda*, and by other

names in other novels, as the epitome of English traditional life. Even the entrance to the house affects his heroine deeply: "In this doorway, formal yet sensitive, with its delicate carving softened by two and a half centuries of sun and frost, she had an impression of a different attitude towards life from that she had known hitherto." Her brother-in-law kindly points out, and he does not mean to be patronizing, that she feels this excitement because she is now "in the living stream of culture. I imagine that Australia is rather out of it."⁷

No doubt the youthful Boyd felt the same way. He made various comments at various times about the degree to which he felt personally deracinated, but we have his own words, in his first, less guarded autobiography *A Single Flame*, that "from as long as I can remember my chief wish was to return to Europe. . . . It seems to me that my early life was dominated by a semi-snobbish urge to arrive at the centre of civilisation."⁸ Snobbish or not, it was a wish he wasted no time in realizing, and in the end he spent more years of his life in England than anywhere else. After returning from the war, he spent only eighteen months at home before leaving finally when he was twenty-eight, armed with an allowance of £100 a year. He never saw his parents again and returned only once. His ambition from the start was to become a writer and like so many others he was positive that not Australia but the "centre of civilisation" was the place to do it.

Lucinda Brayford is often considered to be Boyd's masterpiece. It is certainly his most thematically ambitious single work. Although it recycles some of the same family history that he had treated earlier in *The Montforts* (1928), it does so in a more leisurely way and with a larger range of characters, many of them mordant studies of power in three of its characteristic forms: sex, money, and social climbing. Boyd's ability to dramatize social change, specifically the evolving cultural history of Europe over many decades—albeit a very narrow upper-class slice of that history—strikes a chord that hitherto had been missing from the Australian novel. It is the chord of witty, cosmopolitan satire. Boyd's style is not an intrusive or distinctive one, and it's devoid of rhetorical flourish except in rare moments of religious or aesthetic exaltation, but it's infused everywhere with a dry, urbane humor of an idiosyncratic kind. It is best appreciated in the round. Small extracts do not give much sense of its flavor.

With his family background it is not surprising that his novels operate in a self-assured, elite, anglophile social stratum where British and Australian *mores* were, to eyes less perceptive than Boyd's, virtually indistinguishable. Boyd himself did not live a high-society life at any time. He was relatively poor in the 1930s, living in an English village and existing almost entirely on his allowance from home and what he could pick up from journalism. At one point he joined a religious community. His books sold so poorly that

his publisher despaired of him, turning down three successive manuscripts. When prosperity eventually did come, it was partly from the royalties from *Lucinda* and partly from inheritances when his parents died.

His social connections did give him another useful kind of inheritance, however: a supply of rich Australian gossipy material to work with, and this he put to good use on occasion. For example he fictionalized the colorful life-story of his fellow expatriate novelist and short-story writer, Barbara Baynton, in *Brangane: A Memoir* (1926) and again in *Such Pleasure* (1949), each time making his heroine an adventuress and social climber. Each time, though, doubtless to avoid the risk of defamation, he stripped out all the most fascinating Australian detail, turning these works instead into sub-Jamesian, mannered social comedies.

Soon after he arrived in London in 1921, the young Boyd gained access to Barbara Baynton's opulent London mansion and wrote an article for the *British-Australasian* describing the treasures of furniture and art she had collected there. A delicate irony lurks beneath the surface sycophancy of this piece. Its mistress was away on her travels at the time, and if she had suspected for a second what Boyd would be doing to her in his novel later, the formidable Lady Headley (as she was then) would doubtless have wreaked a terrible revenge.⁹ *Brangane*, in fact, passed virtually unnoticed in Australia. It was published under a pseudonym and, like Goring-Thomas's equally scabrous *The Lass with the Delicate Air* years before, may never have been read there, or at least never decoded. *Such Pleasure*, though, was a different matter. It had notices in both the *Argus* and *Herald* in Melbourne, and was easily deciphered. By that time Baynton had been dead for twenty years, but her relatives were very much alive. It was whispered that Jo Gullett, her grandson, threatened Boyd, who was then living in Victoria, with a horse-whipping on the steps of the Melbourne Club. Somewhat ingenuously, Boyd had thought that, being an expatriate of long standing, it would not matter if he recycled lively Australian gossip in fiction published in England. He was wrong. Like Patchett Martin and others he discovered that the long arm of scandal and retribution could easily reach from one side of the world to the other.

He took no such risks with *Lucinda Brayford*. He started out early in the Second World War to write something along the lines of his earlier work, a social comedy, the nucleus being an experience he had with a pampered female guest who admitted she did not know how to make a cup of tea. "I went out nearly bursting with suppressed derision," he said, "and conceived the idea of writing a novel about a woman brought up in her circumstances, suddenly plunged into war-time austerity." This original scheme must have been abandoned quickly, for austerity is not a feature of his heroine Lucinda's living habits at any time, either in the interwar years or in both of the world

wars. During these she continues to live a leisured and secure life. Thanks to her large income from Australia she never comes close to having to make her own tea, nor are any more onerous duties laid on her. Bill Vane, who is not a very sensitive soul, tells his friend, "My poor bloody sister has to spend the rest of her life nursing an Englishman who looks like a gorilla that's had its face lifted," but that is an exaggeration. She does not have the labor of looking after her horribly wounded husband. Servants do all the work and he is kept permanently out of sight in a locked-off part of the Crittenden estate like a latter-day Bertha Rochester. Nor does she even take on the task of caring for her own son—nurses, nannies, and a boarding school do that, except during bath-time and holidays.

Boyd thought *Lucinda Brayford* was his best work, and surmised that his claim to be an artist would ultimately rest on it. By the time he published it, he had already been an expatriate for a quarter of a century, and it marks a return to using some Australian material; not of contemporary life in that country, of which he knew nothing directly, but once again that drawn from his own childhood or earlier. The final part was written in the aftermath of the Yalta conference of February 1945, the ultimate betrayal for Boyd, when the ex-Allies had carved up Western Europe between them. "If that chapter is full of bitterness," he said, "this is the reason for it. And yet the last scene, where Lucinda after all her loss and grief can still believe that the future will be better for mankind, shows that I'd not despair. . . . My book *Lucinda*, whatever its faults, is, I am certain, my best book, as it reflects the heightened condition of my life as I wrote it."¹⁰

The middle-aged Boyd had had a peaceful war living in Cambridge, apart from one brush with the authorities when they tried to conscript him for school-teaching. Nevertheless, he suffered along with everyone else from the privations of wartime, and his novel reflects that. It was the product of the same era that Evelyn Waugh defined so well in *Brideshead Revisited* (1945). *Brideshead* was written contemporaneously with Boyd's novel and appeared just one year earlier, and, like *Lucinda*, much of its action takes place in the early interwar years and has a similar elegiac tone. In the preface he added to it later. Waugh noted that it had emerged from the stringencies of war, the era of "soya beans and Basic English—and in consequence the book is infused with a kind of gluttony, for food and wine, for the splendours of the past."¹¹

Rather less intrusively, some of that same feeling infuses the more purple passages of *Lucinda Brayford* too. One such describes Lucinda's cozy realization, once her affair with Pat Lanfranc is in full swing and she is sexually sated, that living as she does on the Crittenden estate with her little son, the heir apparent to this ancient family, safely asleep upstairs, that "as far as material things were concerned, she probably lived the most civilised life

that had yet been evolved." The novel sold well in England, America and Scandinavia, partly, no doubt, because its nostalgia, the pleasurable melancholy of its closing scenes, matched the mood of the times. In the grim days at the end of the Second World War it was read, as Waugh's *Brideshead* was read, as a nostalgic recreation of a way of life seemingly gone forever. The good sales were, for Boyd himself, not only a financial boost but a psychological one, because he took it that many people felt as he did about the downward course of European history. Boyd, like many another expat Australian of his time, found a mournful pleasure in charting the accelerating decadence of the Old Countries.

The novel is organized into four movements, each with an allusive epigraph: "The Shoulder-knots of Livery," "Invoking the Storm," "The Leaves on the Fallen Tree," and "In Adolescentis Flore." Together they cover the eighty years or so before 1945. (Roughly speaking, its action starts in the colony of Victoria where *The Way Home* leaves off.) The chronology is not linear. Though it ends in the immediately postwar present, the most time is spent on the earlier years of the century, leading up to and after the First World War. Few dates are given explicitly, but Boyd is even more adept than Richardson had been at inserting historical details sufficient to fix precise dates on to private events. Lucinda and Hugo voyage to London after their marriage and on the very night of their arrival go at once to Covent Garden to see Nijinsky dancing in *Scheherazade* with set designs by Bakst. This ballet had recently transferred to London. It is 1912. Later the Brayfords make a special visit to Paris to see Julie Vane off home to Australia and also to see *Le Coq d'Or*. Diaghilev's production opened there in May 1914, so we know the Great War is looming. Again, for the alert reader, Lydia's casual racing tip to her brother ("By the way, back Artilleryman for tomorrow") exactly fixes the ball scene at Tourilla to the night before the Melbourne Cup of 1919, which that horse won. Finally, Heather Brayford, contemplating the pleasures of adultery, watches George V's funeral from a Park Lane balcony: it is 1936, and before the year is out the sex and scandal of the abdication crisis will fall on the heads of bewildered Britons. There are many more examples. All these casual undated references help to extend and elaborate a family saga of private doings into the culture and history of the early twentieth century.

Only the first movement is set entirely in Australia, apart from a short episode in Colombo telling of Julie Vane's sexual adventure in that city. The other movements have mostly, but not exclusively, European settings: central London, a grand English country house, and the louche life of expatriate English bohemians in Provence who are taking advantage of the interwar years' devalued franc. All the action deals with successive phases in the fortunes of the Brayford and Vane families. The first are English landed gentry of ancient lineage who live on their splendid country estate. The

second are Australian pastoralists, members of the Victorian squattocracy whose fortunes are established at a stroke when a drought breaks suddenly on their run-down Riverina sheep station. The Vanes become immensely rich, living far from the source of their wealth in grand style at Tourella, one of Melbourne's finest Toorak mansions, a vulgar pseudo-Renaissance pile where Melba comes to sing at a garden party. They are the kind of people Richardson describes cuttingly in *The Way Home* as "owners of sheep-runs that counted up to a hundred thousand acres: men whose incomes were so vast that they hardly knew how to dispense them, there existing here no art treasures to empty the purse, nor any taste to buy them had they existed."¹²

The destinies of these two families are linked over four generations by marriage. On the Vane side are William, who emigrates to Australia after a gaming scandal; William's son Fred and his wife Julie; their three children Lydia, Lucinda, and Bill, and their respective spouses Dr. Roger Blake, Hugo Brayford, and Muriel; Lucinda's son Stephen and his wife Heather, who is his cousin, the daughter of Bill and Muriel Vane.

On the other side, the aristocratic English Brayfords into which Lucinda marries number Susannah, the dowager Viscountess Crittenden; Arthur Lord Crittenden and his wife Marian, the current childless owners of the estate; Arthur's brother Paul, the immediate heir to Crittenden; and their half-brother Hugo, Susannah's son. Since Paul Brayford is openly homosexual, Hugo and Lucinda's son Stephen becomes at birth the *de facto* heir to Crittenden. As it turns out, Stephen divorces his adulterous wife and dies while still a young man, so that the childless Paul does become the master of Crittenden after all. Throwing aside Arthur and Marian's carefully nurtured sense of noblesse oblige, he turns it into a mixture of a bear-garden and a brothel. He hires new staff for their good looks alone and throws out all the furniture dating from later than the French Revolution. (Paul's habits are surely based on the details of the Beauchamp scandal of the 1930s, mentioned earlier. During the divorce proceedings Beauchamp's taste in footmen and stable-boys, whom he equipped with diamond rings, became notorious in society circles.) Thus to enter the "new" Crittenden

gave one the sensation of having passed the grave into a dead, yet deathless, world. There was nothing in sight that was made by living men. Then suddenly against the deathly beauty would flash the living face of a footman like Hyacinth or Daphnis.

In such a fashion does the aristocratic Brayford line actually and symbolically gutter out. Paul Brayford is indeed a withered leaf on a fallen tree. It seems that there will be no heir at all. The rule of the hated businessmen, industrialists, and media magnates will have triumphed, as the tapestry of

traditional rural life disintegrates. Not that the future will be any better in Australia. In due course the grounds of the Vanes's home Tourella will be cut up into suburban building blocks and Fred Vane's pride and joy, the two huge ostentatious vases in his hall, will be sold as junk after his death.

Although these two families on opposite sides of the world seem utterly different in their way of life, ambitions, and mentalities, they are really knit together by far more than the marriage of pastoral riches and blue blood. Boyd's homeland is by no means forgotten with the transference of Lucinda herself to England. For one thing, there is a constant movement of the Vane family and other minor characters to and from England. (Neither the cost nor the travel time concerns the rich and leisured people with whom the novel deals exclusively.) For another, the narrative occasionally crosscuts between what is going on simultaneously in each country. And finally, various connections, more or less subtle, of a metaphorical and symbolic nature are made constantly. Boyd himself laid great stress on these connections. The metaphors he used himself to explain his method are the layered paint on a canvas, or of motifs in music:

The first part, the bright undercoat, is set in Australia. Then the scene moves to England. The undercoat flows and fades, enriching the texture, and there is always the feeling of Australia in the air, remembered glimpses that recur like motifs in music.¹³

Some of them are simple memories, as when Lucinda almost misses a train and has to travel in the guard's van where the smell from a heap of dead rabbits reminds her of the skins at her parents' sheep station nailed out to dry, so that the peculiar smell "tinged with a different colour . . . her golden visions of her Australian childhood." As Lucinda at this point in her life is trying to come to terms with how matters are working out for her in England, there are many such glimpses. A fuller and more positive one comes when Lucinda is holidaying at St. Saturnin in Provence with her brother-in-law. By this point she is approaching middle age and has been an expatriate for the greater part of her life, but Australia still shows through, like an undercoat of paint or erased writing on a parchment:

As she sat on the hot rock, watching Paul and Pierre splashing and fooling in the sea, a memory, like the original writing on a palimpsest to which some chemical had been applied, did show very faintly through the more recent Provencal memories. It was of Bill and Blake IX splashing and fooling below the Tarpeian Rock. . . . She had one of these moments which she had come to recognise as she grew older, when the recurrence of a condition taught her to accept it as a part of what nowadays was called her "life-style". It seemed to

her that it was her fate to sit apart, watching men who were less interested in her than in themselves and their own preoccupations.

This is one of several reminiscences of her youthful holidays at Cape Furze in Victoria, always in connection with their favorite bathing-place, the "Tarpeian rock." The unusual name is that of the Roman place of execution for traitors and perjurers—in jest, of course, but with evolving sinister overtones each time it is recalled in England. The allusion suggests loss and guilt: the abandonment of a paradise of innocence coupled with the sense that if Lucinda had not been seduced into leaving her homeland for the delights and deceits of England, a good many disagreeable and even tragic events would never have occurred.

Lucinda Brayford is an ambitious novel, and now and again it raises doubts as to whether Boyd is entirely in command of his material. In his generally admiring essay on it, A. D. Hope said, almost in exasperation, that Boyd had little sense of dramatic action and his narrative merely ambles through Lucinda's life, making it "from one point of view . . . a not a very successful novel."¹⁴ Certainly it has its weaknesses. The blandness of tone, the refusal to rise to an occasion, is striking, as Hope and many others have detected; though it is hard to know whether this is because Boyd could not handle dramatic action or because he eschewed it as being not to his purpose. Unlike Richardson, who loves to linger over a scene, Boyd is brisk. One of the most alarming events, the nighttime burglary at Tourella during which Fred Vane narrowly misses being shot, is passed over in half a page of unemotional, if mildly farcical, prose. Again, right at the start, the callous William Vane and a group of hearties toss the pompous but harmless Aubrey Chapman, who is taking orders and is suspected of being a Puseyite (a closet Catholic), off the Clare College bridge into the Cam. Considering the momentous consequences of this bit of rowdyism—it is entirely responsible for the shift of scene to Australia—almost any novelist would have made more of it than Boyd does. One might contrast it with the similar scenes, handled with fantastical comedy, of Paul Pennyfeather's undoing, in the opening chapters of Evelyn Waugh's *Decline and Fall*, or the threatened tossing of the aesthete Anthony Blanche into Oxford's Mercury fountain in *Brideshead Revisited*. (Incidentally, it would be very interesting to know what Boyd made of his fellow-satirist. There are surely echoes in *Lucinda* not only of *Brideshead Revisited*, but of Waugh's earlier *A Handful of Dust*, especially in the details of Brenda Last's adulterous affair and the generous Tony Last's collusive arrangements to "give" Brenda her divorce. Unfortunately it seems almost nothing is known of Boyd's reading, except that he admired P. G. Wodehouse and some of the French and Russian masters, had once read Galsworthy, and despised Henry James.)

Also every reader must raise an eyebrow at Boyd's reliance on coincidences that strain credulity, unless he or she is willing to accept divine intervention, as when Stephen Brayford meets, only for the second time, floating in the waters of the English Channel the "Sweetie" he had so much admired in the King's College choir some years earlier. The ex-chorister is mortally wounded at Dunkirk, and Stephen, who has only volunteered for the relief ships on a whim, happens to be the one who pulls him dying from the sea. The whole episode is given a bare page, even though it leads directly to Stephen's pacifist stance, to his brutal handling in the Glasshouse prison, and indirectly to his death. True, the reader is invited to consider a higher explanation for the meeting: "Still, he was glad that through the extraordinary coincidence—or was it so extraordinary?—he had been able to hold his hand at the end." But this is in a single, typically muted sentence, and the matter is never alluded to again. Another extreme coincidence has Bill Vane, on a visit, unknowingly falling in love, out of all the eligible young girls in London, with his half-sister Anne. Adding to the implausibility here is that Bill's illegitimacy nevertheless remains a secret. When he is forcibly separated from Anne for the vaguest of reasons, a virile, headstrong, rich young man like Bill Vane would surely have extracted the secret of his mother's adultery and his own birth from one of the several people who are privy to it while he is still in England: his sister, Anne's mother, and apparently even Anne herself; or else when he returned to Australia he would have got it from either his mother or her companion Watteau—especially the latter, as she knows every detail from Julie Vane, who is at her mercy eventually, and she has no great reason to keep it to herself.¹⁵

There are also issues with the way the delineation of character is handled. The focus of the novel is Lucinda's experiences and her moral development, and a good portion of the narrative—though not all of it—is filtered through her consciousness. Her son, the saintly Stephen, who is tormented by the authorities for being a conscientious objector in the Second World War, partly takes over this role later. The narrative technique is conventional, being almost entirely limited third person. Unlike Richardson's use of the same technique, which always takes on the tincture of the person's habits of thought (leading some readers, as we have seen, into the serious error of confusing Richard Mahony's limited sensibility with his creator's), there is rarely any detectable distancing or separation between character and author in Boyd's case. Sometimes there is none at all, as in this about Cambridge university, apropos of nothing in particular:

It was not an arrogant claim but a simple fact that here and to Oxford for seven centuries had come the greater number of the imaginative and intelligent youth of the country to spend its most ardent years. There had been a

proportion of brutes and fools amongst them, as there must be in any large gathering of men.

The "greater number" over seven centuries! Could Boyd possibly have forgotten that for nearly all of those centuries, by far the "greater number" of youths, specifically the entire female half of humanity and all Catholics and Jews, had been excluded, no matter how "imaginative and intelligent" they might have been? Or that for a training in the applied sciences or medicine there were far better places to get it, like Imperial College London or the famous Scottish medical institutions? Or that Thomas Henry Huxley had growled that one could earn the greatest honors Oxford had to bestow without knowing whether the sun went round the earth, or vice-versa? Or that the vast majority of male youth was excluded from any higher education at all by lack of funds?

Here and in a few other places, Boyd has forgotten Henry James's adjuration about the absolute necessity, for the expatriate writer, of not sentimentalizing Europe; and in any case these sentiments do not sound much like his character Stephen Brayford's, whose mind is supposed to be open to us that this point. They sound (temporarily, fortunately) much more like those of Boyd in his crotchety old age, when he started to sound like a cranky housemaster with a fixation on the intimate behavior of his charges. He inveighed against "boys abusing their bodies" and looked back nostalgically to his own boyhood in the halcyon days before the Great War when "the sex life of my school fellows, as far as I know, was practically non-existent. All the boys' energy went into their work and their games." For him all this was so different from the present (the present, that is, of the early 1970s), when the youth are "doped and sodden with sex" and the literary world has turned into an Augean stables where "the latest London play is set in a public lavatory."¹⁶ *Lucinda Brayford* belongs to the "line of asterisks" school when it comes to sexual description. Although there is a good deal of misconduct in each generation, it is reticently treated by comparison with, for instance, Boyd's own contemporary Christina Stead. But, then, he was born a subject of Queen Victoria and was a schoolboy when she died. This does not preclude, however, a delicate homoerotic flavour, as when he has Stephen Brayford musing:

One often saw in the street, or in a train or theatre, a face which stirred feelings of friendship which could never be fulfilled, not only because there was no chance of acquaintance, but because, even if there were, there might be impassable gulfs of taste or material interest between that person and oneself. Only the spirit was in harmony. So he thought it must be with this boy.

Even here, apart from the last sentence, there is no reason to suppose these are not Boyd's sentiments as much as his character's, especially given the shift to the impersonal pronoun.

Occasionally the point of view moves to a lesser character. This is Julie Vane of Toorak, immediately after she has emerged "from the middle classes into grandeur" at Tourella and is wondering how she ought to conduct her new household:

The decision was more difficult as money fixed no limit. She wished to go as far as possible towards an aristocratic ménage, but to stop short of the theatrical or ridiculous.... Julie would have liked a footman, but she felt rather timid about employing one. She felt that if an occasion arose in society when she was obliged to say "my footman" her body would give an involuntary wriggle, her voice would go rather high and sound at the same time apologetic and prim.

In the middle of this account comes a comment that, had she lived in Britain, Julie would not have been uncertain because all styles of living there are "more dynastic," so that even an impoverished Irish landlord "might drag in the stable boy" on social occasions to act as butler. Naturally Julie knows nothing of such arrangements in Ireland or anywhere else, nor would they interest her; and it cannot therefore add to the humor with which her insecurities are treated. It is a pure authorial interpolation that has been woven into the third-person narration, and it is, in context, amusing but quite irrelevant.

Occasionally Boyd goes further by shifting into third-person omniscient mode, as when the narrator makes the reader perceive, as Lucinda does not, the similarity between herself and her young niece:

If she had known it, Heather even more closely resembled herself, when she had driven back with Tony from Cape Furze, twenty-five years ago.¹⁷

In all these cases it can be seen that the narrative voice varies little. Whichever character's thoughts and sentiments are being rendered, they all sound much the same. Diegesis, not mimesis, characterizes Boyd's technique. He breaks what is usually regarded as the cardinal rule of fiction: the importance of showing, not telling. On the contrary, "telling" is his forte. It does have its advantages. What a novelist of the modernist school, which Boyd so despised, might suggest by implication and indirect allusion, he bluntly puts in front of the reader and moves on. The method is not necessarily crude. It is capable of mordant little strokes. For example, when Lucinda sets up her London love nest for the visits by Pat Lanfranc, she has an extra bolt put on the door and she enjoys telling him about it. The narrative comments:

This happened about five months after their first reunion, and Lucinda found to her slight consternation that she was grateful for the extra topic of

conversation. It was this that made her first aware of the disadvantage of the nature of their meetings, that they shared none of the ordinary activities of life, nor met outside the close and often wanton atmosphere of her flat, so that a thing so commonplace as a new bolt on the door made an important and refreshing contrast to their luxurious routine.

It is easy to imagine how such a telling revelation might be conveyed indirectly by other pens, though not necessarily to any better effect. The desolating truth about English adultery among the leisured classes (the affair is labeled a "furtive routine" a few pages later) is neatly captured here, especially as Lucinda is just then becoming aware that in taking her lover she has chosen a man who is a close replica of her husband. Unknown to her, Pat Lanfranc's main worry is that if he is dragged into a divorce action as co-respondent, he will be obliged to resign from his regiment. So much for the world well lost for love.

These strictures do not apply to the dialogue, however. That is truly individualized. In conversation or monologue there is no mistaking Paul Brayford's voice, or Fred Vane's, and certainly not Lucinda's or Stephen's. Boyd's special genius is for witty dialogue, which is quite often stagey—could anyone really produce such spontaneously lucid gouts of vitriol as Paul Brayford?—but it is admirably adapted for the revelation of character; indeed, it is Boyd's *only* really effective way of revealing character. It works best in small exchanges, as when Stephen discusses, with respect to his plans to marry, his financial prospects with his mother:

"If no one gave us anything, we'd still have about ten times as much as a farm labourer."

"Yes, and Heather spends on one flimsy frock as much as would keep a farm labourer for a year. I'm not a Socialist, but it seems to me indecent to buy five hats in a morning, and to decide in the afternoon that only one of them is fit to wear."

"Heather has seen through that shallow kind of life. She told me that she would like to live simply."

"She hasn't tried it yet," said Lucinda.

Here, as in other such banter elsewhere, money is the issue. The main characters are indifferent to money, with that enviable indifference that is reserved for those who have never had to work for it or worry about the lack of it. No one has to work for wages, except for Tony Duff, who is an interior decorator in Melbourne, and Watteau, who earns her keep as Julie Vane's lady's companion. Nevertheless, Boyd is very attentive to money in both countries, giving us small glimpses into the kind of arrangements made privately within upper-crust Australian families when its members moved away

overseas to live. Considered simply as social history they are interesting and valuable because the kinds of details they provide are so rarely available. For example, Lucinda, her husband and son live out all their lives on the large annual remittances paid to them by the senior Vanes, even though no one ever takes a trip back to Australia to visit them. Both Fred and Julie Vane die without ever seeing their daughter again on her native ground, and no one finds this very odd. Upon her marriage to Hugo and departure for England, Fred Vane grants her an aristocratic £3,000 a year, rising to £3,500 when Stephen is born. For a time, after the Crash of 1929, Fred cuts the allowance by one-third, on the reasonable ground that he is hurt because his daughter will not take the trouble to visit him; and, in addition, we are told, "the new exchange rate took away a fifth of the remainder" of Lucinda's income. This is a reference to the fact that in 1929 Australia left the Gold Standard and from 1931 the pound was pegged by the Scullin government at a 25 percent discount to the pound sterling, a measure that affected many literary expats, including Boyd himself.¹⁸ However, in 1936, Fred restores her income to its pre-Crash level, presumably to around £2,600 sterling a year, and since she is a widow by then she spends it all on herself. Her son Stephen's expenses at Cambridge are being met by the Brayford estate, and they are not skimped. He has a magnificent set of rooms overlooking the river, a radiogram, a grand piano, solid old furniture and thick carpets from Crittenden, a modish oil by Duncan Grant, and a decorative bowl of goldfish.

Their income puts the newly married Lucinda and Hugo high up in the ranks of the upper-middle classes. When Hugo drops £20 at poker in one night during their wedding voyage, Lucinda is quite shocked and reminds him that it is a third of their weekly income. Actually, if their total income is indeed £60 a week, or £3,120 a year, then Hugo's army pay must be only £120 a year. He has just lost about ten times his personal weekly income in one evening's play. But his young, pregnant bride (whom he orders sharply not to be "mercenary") can hardly be expected to point that out. Hugo in any case gives up his army commission immediately on arriving home, thereafter sponging on his wife and his own relatives, living only for shooting, gambling, and his mistresses in a manner quite acceptable in his circle.

Such is the moneyed background to all the events of the novel. Harry Heseltine told no more than the truth when he said that the "cultural fulcrum" of Boyd's art is "the state room of a P&O liner."¹⁹ For almost all modern readers who cannot muster the necessary imaginative sympathy because they have never occupied that metaphorical P&O state room, much in Boyd's world must inevitably be alien. The constricted social range of the English county gentry is alien; the habits of the Toorak nouveaux riches in Melbourne's post-gold rush era are alien; the smooth invisible machinery of maids, butlers, and powdered footmen that keeps the whole system

going in both countries is very alien. The only lower-class character who is made very visible, the ex-footman Harry, who is poached from Crittenden by Paul Brayford to be his body-servant and lover, is deferential to the point of absurdity. Would Harry, who in the 1920s is living with Paul in a scruffy little villa among the self-exiled bohemians in Provence, really address his lover as "Sir" and his sister-in-law Lucinda as "Madam"? The precise nature of Harry and Paul's relationship is, in fact, both arch and evasive.

For Boyd the value of a private income, apart from the obvious one, is that it supports a particular habit of mind, an approach to life, which he rates very highly. It is what he calls, mischievously, living for pleasure, or, to put it more decorously, living to expand one's cultural and aesthetic discernment and having the freedom to engage with the world beyond only on one's own terms, avoiding in particular the despised worlds of commerce and politics. That is the hallmark of the Boyd aristocrat. About Lucinda herself we are told, but not really shown, that from childhood she "had shown a composure and sensitive charm which had marked her as a natural aristocrat"—and certainly in Boyd's scale of values there can be no higher praise than that. But it is hard to see what defines her so, especially in youth. The critic G. A. Wilkes, and after him A. D. Hope, were puzzled by the fact that "Lucinda's mind at this time remains closed to us; we watch her behaviour [in her love affair with Tony Duff] without seeing the motives behind it."²⁰ Surely the reason is that in her earlier Australian years, Lucinda's mental life is practically a void. Her intimacy with Tony is seen almost exclusively through his consciousness because that is the only place it really exists; and, typically, when we do briefly enter Lucinda's mind, the narrative slips into omniscient mode, foretelling the future: "Although she made no deliberate attempt to remember it, in that moment it was printed vividly on her mind and remained there for many years—the sea with its dazzling white horses, the hot expanse of the Tarpeian Rock, and the two sprawling sunburnt boys with their oranges." Apart from that we have at this point nothing but clichés ("When Lucinda danced with [Hugo] she felt as if her bones were melting") and her characteristic "silvery, empty laugh." She is, after all, neither well-educated nor very clever, and she is only seventeen. It takes her transplantation to the guiles of London and country-gentry life before she starts to grow and really grasp the painful ironies of her materially cushioned existence. Clearly the reader is expected to sympathize with her fate; indeed, to regard her as becoming a heroine caught up in a tragedy. But there are problems in doing so. True, by the age of forty she has lost her invalid husband, her lover, and her son. But she does not love or even like the first, the second leaves her after she writes him an impulsive letter that she does not in the long run regret, and the third is too effete to be very interesting and dies not in the war but of an obscure chronic disease, perhaps epilepsy.

By the time she has come through all this, Lucinda is still a rich and attractive woman whose circle of friends and relatives is mostly intact. Admittedly, the memories of her innocent and tranquil Australian childhood have taken on a less golden tone after the revelation about her mother's adultery, but it remains a secret. Both sides of her family in England and Australia are as secure as ever, and her strong faith is there to support her. Most people emerged from the Second World War with very much less than that.

Really, it is hard to see her life as a personal tragedy. The role Boyd wants her to play is that of being a vehicle for his attempt to dramatize the situation of the innocent abroad—a congenial one for an expatriated author trying to explain the New World to the Old. Boyd plays off the usual oppositions—gullibility versus betrayal, naïveté versus sophistication, warm spontaneity versus cold guile—but, as in Henry James, the sexual and marital arena is where readers' attention is mostly directed. In the same way that Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady* comes slowly to understand the trap she has fallen into—that Gilbert Osmond and Madame Merle are long-standing lovers, united in a conspiracy against her, especially over her stepdaughter Pansy—so Lucinda comes to grasp the nature of the gilded cage she occupies. But she is not a sufficiently substantial character to carry off the role of tragic heroine, nor are the stakes set high enough.

The theme of the innocent abroad is stated right at the start, in the epigraph to the first part of *Lucinda*, "The Shoulder-knots of Livery." It is a quotation from *Madame Bovary*, extracted from the point where the dazzled Emma excitedly anticipates her translation from provincial life with its *petits bourgeois imbéciles* to the social and amatory pleasures of Paris. Emma's fantastical daydreams of love-pleasure in a new luxurious setting have a cutting applicability to both Julie Vane and her daughter Lucinda. They parallel Julie's seduction by a smooth English academic while she is alone on a short rest cure at Colombo, and also her ambitions for social climbing as soon as she escapes from the dreary outback stations that underpin the Vane fortune. And Lucinda is in some respects her mother's daughter. She too sees marriage to Hugo Brayford, a scion of the ancient English aristocracy, as offering an escape into luxury and sophistication. As ADC, Hugo would have worn "shoulder-knots," or more precisely epaulets, as part of his dress uniform, and this vision dazzles her no less than it does Emma Bovary. She is blind to the life awaiting her in prewar England, where she comes slowly to realize that Hugo never intended to use her for anything but "a banker and a bedfellow." The shades start to gather on the very night of her arrival in London, when at the ballet she catches sight of faces in the crowd more strikingly distinctive than anything to be seen at home, including one of "tired wickedness."

Thus begins her plunge into a privileged world of secrecy, deceit, and sniggering gossip where sexual license among the married is tolerated, even expected: always for men, and, once a legitimate heir had been produced, tacitly for discreet women too. In England before 1937, the simple adultery of a husband was not grounds for a divorce action by a wife. So, in 1915, Hugo naturally finds any talk of divorce as not just foolish but incomprehensible. He has done his duty by supplying Crittenden with its heir. He has not married a colonial heiress to lose her just because he has a mistress. When Lucinda writes to him at the front saying she has discovered his philandering and wants a divorce, she waits in trepidation for his reply, but when it comes it is anticlimactic. He simply dismisses it out of hand—in his moral universe, why should he not?—and he does it in a mere postscript; not maliciously, but because for him it is too ridiculous a notion to warrant anything more than a scribbled afterthought. Lucinda starts to learn the real nature of the aristocratic world, and the extended simile employed is effective:

The world was entirely different from what she had imagined it to be. Hugo was like some tough leather surface against which one beat one's hands without scratching them or breaking any bones, but without evoking any response.

The “tough leather” is the English caste system and the Establishment's unsailable, supremely confident values at that time, values that both fascinated and repelled Boyd himself. In this respect the Jamesian theme of Lucinda's fate in England is secondary to another ambition that Boyd had for his novel from the start. That is to say, he wanted to make it “a parable of my life and times,” meaning, in effect, a satirical study of the decline and disintegration of all the social and religious values he held dear. Although he put the cause of this down to “the evil miasma of the war,” it was really modern life itself, in many of its manifestations in the earlier twentieth century, that outraged his innate conservatism.²¹ In his analysis, life in both Australia and Britain was suffering from this same malaise, the collapse of traditional modes of life and behavior, though he interpreted the processes of degeneration as taking rather different forms in each country. Boyd's diagnostic skills in both cases are formidable, though any remedy seems to be beyond him. Not, of course, that a novelist is required to find solutions; his job, directly or indirectly, is to expose and dissect issues by putting characters into interaction. What he does do is what all satirists do: hold up for inspection and censure his special vision of the vices and follies of mankind. He said himself that he “ridiculed savagely” a wide range of targets in both countries: politicians, rich parvenus, newspaper proprietors, war leaders, bishops, businessmen,

and modernists in art; and he thought this was the reason why his first choice of publisher, Dent, turned him down.²²

Satire must always work from an implicit moral base, and that base is almost invariably a conservative one. Boyd is a moralist who put his faith in but four groups. First, in the landed gentry of England and its dying ideology of leadership and responsibility; second, in creative artists, especially painters, architects, and writers insofar as they stayed uncorrupted by modern values; and third, in high-Anglican Christianity. Boyd was more attracted to the ritual and ceremonies of Christianity than its doctrines. Like his heroine, he was a regular frequenter of King's College Chapel, Cambridge, during the war years and accepted in a spirit of muted optimism, the choir's cry of affirmation, at Easter, of "Behold, He is Risen!" (*Eya, Resurrexit!*), which he used as the last sentence of his novel. By that time, symbolically, the magnificent stained glass windows had all been put back into place. The possibility of redemption, at the level of the individual spirit, is not entirely ruled out.

The fourth source of values for Boyd were certain aspects of Australian life, particularly the life of the well-bred, well-heeled class to which he had belonged himself in youth, before the First World War. In the rosy glow of Boyd's memory, these values stemmed from a way of life in which there was no evident poverty, no unemployment, and no slums; when war and war's alarms were far away; and where (as he puts it plaintively) the income tax was only sixpence in the pound. Certainly no one could accuse Boyd of overrating Australia as a habitat for transplanted Europeans, especially those who doggedly pursued an Anglocentric way of life. He is very good, for instance, on the grotesquery of the Vane family's Christmas time in coastal Victoria: the arid brown paddocks, the blasting heat, the lack of anything at all, right out to the horizon, to catch and charm the eye, the absurdity of it all as seen through Tony Duff's eyes:

As he opened the churchyard gate he heard the nasal voices of the choir strained to reach the high notes of "Join the triumph of the skies" and although he had only once been to England, and never at Christmas time, this shrill noise, rising thinly to the high and blazing sky, struck him as a travesty. . . . The varnish on the pitch-pine pews had become sticky with the heat. When they stood up for the psalms their tweed suits came away with a tearing sound, leaving a thin growth of hair on the pews.

Those hairy pews are just the kind of detail that makes Boyd's satire so distinctive. There is a delicious, astringent malice about it that in the 1940s was a rare note in Australian literature. It is not the highest art, perhaps, but it is art that is possible only for one who is definitely both an insider and an outsider.

Yet this is only part of the picture. In other ways certain Australian values, not especially profound or intellectual ones for sure, but firmly based ones, are appealingly presented. Julie Vane, and Lucinda's sister Lydia and her husband, are used to counterpoint corrupt or decaying English values about which Boyd is at best ambivalent and at worst openly contemptuous. Again and again with sharp wit he adjusts the balance, setting vice against vice, virtue against virtue, foolishness against foolishness. What is extraordinary is the urbanity of tone, the evenhandedness of his treatment of both Australian and British mores. The balance is very deliberately preserved and sympathies about evenly divided. Thus Fred Vane's judgment on his first and last visit to the Old Country:

Fred returned from England earlier than Julie and the girls. He hated being there, as apart from a few Australians whom he met, no one knew how important he was. He was involved in a slight motor accident in Regent Street. In reporting it only one of the evening papers gave his name, and this one referred to him as "an Australian farmer named Vane." ... He never left Australia again. "England," he said, "is a country of poodle-fakirs and popinjays."

Fred likes the term "poodle-fakir" and uses it more than once. Actually "fakir" is meaningless. The slang phrase was "poodle-faker," meaning a (usually) effeminate young man who, for gain, acts as the friend and confidant of a woman without exactly being a gigolo. Whether the error is Boyd's own or Fred Vane's is unclear. At any rate, it does not affect the irony that Fred's only son and heir is actually not his but has been fathered by one of those contemptible poodle-fakers and popinjays of the Old World. Nor does it affect the counterpointed brief episode, much later, when Lucinda meets the Misses Gear in Florence. These genteel sisters have taken the opposite tack to Fred Vane. They have left Melbourne indignantly because the newspapers there declined to print their relative's obituary. They are now living as rather bewildered *dépaysées* surrounded by mementos of their former home. It would be hard to say which episode is supposed to be the more foolish. Again, when Lucinda, before her departure as a bride, tells her parents she likes people who live for pleasure, they are amazed and appalled, because Julie and Fred live their ostentatious social life as if they "served some deep if obscure moral purpose, that they were almost a reflection of the Divine Will." Later, exactly the same point is made about Marian, the mistress of Crittenden (who is, in fact, a woman of the middle classes, as we are frequently reminded): that she runs her stately home "from a stern sense of duty to the lower orders." For people of independent means *not* to live for "pleasure" is, on Boyd's scale of values, a vulgar error.

Lucinda likes to think that she herself lives “more or less at the centre of the civilised world,” but as we saw in [chapter 3](#), what they perceived to be the growing degeneracy of life in the Old Country gave some expatriate Australians over several consecutive generations a comforting sense of superiority. Despite his Anglocentrism Boyd is far from immune to this feeling. One of the most effective scenes is the exchange between the horsey, good-natured Lydia on a visit from Australia, on one side, and, on the other, Lucinda’s relatives by marriage, Marian and Paul Brayford, debating the question of what should be thought, in retrospect, of the Victorian “civilized” values. Paul is never at a loss to throw off an outrageous opinion:

“Still, unhealthy stock is necessary, at any rate in the human race. It’s only from disintegration that new life springs.”

“That’s decadent rot,” said Marian.

“On the contrary, it is decadent to cling to out-moded ways of living and thinking,” said Paul. “The further one goes with the process of decay the nearer one is to the new life.”

Lydia looked at him uneasily. Although she only half understood what he said, she knew it was against everything she valued, the reproduction of young Blakes and of young race-horses, and having enough money to feed them.

When they were going to bed she came into Lucinda’s room.

“If I saw much of that brother-in-law of yours, I’d take a meat chopper to him before long,” she said.... “You don’t want to listen to all that stuff. It seems to me there’s something wrong with this country. You don’t know where you are. You all want a few kids to occupy your time.” Feeling that this was a cruel thing to have said to Lucinda, Lydia added, “Don’t get down in the mouth, Lucie, old girl. Things will change for you soon. You must come out to Australia soon and we’ll buck you up—plenty of sunshine and parties and no cranky degenerates.”

Lydia’s promise to her sister of sunshine, parties, and no cranky degenerates is not of course the last word. Paul Brayford’s opinions are often made to sound extreme, but they are never roundly condemned. To some degree his values are the same values with which Boyd underpins his satire. But equally Lydia’s sentiments are clearly intended to sound wholesome. We are asked to admire her “simple heartiness” and to be amused by her loud comment as she leaves a risqué London review, that “if my dogs behaved like that I’d whip ‘em.” It is certainly something to set against the despicable English worlds of Baa Wendale and his muckraking gossip column, or the brutal Maurice Ablett, who handles his women, including Stephen’s wife, in the same way that his hero Hitler will soon be handling Poland.

All in all, it is Boyd’s judicious wit that is the most attractive feature bequeathed to him by his expatriation. A minor character is the loathsome

Australian newspaper proprietor, Straker. Having made his money at home from selling pornographic postcards, he arrives in England just before the Great War, starts a jingoistic tabloid, buys himself a fake title and a castle, and later promotes in his paper a policy of pro-Nazi appeasement. But he is no match for Paul Brayford:

“Sir,” he said, “your newspapers have for two decades been engaged in the degradation of the proper feelings of our people. What is vile they offer to gloating eyes, what is vindictive they applaud.... In my opinion, and I am given to understatement, you are the scum of the earth, so much of which has recently risen to the surface. I beg you will leave before my butler throws you down the steps.”

Splendidly prophetic passages like this make it hard to credit that Boyd’s evenhanded, Anglo-Australian mockery now belongs to a time sixty years in the past. His “double alienation”—let us call it, rather, “double perspective”—was the product of one very special type of expatriate literary experience that has vanished forever.

CHAPTER 8

A LEAVEN OF VENTURESOME MINDS: LITERARY EXPATRIATES AND AUSTRALIAN CULTURE

Australian writing was robbed of a leaven of venturesome minds. Our literature of the last forty years might look very different if there were added to it the books these writers might have produced in Australia.

A. A. Phillips (1966)¹

An artist is the incarnation of his country, wherever he might happen to hang his hat.

Clive James (2001)²

The real meaning of “expatriate” is “ex-patriot”.

Anon

IN 1927 THE ENGLISH NOVELIST AND PLAYWRIGHT J. B. PRIESTLEY WROTE A light article titled “Voluntary Exile” that in its way shows how the concept of expatriation, apart from registering the simple fact of geographical separation, is a cultural construct manufactured from implicit assumptions about the status both of the place of departure and of the place of arrival. Priestley, with his pipe and Yorkshire accent and avuncular manner, was the very image of the author always at home, deep-rooted in his Englishness, a paid-up member of the “Abroad is Bloody” club. In “Voluntary Exile” he puts the case against the stay-away writer:

[People] do not seem to realise that the best books are always written at home, that the writer should be the last of all people to sever his roots.

It is not the going abroad, for a glance or two at an alien life, but the living abroad that works the mischief. The real exile, with a hunger in his heart, may write more beautifully than ever he did at home, seeing the life that he has lost as an old man sometimes sees his youth, something far away and glamorous yet wonderfully clear. Literature can be well served even by nostalgia, for passionate desire and dream are there. . . . The voluntary exile, unless he should be one of those very exceptional persons who find their own souls only in a foreign land, is in an absurd position. He is merely a tourist who is lingering on.

The only kind of writers who can benefit from being “lingering tourists,” he concludes scornfully, are the ones “who are born for cosmopolitanism and produce books that seem to have been written in and for hotel lounges.”³

Priestley’s journalistic piece is no more than a set of off-the-cuff remarks—it’s easy to think of notable exceptions that make nonsense of the argument—but it does raise one very telling point in the present context. Would Priestley the Yorkshireman have considered his own shift from his native city of Bradford to London, a shift that he made after his war service and Cambridge, as being (in his words) a foolish “voluntary exile”? Would he have thought it made him a feeble cosmopolitan who had severed his creative impulse at the root? Would he have felt he deserved censure from his own countrymen, and would he have despised himself for voluntarily castrating his talent?

Of course not. In fact Priestley found living in London stimulated his imagination immensely. His second really big success, *Angel Pavement* (1930), is a socially panoramic treatment of various phases of life in the capital as it was lived nowhere else. And that is the point. In the early days many saw shifting from Melbourne to London as intrinsically no more noteworthy to shifting from any English provincial town to London (or, perhaps, to make the analogy closer, from Edinburgh or Dublin to London). This is what ambitious young authors had been doing for centuries before Priestley trod the same path, and rarely was it seen as a matter of conflicting allegiances, of being a matter worthy of public concern or condemnation. It was just a private decision, enacted a thousand times over the years: a natural, age-old response to the metropolitan/provincial dichotomy, and interesting only within the immediate circle of the person leaving.

The trajectory of Priestley’s own career in the 1920s surely explains why the departure of many writers from Australia was for a long time regarded with equanimity—when the gap they left was noticed at all. Certainly these departures are all but undetectable with the usual tools of historical demographers. It should be remembered that reverse migration has been a regular phenomenon of Australia’s demography. There were times when the country suffered a net *loss* of its total population. It happened in some of the closing

years of the nineteenth century, thanks to bank failures and drought, and again in 1945–46, when departures exceeded arrivals by 15,000 people, causing something of a panic.

It goes without saying that departing writers, indeed all creative people put together, were but a minuscule proportion of those who returned to the Old Country over the decades, and only in special cases was their departure recorded. For the single most remarkable fact about the history of literary expatriation to England in the first part of the twentieth century is how thoroughly it was taken for granted, and how little its scope and effects were discussed. To a surprising extent this is still true. In the bicentennial year, 1988, a conference was held in London under the auspices of the Australian Studies Centre. The papers considered the contribution of Australian expatriates to British society in almost every field of human endeavor—except one. Physicists, doctors, artists, musicians, bankers, folk of the theatre, film, the ballet, and the media—all were selected, evaluated, and given their due. But not one single expatriate from the worlds of fiction or poetry or any kind of creative writing whatsoever over the last 200 years figured at all.⁴

Today this must surely strike anyone who is concerned for the cultural health of the nation as a remarkable omission. The question of how far it matters if a not inconsiderable fraction of a country's intelligentsia—literary or otherwise—takes itself off to live indefinitely somewhere else must be a debatable issue at any time; but in principle most cultural historians, and perhaps most sociologists and historical demographers too, would accept that it is a phenomenon worth serious attention. Many would surely put it somewhat more strongly. As the acerbic but always refreshing A. D. Hope opined in the 1970s, if literary talent exports itself from the periphery to the center, one of its most malign effects is to debase the whole hierarchy of the lesser names left behind. "What gives literature maturity and standing," he said, "is its *best* writers. If they are skimmed off one tends to have a literature of second best, a general scene of creditable mediocrity, and that is just what, in fact, we have had."⁵ When the best go missing in action, the lesser names all move up a few undeserved pegs, and suddenly it happens that the new "top" names are being equated with the most brilliant talent anywhere else. To change the metaphor, they become rather plumper fish in a more depopulated pond. From there it is only a short step to the cultural cringe being replaced by a snarl of superiority. That, at any rate, is one argument, pursued in the wake of A.D. Hope by Clive James, who with his customary sarcasm has dared to ask—over and over, with pointed examples—why it is that so many publicly acclaimed great writers have produced so little good writing.⁶

It chances that Hope's dairy metaphor ("skimmed off") is the same as the one that was employed by Miles Franklin ("rich cream") decades earlier. The difference of tone, though, is telling. For Franklin the removal of the rich

cream off the top of the milk was a fact of nature. She herself had no qualms about surrendering to it. Her imagery carries few of the moral overtones—chiefly indignation and resentment—detectable in Hope's position, which is more typical of the 1970s. Franklin's focus is on the rich cream. Hope's is on the dilute, bluish residuum.

It is Franklin's attitude rather than Hope's that was the one current up to 1950 at least: calm, complacent, shrugging acceptance. Commenting on the proceedings of the Australian Book Week held in Australia House at the end of September 1931, the *British Australian* paper reported that "it was a pity many of the best Australian brains should have to desert their birth land permanently for the Mother Country. It is necessary for them to come here to get perspective and the atmosphere Australia lacks through sheer newness. The Commonwealth would be all the richer if they did not, so many of them, remain." But that was inevitable, the newspaper said bluffly. "Discounting the nonsense, the truth is that until Australia has grown larger, and can afford to support its own artistic genius, many of its writers, painters, musicians and sculptors will continue to make their headquarters in England or the Continent."⁷

Very probably these are the sentiments of an expatriate contributor. We note the emollient use of the word "headquarters," implying flexibility of travel and the promise of a regular interchange of ideas and personnel between center and periphery. But that was merely lip service. No one really expected to see a balanced two-way flow. The newspaper took it for granted that writers do tend to gravitate to the cultural centers of their world. It was inevitable, and therefore beyond remediation. For Australians to wring one's hands over it was assumed to be futile; just as futile as the burghers of Stratford, Canterbury, and Litchfield mourning their own cultural loss when William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, and Samuel Johnson took the high road to the capital.

This indifference—meaning, among other things, that no one at the time saw any particular need to collect any hard facts—makes it difficult now, so long afterward, to draw any quantitative conclusions about how the Australian literary scene was shaped by the creative diaspora over these years, other than to make the obvious point that some writings now held to be canonical in Australian literature would never have existed if their creators had stayed at home. Useful generalizations are hard to come by, simply because in most cases—not quite all, to be sure—the decision to expatriate was taken for private reasons and rarely under the influence of external pressures sufficiently strong to become a matter of public record. As we have seen in earlier chapters, the best evidence comes from autobiographical material, or material from which biographical details can reasonably be extracted, and is therefore highly personal and individualistic.

We do have one very broad statistical indicator of the loss. This is an estimate made in 1939 that of those Australians who left their country as Rhodes scholars after an expensive investment in their education about one-third never returned. Furthermore, of the twenty scholars who by that date were judged to have an international reputation, more than half were living permanently overseas, mostly in England.⁸

Rhodes scholars are, of course, only the tiniest tip of the iceberg, and few of them were in any sense "literary." It is not much of an indicator. Still, it is at least a reminder that among those who left were many members of the intelligentsia who, though not creative writers, were broadly speaking people of letters, using words in their trade; people who would certainly have contributed in one way or another to the general enrichment of the cultural atmosphere if they had stayed. Common sense says that the loss of so many of these brilliant and imaginative minds over three or four generations must have been profound. They ranged from mild eccentrics like Chalmers Kearney, an inventor and transport engineer, who promoted his monorail system in a utopian novel, *Erone*, to conservatives like Francis Sheed, who with his wife founded Sheed & Ward, the best known of the Catholic publishing houses in England. There was Robert Lowe Hall, later Lord Rotherhall, government economist, Establishment figure, and generous literary patron who like so many others never returned after winning his Rhodes scholarship in 1923; and there were curious types like F. Matthias Alexander, the self-help practitioner and inventor of a technique for improving physical posture and breathing and with them mental attitudes, who still has a modest following today. Born in Tasmania in 1859, Alexander had what seems to have been a fairly rickety career in Australia as an elocutionist and stage entertainer until he sought greener pastures in England in 1904. There he blossomed: his self-help guides like *Man's Supreme Inheritance* and *The Use of the Self*, sold well, and by the 1930s, having become a white-haired and distinguished-looking sage, he had formulated a practical philosophy and a set of breathing and movement exercises that impressed Aldous Huxley, among others. Huxley's novel *Eyeless in Gaza* has a character based partly on him. This is Dr. Miller, who amputates a gangrened leg alfresco while preaching pacifism and literally straightening out Huxley's fictional alter ego, the neurotic soul-searcher Anthony Beavis. Dr. Miller, however, is no more an Australian than Alexander was a doctor; perhaps Huxley did not know much of his origins.

The loss of scientists, academics, and teachers of all kinds was also great. The language teacher William Tilly left in 1890 at the age of thirty to set up his famous German language school outside Berlin, which he and his large Australian family ran with all the iron discipline of a Prussian military academy. The linguist and critic A. R. Chisholm attended the Institut Tilly

in 1912, and has left an amusing account of how the punishing schedule gave him complete fluency from scratch within the promised six months.⁹ A common reason for the departure of academics was poor facilities and worse research funding. Unfortunately, they were often the most talented ones of their generation, as in the case of the psychologist Stanley Porteus, inventor of the still-used Porteus maze intelligence test, who left in 1919 for the greater opportunities offered in Hawaii. Some academics fell foul of the media or the conservatism of their institutions. Helen Bourke has examined the motives of three distinguished scientific academics in the 1920s who joined what was not yet called the brain drain. Two of them, Herbert Heaton, an economist, and Thomas Griffith Taylor, a geographer, were native-born and, as Bourke puts it in phrases that might well have a wider application, “energetic combatants in controversy, provocative in style and sometimes mischievous in their wit”: too much so for them to linger as soon as they received good job offers elsewhere, usually in North America. They were just the sort of men Australia could ill afford to lose. Both Heaton and Taylor had suffered badly in the media for expressing their views too stridently. In Taylor’s case, it was because he was too outspokenly pessimistic about Australia’s sustainable population capacity.¹⁰ An even more controversial figure was Grafton Elliot Smith, a restlessly inquisitive anatomist, archaeologist, and anthropologist, who went to England in 1896 and returned only for two visits. His career was spent at Manchester and University College London. Elliot Smith was an anatomist of genius, but he was not content with that. He maintained a diffusionist position of human culture so extreme—indeed, by modern standards downright bizarre—that when he was shown, during an Australian visit in 1914, examples of the smoked corpses produced by Torrens Straits islanders he claimed excitedly that he detected the remnants of Egyptian mummification practices in them, somehow transmitted across the world. Claims of this kind, though not very exceptionable at the time, raised eyebrows. Indeed, a vague question mark seemed always to hang over Smith’s career. Perhaps it was due, as a biographer claims, to nothing more than the prejudice shown toward an Australian interloper into the British medical establishment who had dared to venture outside his strict speciality; or possibly it was because of whispers about his supposed involvement in the fraud of the Piltdown Man.

Several other medical specialists, later to become famous, joined the same exodus in the first years after the end of the First World War, including the renowned pediatric surgeon Sir Denis Browne, who was born at Toorak in 1892 but went to Liverpool for training as a young man, and did not return. He was widely read in the humanities and was married to Helen Simpson, a versatile author who combined interests in crime, demonology, and cooking, who herself had left in 1913, aged sixteen. She died very young in 1940.

The year 1919 also saw the departure of Sir Hugh Cairns, the brain surgeon. Born in Adelaide in 1896, he left on a Rhodes scholarship and among the notable events of his career was being called to the case of Lawrence of Arabia, author of *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, after his fatal motorcycle accident. Cairns advised the British government on the design of the first effective crash helmet.

People like these, and too many others to be mentioned, were Australians of wide cultural interests who would certainly have contributed much to the life of their homeland, as well as to their specialties; yet few of them were seen again at all during the active phase of their careers. People of this self-confident type with specialized skills took easily to transplantation. The degree to which they continued to regard themselves as being in any sense Australian at all varied greatly. In some cases, cutting the umbilical cord was painless and immediate. They became immigrants. In others of the metic type, the severance was never total, no matter how many years were spent away.

Perhaps the ease of cutting the cord varied directly with the degree of success. There is no reason to suppose they were the victims of any sustained prejudice against antipodeans, and hence no reason for Jonathan Crow's growl, in *For Love Alone*, that "I haven't a chance of a good academic job with my accent. I'm a blanky Colonial." In fact, Christina Stead probably gave him this line just to emphasize his morose and paranoid nature. After all, her own accent was no handicap. She got her first London job, which catapulted her into quite a different social sphere, precisely because she presented as an eager colonial. Numerous scholars rose to the peak of their professions after leaving, such as the jurist Carleton Kemp Allen (1887–1966) who departed for Oxford in 1910, became a famous expert on jurisprudence at that university, wrote many semipopular works on the law and a couple of jeux d'esprit fictions, and was knighted on retirement.

All such people were exactly the sort of venturesome minds that would have added some yeast to the stodgy dough of Australian provinciality had they stayed. It is a truism that those who from whatever motive seek a better life in another country are likely to be exceptional in their drive and acumen, and that makes their loss the more deplorable. The case could be made that Australia suffered in this period from an unfortunate natural selection whereby the fittest exported themselves, leaving a tranquil ecological niche in which the lazy, the smug, and the dullards waxed fat. And perhaps the consequences were even worse than that. One might go on to speculate that a negative feedback loop of ever-increasing severity was established. Suppose large numbers of Australians really did exile themselves to escape the dreary, vulgar philistine nonculture of their homeland—the status that was once roundly dismissed by D. H. Lawrence in one of those lightning

bits of impressionism to which he was prone as “nothing, *Nichts, nullus, niente*.” Then, by leaving, did they not exacerbate the very problem they were complaining of, by adding to the list of the books that were never written, the life that they failed to enrich, the public careers that they aborted even before gestation? Was not the sheer scale of departures of so many talented and enterprising people in part actually *responsible* for the aridity of cultural life—at the very least, because they were not physically present to insert themselves vigorously into the life of the mind of their day? If they complained about their status as “second-hand Europeans,” as A. D. Hope put it in his most famous poem “Australia” of 1939, then is it not a fair retort that fleeing the scene in order to become a first-hand European instead of a second-hand one was a pretty self-indulgent solution?

Though a general indifference to these many losses was the order of the day, it was not however an entirely uniform and universal indifference. Twice in our period influential voices were heard arguing that for the budding author the rush to London was a fool’s errand, damaging both personally and for the emerging Australian literary culture, and therefore to be condemned. The first came at the end of the nationalistic 1890s, when the *Bulletin*, in the shape of its literary editor A. G. Stephens writing in Sydney, and the journalist Patchett Martin offering his experiences from London, advised its readers with literary ambitions to “sit tight and write.”¹¹ The argument for doing so was that local writers could make a decent living on their home ground; those writers, at least, who were capable of supplying what readers wanted. Martin even claimed that in the year 1899 it “should” be possible to run one’s career as easily from Sydney as from London or New York—though he failed to explain what, if that were true, he was doing in London himself, a city from which he never returned.

No love was lost between Stephens and Patchett Martin, for reasons now lost to history. Stephens’s opinion of Martin was that he was a money-grubbing second-rater notable only for his “super-extraordinary cheek.” However, broadly speaking, that same “sit tight and write” advice that Martin had given in the *Bulletin* was Stephens’s advice too. Stephens went to London twice himself and found he had no liking for it. He could not advise anyone to move there for literary purposes. But no one took much notice of his jaundiced opinion that the city was a “filthy hole,” the air foul and the climate “vile, with variations,” the men “beasts of burden,” and the women “beasts of pleasure.” It sounded like mere rant. Although a superb editor with a shrewd eye for new talent and a critic of immense influence in his day, Stephens had an unworldly side to his nature. Never one to neglect an international comparison, especially one to the credit of the local products, he asked in his *Bulletin* column: “How many writers in France have been so fortunate [as some Australians]? They with their editions of 250 or

500, when they have gained a world-wide reputation for original power and refined art" For Stephens, "refined art" was everything; economic viability, a bagatelle. Monetary earnings were not allowed to figure in the equation. To make no money from authorship was almost a badge of honor. He refused even to consider whether Verlaine or Mallarmé, his culture heroes, actually lived on the microscopic sales of their poems. He preferred to claim dramatically that Ethel Turner, the author of *Seven Little Australians* (1894), which sold 20,000 copies locally, wrote for just one hour a day, finished one book a year, and yet earned a sum "which many a barrister in his tenth year sighs after vainly."¹² This comparison was a cheeky one, since in fact Turner was married to a barrister. At all events, when he told his readers airily that "*Apart from cash*, there is no profit in 'going to London,'" the first phrase probably lost his case right away, at any rate in the minds of those same readers with overseas ambitions of their own.¹³

Patchett Martin may have been the target of Stephens's contempt, but while in London it was he who took the very first practical, creditable steps of trying to organize and display the expatriate contribution to Australian literature as it was at that time. In 1888 he gathered contributions for an anthology of contemporary writings, *Oak-bough and Wattle-blossom*, thereby taking up the question of what an "Australian author" really is, and, more to the point, what the status is of those "who are fully Australian by birth and training, but whose literary work has been accomplished in London." It was certainly a fascinating question, but Martin had no useful generalizations to offer. The best he could do was to give space to those who (more or less) fell into that category. He simply drummed up contributions from seven people in the class he had defined who were on the spot—Haddon Chambers, himself, Rosa Praed, Douglas Sladen, Philip Mennell, Edmund Rawson, and Sebastian Oldmixon—and left it to the reader to work out what their merits were and what they had in common. That was little enough, to be sure. Neither Philip Mennell nor Douglas Sladen met Martin's rudimentary specification of being "fully Australian by birth and training." Mennell was born in Newcastle on Tyne, was trained in the law, and did not emigrate to Victoria until he had qualified as a solicitor. As for Sladen, far from being "fully Australian," he had simply worked in Melbourne for a few years after Oxford, and he never returned even once over the course of a long life.¹⁴ Patchett Martin's was a brave attempt, but it had fallen at the first hurdle in trying to define what expatriation was doing to Australian literature.

In the next decade the journalist Francis Adams tried to offer a broader perspective. He speculated that the greater accessibility of England, thanks to the steamship, had aborted the growth of a truly independent, national literature all too soon after its conception. What he called the "brilliant dawn" of the first generation of writers (which for Adams meant Marcus

Clarke and Adam Lindsay Gordon) had been succeeded and obliterated by a "cloudy, colourless day" of internationalized literature.¹⁵ That was one, not uncommon, view of the colonial-metropolitan relationship and it still has plenty of resonance a century later. It is a pity Adams did not work out his ideas at more length. It is plain, though, from such stray comments that the notion that such a thing did exist as, distinctively, an *expatriate* Australian writer was fully formed at an early date; that is, by 1890 or even a decade or so earlier. This is, on the face of it, rather surprising. To be any creative use, the writer's sense of expatriation has to be able to draw on a certain distancing, an appreciation, in one's own eyes and those of others', of being stuck in no man's land, of having lost one country without having found another, of *not* being assimilated. This is a risky but potentially stimulating position because one's (Australian) readers might welcome and admire one's "objectivity" or, alternatively, denounce and resent one's "irrelevance." The point is that this position could not have been taken up while those who left were regarded by their readers, and indeed regarded themselves, as simply returning "home" to Great Britain. It needed *some* sense of a national identity, even if it were perceived only as a void.

With the decline of 1890s nationalism, the question faded from notice. When it was revived again it was very briefly, in the 1930s, in the middle of that troubled decade when neo-nationalism was raising a flurry of interest. It was then that the editor-critic P. R. Stephensen published his influential long essay *The Foundations of Culture in Australia*, remarkable for its air of Anglophobic indignation and chauvinism. *Foundations* covers a lot of ground and pulls no punches. In his day Stephensen was unrivalled as a cultural polemicist when in full spate, and here for the first time we find a fully fledged assault on those cultural leaders who had chosen to take themselves off. Daring to say that the idea of a writers' homeland across the seas was nothing but a pretty legend, Stephensen unleashed his wit against "a large colony of young Australian writers and artists, in Chelsea or Bloomsbury, aspiring to set the Thames on fire, because the Yarra and the Parramatta seemed too damp." "*What's the matter with them all?*" cried Stephensen, succumbing to italics. "The shirkers, they have cleared out, funk'd their job.... From a national point of view our émigrés may be written off as a dead loss."¹⁶

Unlike his predecessor Stephens, Stephensen does not try to prove that a good living is available locally to those with talent and a capacity for work. He knew that was untrue. Rather, he makes it a purely moral issue: to leave is disloyal, even cultural treason. Stephensen was the first to make the explicit accusation that literary expatriates should be regarded in this light, and it was no passing phase in his thinking. Twenty years later, in 1954, literary migrants were, to his mind, still shirkers and "unpatriots" who had chosen the "line of least resistance" when they should have stayed home and stuck

to the main task: "the building-up of culture in Australia."¹⁷ He was still doing his best to make them feel ashamed of themselves for leaving.

Stephensen was much abused for taking this stance, notably by Randolph Hughes, who savaged him in a review of *Foundations* in the conservative *Nineteenth Century* magazine. The scholarly and eccentric Hughes (1889–1955) was an odd fish. He had long been an expatriate himself, having left in 1915, and he had just quit his post as a lecturer in French at London University after a violent row with the authorities, or rather with one unfortunate academic whom he called a "furtive rotter," a man whom, he told the horrified Jack Lindsay, he would have enjoyed personally torturing to death. He survived precariously thereafter by freelancing, exam marking, doing academic odd jobs, and producing erudite but unremunerative work on the poet Swinburne.

Hughes called Stephensen's *Foundations* "clumsily conceived and barbarously written," though he conceded that in its "crude Calibanish way" its fanatical Anglophobia did serve the useful if unintended purpose of warning what could happen if Australia chose to cast off from its British moorings. Such a reaction is hardly surprising from a man who called himself an old-fashioned Tory. In fact Hughes thought of himself as a pan-European, writing energetically in support of a rapprochement with Nazi Germany in the 1930s. Certainly there are many foolish things in Stephensen's essay—he had singularly unattractive views about many things—and especially naïve is his notion that one can somehow force a national literature into existence by wishing for it. Still, we see his best side in his loyalty to the idea of supporting Australian culture, or at least not abandoning it, an opinion he stuck to even after his punitive internment during the war because of his subversive views. Oddly enough, his politics and those of his opponent Randolph Hughes were not that far apart, as it happens, especially in their anti-Semitism; but by a fine irony nothing at all happened to Hughes in England even though he was an unrepentant fascist who continued to tell anyone who would listen that "Herr Hitler had the 'real honour . . . of figuring among the types produced by two millennia of European civilisation" right up to 1939.¹⁸

Stephensen's fulminations, and the more muted protests mounted by the writers of the Jindiworobak movement in Adelaide of the 1940s who drew on Stephensen's analysis, had little influence. Though his rhetoric was admired in some quarters and his points taken seriously, they had, as might be expected, little practical effect, other than increasing the attention paid to the plight of Australian writers who doggedly eked out a living at home, and encouraging further laments about those who were being "starved out." The exodus of "the shirkers" continued unabated until the Second World War temporarily brought it to a halt.

While there is no evidence that anyone was kept onshore by the forces of radical nationalism in the period 1890–1900, or in its later brief recrudescence in the mid-1930s, it does raise a moral, or at least a philosophical, question, to which writers themselves were not blind: When push comes to shove, how much claim, if any, does our country of birth have on us? It is an especially acute question for writers, who more than most kinds of artists so often have to engage themselves while they are young in a life-or-death struggle for self-definition. It is they who need the oxygen of a fostering cultural atmosphere to do it, if their nascent talent is not to be asphyxiated. The occasional slightly guilty remark implies that attention was paid to the issue from time to time, but that the urge to leave was so overmastering that the question was simply shelved by those best equipped to tackle it.

The most memorable enquiry into whether one's natal country "ought" to require one's presence comes not from any biography, but from a work of fiction: Henry James's horribly effective short story of the supernatural, "The Jolly Corner" (1908). The story is American in setting, but its point is no less applicable to the Australian situation, both then and later. Spencer Brydon, an expatriate of thirty-three years' standing, returns to his childhood home in New York, a huge empty house with a demolition order hanging over it. On his repeated visits to this house, Brydon finds himself speculating more and more about what kind of man he might have become had he never gone overseas. Gradually he comes to realize that, in some inexplicable way, this alternative, never-departed, self is actually haunting the rooms of the old home. After a series of nocturnal visits, he gradually he tracks it down and confronts it. The face is covered, at first, by two mutilated fingers; then they are dropped to reveal a loathsome monster:

The stranger, whoever he might be, evil, odious, blatant, vulgar, had advanced as for aggression, and [Brydon] knew himself give ground. Then harder pressed still, sick with the force of his shock, and falling back as under the hot breath and the roused passion of a life larger than his own, a rage of personality before which his own collapsed, he felt the whole vision turn to darkness and his very feet give way. His head went round; he was going; he had gone.

James's story is wonderfully rich in its possible interpretations, but one thing is certain: Brydon had been right to go all those years before. No abstract moral principle could, or should, have delayed him. As his stay-at-home friend Alice tells him comfortingly, "No, thank heaven . . . it's not you! Of course it wasn't to have been." Yet no doubt many an expatriate must have wondered, like Brydon, "what fantastic, yet perfectly possible, development of my own nature I mayn't have missed."¹⁹ What "small tight bud" had been blasted by the chill climate of England before it could ever bloom?

James was a novelist, not a historian, and so claims the novelist's rightful privilege to deal in particularities. Nevertheless, one cannot help but use the moral of his tale to speculate in a general way about Australia's own Jolly Corner: which is to say, that alternative history of culture and society wherein those venturesome minds who left, had stayed. What unexpected buds would have bloomed, given the chance, in their native soil? Or is that too optimistic? Would the effect have been to breed monsters? Stephensen, in *Foundations*, thought so: he remarks bitterly that one of his country's most valuable "primary products" were geniuses—but they were made only for export. If they stayed, they were destroyed, slowly but surely. In our own time the same point has been argued by Clive James. James, who should know, has commented that becoming an exile to escape boredom may sound like an absurdly precious notion, until you consider just how lethal unrequited boredom can be.²⁰ It is tempting to blame cultural deficiencies for destroying some people who did not stay away or who never left at all for one or another of those reasons Miles Franklin listed so unsympathetically: Poverty, Ignorance, Misfortune, or Incompetence. Henry Lawson's career started to disintegrate after his return from London, and even more spectacularly catastrophic was the career of the poet and academic Christopher Brennan. He was unusual in that neither London nor the English literary world of his own day meant anything to him: his gods were the symbolist poets Baudelaire and Mallarmé, and the Greek dramatists. He went to Berlin on a scholarship in 1892 and stayed for two years, though he did not like Germany, and returned to Sydney when he could, never leaving it again. Had he stayed his poetic gift might have come to nothing anyway, but he could hardly have done worse than he did by returning. A prodigious scholar, he finally secured a post at Sydney University but was dismissed from it in 1925 amid dark accusations of sexual impropriety and perhaps even incest. His fall was not as great as Lawson's, but he passed all his later years in a fog of alcohol and poverty before dying in 1932. There were other, less spectacular but still mournful cases like that of Louis Esson (1878–1943). His career as a playwright, which had once seemed so promising and original and brave in its attempt to create a folk theatre akin to that of Synge, Yeats, and the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, fizzled out while Esson was still in his forties. Would not Esson have done better, both personally and as a playwright, if he had given up this futile attempt and followed in the footsteps of dramatists like Haddon Chambers, Harrison Owen, and those others who did not scruple to take their talents to London's theatre land? Men like Brennan and Esson were of the type that the critic R. P. Blackmur once termed the "ingrown" expatriate, the negative image of James's Spencer Brydon: people whose psychological makeup was such that they *needed* to break out for their own good, but somehow never did, with tragic results.²¹

Perhaps not too much should be made of this. As the self-destructive career in England of Philip Lindsay shows only too plainly, one did not have to stay in Australia to slip into alcoholism, dissipation, and an early grave. Still, it is a fair generalization that it was the immigrant, not the metic, type of expatriate who took away no bud that would have flowered at all, or would have flowered in a different way, in Australia. Lindsay himself could hardly have become such a lively historical novelist and scriptwriter in his homeland, even if he did sicken of his exile in the end. Or take the case of a person on the fringe of the literary world, Murray Allison (1877–1929). It is fairly certain that Allison, after leaving at the age of thirty-one, never considered returning. He wrote a book on advertising, a collection of short stories, some with Australian settings, and a book of verse; but naturally these did not meet the bills for his country estate, the Haven, near Chichester, or his eighteen-ton motor cutter *Thalia*, moored at Cowes on the Isle of Wight. Those were paid for, not by literature, but by his rapid rise, first to the considerable rank of advertising manager for the *Times*, and later to his role as a small newspaper proprietor in his own right.

It is possible that the career of an energetic, imaginative businessman who did a little writing on the side, like Allison, might have taken on a not too dissimilar shape had he never left Australia. But in other cases the flight to England seems to have been so overdetermined that it is impossible to conceive of any alternative antipodean history for them at all. Quite a number of the most Anglophile expatriates treated their departure as a correction to the order of things rather than a transplantation. In their own minds they were intended by nature to be Britons who by some inscrutable accident had been geographically displaced at birth. This cosmic error they hastened to rectify as soon as they could. While one cannot know what they might ultimately have made of themselves at home, the parabolas of their actual careers show for certain that they could never have developed as they were able to do in England. They would have been, quite literally, different people; and possibly deformed and mutilated people at that, as in James's parable.

In practice, though, Australia was never going to contain some of the characters it produced in this era: men of action, for instance, like the journalist-adventurer Alfred "Smiler" Hales (1860–1936) from Adelaide. He first wandered the country looking for mining opportunities, gathering bush anecdotes, which he recycled in breezy articles and later in his book of reportage, *Broken Trails*. After settling in England in 1899 and having proved his worth as a journalist, he was sent off by the *Daily News* to Macedonia, the Gobi desert, and Basutoland. He gave up reporting wars in 1912, asserting with superb lack of foresight that "the war correspondent's profession is a thing of the past" and turned to popular fiction instead.²² He wrote about fifty books, including the rumbustious *McGlusky* yarns, ridiculous

adolescent power-fantasies that alone are said to have sold two million copies. An even more astonishing character was a near-contemporary of Hales's: George Morrison (1862–1920), who was born in Geelong and trained as a doctor. His life reads like improbable adventure fiction as he came and went from Australia during his early wanderings. Morrison returned from a failed New Guinea exploration with a wooden spearhead embedded so deeply in his body that he chose the agony of a voyage to Scotland in 1884 expressly to have three inches of the spear removed from his abdomen by an eminent Edinburgh surgeon.²³ He made his name in travel literature with *An Australian in China*, a breezy account of a trip he had taken alone, much of it on foot, all the way from Shanghai to Rangoon, without no Chinese and no interpreter. When, on the strength of this epic journey, *The Times* sent him to the Far East as “our Peking correspondent” he got there in time for the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. He was wounded again during the legations siege, when he performed many heroic deeds, and was given up for dead in England. Later he had the chance to read in his newspaper his own obituary, which reported prematurely that he had been killed when “the last heroic remnants of Western civilisation in the doomed city were engulfed beneath the overwhelming flood of Asiatic barbarism.”²⁴ “Morrison of Peking” survived the barbarism—which was far from being only Asiatic in extent—and lived on to supply another twenty years’ worth of action-packed journalism, eventually to die in his bed in Sidmouth, Devon.

These adventurers and daredevils were a subspecies of the immigrant type. They belong to that class—not a small one, even in this period—which was quickly absorbed into English intellectual, artistic, or scholarly life without tension or regret or a single backward glance. Dr. Morrison found it convenient in China to attach a pigtail to his hat. No more effort, apart from a little attention to style and accent, was needed for an Australian to render him or herself invisible in England, or to be no more visible that was found to be personally or professionally convenient. A good example of this type is the very minor novelist and playwright Harry Tighe (b.1877). He grew up near Newcastle, the son of a rich politician and landowner, and was sent to England alone at the age of seventeen to improve his health. After a short term at Cambridge, he became a full-time writer and eventually the author of some sixteen novels, a collection of short stories called *Remorse*, written in the Wildean “aesthetic” mode, and a few plays.²⁵ Obviously the earnings from these forgotten productions did not provide Tighe’s income, which presumably was supplied from Australia. Though not very rich, he lived in Kensington and moved in the highest circles of the haut monde, especially among its theatrical personages. His acquaintance was enormous, and he was a frequent and welcome guest in aristocratic country houses both in England and Europe, in countries from Italy to Hungary.

Tighe is a perfect example of the immigrant Australianate Briton. Unusually for that type, however, Tighe did write two memoirs, both probably issued by vanity presses: *As I Saw It* (1937) and *By the Wayside* (1939). The first is an account of Tighe's impressions of Australia and the Pacific islands, after he was obliged at the age of fifty-five—by reason of poverty, he said—to return after forty years' expatriation, whereupon he settled at Cremorne Point in Sydney, working again in the theatre. But he did not stay long; it was in the middle of the Depression, and he went back to England again, where he wrote both of his memoirs. *By the Wayside* tells of his first departure for England and something of his social life there. It is, however, the most evasive and teasing of all the memoirs of expatriation. Like many other such memoirs that have been discussed here, it is semifictionalized. It is told in the third person, as the pseudoautobiography of one "Chard Ellcomb," whose life is detailed from birth, through his arrival in Europe in 1895, and onward until 1937 when "Ellcomb," like Tighe himself, is aged sixty. Remarkably, not only does it deliberately conceal Tighe's origins (Australia, never mentioned once by name, is half disguised throughout under the coy cognomen "a land of sunshine"), but also it must be unique among literary memoirs in that it sedulously avoids mentioning any of its author's works or any aspect of his authorial career whatsoever. Replacing these details are some excellent anecdotes, such as one about the Irish lady owner of a grand house in which "Ellcomb" is spending the weekend: this lady has to suffer the risk of getting pneumonia in her soaking wet dress because her maid is busy having tea, and changing it all by herself is beyond her capacity. Like Martin Boyd, Alice Rosman, and a host of other expatriates who were mildly scornful of English effeteness and impracticality, "Chard thought of his mother in a far-off land of sunshine—capable, energetic, practical and inventive. He could condone ignorance but not inefficiency."²⁶ The rest, though, consists of pages of woolly reflections on aesthetic and philosophical issues that are neither very original nor very interesting. *By the Wayside* is chiefly remarkable for the number of names it drops that were famous before and just after the Great War: the novelists Mrs. Humphry Ward, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Michael Arlen, Gilbert Frankau, Cunninghame Graham, Hugh Walpole; and Edward Elgar, Sybil Thorndyke, and even the physicist Lord Kelvin. It was Australia that claimed Tighe in the end, however, because he died at Manly in 1946, and despite his wide acquaintance he seems to have made little impact on other people of the English world he inhabited.

That could never be said of a man of a very different stripe again, another immigrant who was much more famous in his day but like Tighe is quite forgotten now: Walter (W. J. R.) Turner (1884–1946). Turner can reasonably lay claim to being, after Alan Moorehead, the second most spectacular

and broadest success in England; a man who slotted himself, a square peg in a square hole, without discernible effort right into the center of the British literary establishment. Born in Victoria in humble circumstances, Turner absconded at a young age expressly to become a writer. He rose like a rocket in Bloomsbury circles by sheer industry and force of personality. In 1923 he was sketched by the fashionable William Rothenstein as a man who had definitely arrived. The young Aldous Huxley supplied an admiring pen-portrait to go with the sketch, and then mildly satirized Turner in his second novel, the equally fashionable and daring roman à clef, *Antic Hay*. In an early scene in that novel, the absurd Casimir Lypiatt loudly delivers in a crowded restaurant a ridiculous pseudo-Mexican poem that is surely a mischievous parody of Turner's much-anthologized poem "Romance." Australian readers were not allowed to appreciate Huxley's cheek at first, because *Antic Hay* was immediately banned for obscenity.²⁷

Turner became a prolific Georgian poet, a biographer, a comic playwright, an editor, and one of the great arbiters of musical taste between the wars. He was a provocative music critic for the *New Statesman* for many years. Turner had glamour; he was a celebrity. Learned, debonair, full of sophisticated and unsettling opinions, he was the lover of numerous clever women including the formidable archaeologist Jacquetta Hawkes, who described him dispassionately as an "ageing poet, a most fascinating man who was also a well-known womanizer." Hawkes tells without rancor how, after his death, she set herself the task of trawling through his voluminous books of verse trying to work out which of his many love poems referred to herself.²⁸

In short, Turner, a literary man about town, had just the kind of career that was totally impossible in Australia. A. D. Hope, in his essay on Turner, "A Lost Australian Nightingale," argues that his career ought to serve as a warning to every Australian author about the dangers of cutting the umbilical cord. As the memories of his homeland faded so, Hope suggests, did Turner's original gift of song deteriorate into mere whimsy and tub-thumping patriotism. Actually Hope concedes that this explanation is not being advanced too seriously, for there could have been other reasons for Turner's poetic decline. In any case (and Hope never made this point), if Turner failed, then his overall career was the kind of failure most expatriates of his day would have loved to have. The irritating cherry on the cake, from an Australian perspective anyway, is the first part of his fictionalized memoir, *Blow for Balloons*, where he appears under the self-mocking pseudonym "Henry Airbubble." No doubt time and distance lent enchantment to the view, but in its pages is to be found one of the most wonderfully evocative accounts extant of a Victorian bush childhood in the 1890s. For those who knew of it, Turner's career must have made many a stay-at-home gnash his teeth. It did not help that Turner called the two volumes of his memoir two

"Hemispheres" (that is, Melbourne and London), which simply could not be made to fit together at all. Turner believed in the cosmic displacement idea quite literally. Having got himself into the "right" hemisphere, it was unnecessary, in fact impossible, for him to find a way back across the imaginary equator dividing the two.

Another interesting case of this kind, because it raises even more pointedly the question of what might have been lost to Australia, is the career of Jack Lindsay (b.1900), the other Lindsay brother who never returned from England. Abstemious and unworldly, the only attribute Jack shared with his brother Philip was the straitened existence of the freelance man of letters. If the sheer output of publications and relentless industry were to be taken as the measure of expatriate success, Lindsay would certainly take the palm. He died in England in his ninetieth year, after writing or editing 170 or more works in almost every literary genre: historical fiction, scholarly editions, translations, classical studies, poetic dramas and performance poetry acted out by troupes for various political causes, scripts for the Army Theatre Unit, a series of novels called the "British Way" about contemporary proletarian life, much journalism, biographies, and (most characteristically) a vast quantity of ancient and medieval history, including histories of science and pseudoscience. Over some stretches of his career, even in old age, he was publishing several full-length books a year. He also kept up a correspondence of stupendous length and complexity with various kindred spirits. Yet he wrote very little about Australia, except in the early part of his autobiography, in one novel set in Brisbane and a few articles on authors congenial to him, including Prichard and White.

Lindsay became a communist in 1936, reporting privately that it had given him a reason for living, and that his authorial program for the future was that "as a Marxist I henceforth wage war on two fronts...against Democracy and Fascism."²⁹ This made him unpopular during the Cold War era, and yet his refusal to toe the party line took him close to expulsion more than once. Orthodox or not, his Marxist politics and aesthetics are of little interest today, except insofar as they were responsible for the tediously doctrinaire tone of so much of his work. His travel journals of visits beyond the Iron Curtain in the early 1950s would, if anyone read them now, be a sore embarrassment to his admirers. It may seem harsh to think of Lindsay as one of the Soviet Union's useful idiots; as being a dupe, falsifier, or liar of the same stamp as Frank Hardy, K. S. Prichard, Dymphna Cusack, Judah Waten, or Gordon Childe, but it is hard to forgive his ignorance—was it wilful ignorance?—about what was really going on as Stalin tightened his grip. This cannot be thought a harsh judgment when Lindsay is on record writing excitedly to his compatriot Eric Partridge of "new modes of enriched expression...already to be found in the tremendous cultural blossoming in the

USSR." That was in 1936, the very year of the first show trial in Moscow, which resulted in the judicial murders of sixteen "traitors."³⁰ Years later, when he made the visit recorded in *Rumanian Summer* (1953), he wrote an absurdly enthusiastic account of the Black Sea Canal project without noticing, or at least without admitting, that it was being built with slave labor housed in concentration camps; or that a show trial of dissidents, involving forced confessions, three executions, and savage jail sentences had taken place just the year before. In fact the "Canal of Death" project was discreetly abandoned in that same summer of Lindsay's visit.

Lindsay wanted to be taken seriously as a political philosopher and theoretical historian. He complained pettishly in 1955 to Edith Sitwell that "of course" nobody had ever made "an iota of an intelligent analysis" of his work.³¹ But in this respect he was the victim of his own impatient enthusiasms, which, coupled with his fatal facility of composition, made it easier for him to write a new book than properly to edit the one just then in proof. Considering just a single thread of his output, a man who wrote biographies, or fictionalized biographies, of such wildly diverse figures as Giordano Bruno, Bunyan, Hannibal, Marc Antony, Dickens, Watt Tyler, Turner, Meredith, Cezanne, Cleopatra, Courbet, Helen of Troy, William Morris, Hogarth, Blake, and Gainsborough—and he was sometimes turning out these biographies at the rate of one a year—can hardly complain if he is not treated as a recognized scholar of his subject.

In truth, Lindsay's work, especially his books on classical literature, philosophy, and science, fall between two stools. Many of them are too erudite or narrow for even a well-informed lay reader, yet insufficiently rigorous for the scholar. Sometimes, as in his late *Blast-Power and Ballistics* (1974), which offers a psychoanalytic study of power, contrasting at one point the breath-power of inspiration (pneuma) with violent man power (the fart), it is hard to know when he was speaking metaphorically and when literally—or, indeed, whether he was sure himself. His many histories of classical Greece and Rome were treated kindly by academic classicists like Ronald Syme as good popularizations; but still, one nit-picking scholar after another asked him to define his terms, verify his facts, and even perfect his spelling. Plenty of things, certainly, are irritating about Lindsay's books: the dogmatism and the way Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud hover overhead like a triplet of hirsute angels whatever the topic or the era; the jargon of dialectical materialism that infected Lindsay's otherwise admirably clear style; the reliance on cut-and-paste and the card-index; the erratic references with their telegraphic footnoteing; the wild generalizations and far-fetched yoking of ideas by force; the misprinting of names; and the erroneous dates. Perhaps his greatest gift was as a translator, where he tackled everything from medieval French poetry to the most obscure of Greek texts. And one must respect

the sheer enthusiasm and scholarly drive of a man who was willing to take on even such drearily unrewarding subjects as the origins of astrology in antiquity.

Although leading publishers of the day took some of Lindsay's books—Methuen, Constable, and Bodley Head, for instance—it is painful to note the struggle he obviously had in his later years to persuade even minor houses to publish him. He was very poor right through the '30s, dodging from one rented house to other and trapped in a masochistic relationship with a mentally ill partner. By 1938, amid talk of bailiffs and pressing requests to friends to lend him £5 to pay his house rates, he was complaining: "Re money. There's no money in literature unless one writes trash. Not under the present dispensation anyway. I don't understand myself why Methuen's have taken me up. But unless *1649* [a novel of the Civil War] goes well, it must surely be the (financial) end of me. Reviews have absolutely nothing to do with sales. The writing of short stories has been my chief means of cash, but now I've dried up in that line. At least in the money-earning section of it."³²

Lindsay survived this and other financial crises, but no one at all would take his fiction eventually, which is not surprising, because his novels are uniformly arid in thought, drab in style, and—the historical novels especially—devoid of colorful detail and of any sense of immediacy of place or time. The novels set in contemporary England are, in a different way, desiccated and in the worst sense ideological. In skimming through them one is reminded forcibly of Orwell's dictum that, while all art is propaganda, not all propaganda is art. In his elderly years Lindsay, who was blessed with a young family by his third wife, had to descend to potboiling nonfiction and any commissioned work that he could get; and doubtless he was glad to accept a literary pension from Australia in the late '70s. As his anthologist Paul Gillen says very fairly, Lindsay is, and no doubt will remain, "a fringe phenomenon of the twentieth century intellectual landscape...his heterodoxies and obstinacies, his intimidating range, his titanic output, his rush—all produce caution."³³

Lindsay has not attracted a biographer. Although plenty of materials exist, that would be a formidable project indeed, in the case of such a polymath. It is impossible to come to any definite judgment about his overall achievement as a writer, or to say how exactly his career was molded by his sixty years as an immigrant (and in his case no other term is so fitting). He left Australia at the age of twenty-six and never contemplated returning, not even for a short visit. By the time he reached old age he was aware that intellectuals no longer craved the London experience nor regarded it as so necessary for working out their "inner conflicts" as so many of his own generation had done; but for him at least, he said, "it is too late now for regrets."³⁴

What might such a man have done in Australia? Could he have had that same career? It is unimaginable. Lindsay charted his own wayward path intellectually, from an aesthetics and ethics based on his father's philosophizing, to Marxism, and eventually to liberal socialism; but at all points he was clear what he needed to sustain him. He decided not long after his departure that the England was where he had to be. He never wavered from this conviction, and in this he was surely right. He wrote to his father in 1929:

I love England because it forces on me insistently every problem of my art, making me face simultaneously an emotional instrument complicated by centuries of poetry and repression, a technical instrument complicated by centuries of effort and of tiredness. I find life infinitely exciting here (you will understand me, that I do not refer to any external nexus of action whatever), exciting in its peculiar relation to myself; & I know that while I keep on facing this I cannot tire, for the possibilities of expression are infinite.³⁵

A few years later he wrote in stronger and even more telling vein to his fellow expatriate Randolph Hughes, with whom he carried on a vast correspondence over twenty years:

My whole development has been *away* from everything Australian. For there, among whom I may number us both, who seek to dig roots into life, a traditionless country like Australia is most destructive. It creates either despair (as with Brennan) or tends to drive energy into unnecessary and frustrating fantasies (as my father). Others like Hugh McCrae or Lionel Lindsay scrape through by deliberately deadening a large portion of themselves. Of course there are frustrated characters elsewhere in Europe, but the "frustration" of, say, Baudelaire, if one is to use the word, is a more fecund and rewarding dilemma.³⁶

Despair, frustration, deadness: At least Lindsay avoided these. If, much later, he complained that nobody would treat his work seriously in England, how much more he would have had reason for complaint in Australia, where except for one or two admirers like Bernard Smith, who has tried in several essays and a Festschrift to present Lindsay as one of the great minds of the century, his long labors have met almost universal indifference? It is virtually certain that only his vivid autobiography, *Life Rarely Tells*, will continue to find readers anywhere. Most of the rest is forgotten already.³⁷

So much for the immigrant type. Of the metics, it more difficult to be sure whether, and to what extent, expatriation stimulated a career that might have remained only latent in Australia. There are a few cases where expatriation did offer what is supposed to be the traditional reward for the exile; that

is to say, it refocused writers' creative impulses on the abandoned homeland. A few expatriates, a very few, really did hang on to their Australianness through thick and thin, determined metics still, even after decades away. The journalist and humanitarian worker Joice Loch kept a miniature Australian flag on her desk right up to her death in 1982, by which time she had been an expatriate, mostly in Greece, for many years. Perhaps the most extreme, if hardly credible, case of dogged persistence of identity is that of the novelist Godfrey Blunden (b.1906), journalist, war correspondent, and novelist, who left in 1942 to report from Russia at vast expense for the *Daily Telegraph*. (Though the newspaper got its money's worth when he issued bulletins from inside Stalingrad during the siege.) He worked for *Time* in New York, then returned to France in 1958, where he raised his family and lived for the next forty years, dying there in 1996. Blunden was passionate about his metic identity, best expressed in his difficult novel *Charco Harbour* (1968), a fictional biography of James Cook; and in the remarkable fact that despite all his years in France, Blunden refused to use the language of his adopted country, lest it contaminate his idiolect.³⁸

Sometimes it took years for a metic identity to reassert itself, showing again only after years of working a different vein. For example, James Aldridge (b.1918) left at the age of twenty to become a cadet journalist and, when he turned to novels of international intrigue, made a considerable showing. After war service marked by amazing scoops and risks, he shifted into a writing career of extraordinary length: it has spanned more than sixty years. (His first novel, *Signed with Their Honour*, was published in 1942, and his latest in 2006.) For decades he was regarded as an "international" writer, even a Marxist polemicist, quite cut off from his Australian roots. But then, in his old age he returned for his subject matter to his childhood in Swan Hill, and wrote his "St. Helen" series of children's novels, including *My Brother Tom* and *The Wings of Kitty Clair*, several of them adapted for screen and television, and all of them achieving the remarkable feat of appealing to modern young teenagers even though they are set in Depression-era Victoria. Nevertheless, he has continued to live in Battersea, seventy years after his departure: currently the longest surviving member abroad of all the literary expatriates.

And, finally, what of those who resisted the blandishments of Overseas, and never left? The most determined and productive of those who were determined to stay residents of Australia's own Jolly Corner without deteriorating into monstrosity were Vance and Nettie Palmer, biographers, novelists, poets, critics, social commentators, who for thirty years were the best literary entrepreneurs and arbiters of taste in the Australia of their day. They travelled to England, together or separately, a remarkable number of times for not especially prosperous writers: in 1905, 1910, 1914, 1918, 1931, 1935,

and 1955, and for periods of up to two years at a time. But they were always visitors; and what is most impressive is how purposeful their visits were. Theirs were no quick, touristic trips, and collectively they amounted to a kind of miniexpatriation, but there was never any question of their staying on indefinitely. On each occasion they focused on the task of using the experience as a means of reflecting on their Australian cultural identity, to discover, if they could, ways of inoculating Australian nationalism with high culture. They admired the sense of continuity in British literary life, of each successive generation absorbing and building on its forebears' work. But they refused to be intimidated by it or to glamorize it.

The Palmers were not the first to see their trips as being, essentially, raiding expeditions. Jack Lindsay had had the same idea, originally, when he arrived in 1926. He persuaded himself that he was there just temporarily, "to get to know something of the literary scene and have a couple of books published, and then return to Australia where the *Renascence* was scheduled."³⁹ In his case, though, he got entangled in Arthur Adams's "web" and was in danger of being sucked dry by the London spider. He learned, as he said grimly later, what starvation is, on a "diet" of three to four shillings a week for a year. But the Palmers did not allow anything like that to happen to them. They were too business-like, too well-off (relatively speaking), and too committed to their goal of promoting and, if necessary, bringing to birth an Australian literary culture, for that.

Of course, their ambitions only emerged gradually. On his first stay in London in 1905, the young Vance Palmer served the same kind of mournful apprenticeship in turn-of-century London as many another:

Those days held little for me but memories of dreary hack-work carried on far into the night, the sound of rejected manuscripts dropping in through the downstairs door, and the depressing smell of cocoa boiled on a tiny petrol-stove...my fixed image of London was of a solitary attic and the naphtha-flares of fruit-barrows reflected in the slush of Theobald's Road.⁴⁰

But in Palmer's case this period did not last long. The manuscripts stopped bouncing back and he was soon hobnobbing with the likes of G. K. Chesterton, Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, Frank Harris, A. R. Orage, and T. E. Hulme.

Of the Palmers's various stays, that of 1935–36 is the best documented, thanks to the journal kept by Nettie Palmer, *Fourteen Years*. The London section starts on July 4, 1935, when she was fifty, and we find her living in what was then fashionable Bloomsbury, with an easy entrée to any of the literary names she wanted to interview: Mulk Raj Anand, W. J. Turner, Rebecca West, Havelock Ellis, F. R. Leavis. She seems to be in a comfortable

and contented way of life, though H. H. Richardson, who was high on her list of interviewees, got a rather different impression. "For her V[ance]'s lack of success must be a real tragedy; though she's very brave about it. . . . The poor things are having a hard time to make ends meet. They reckoned on journalistic work on this side; & N. says none to be had:— In many ways I feel very sorry for her; & wish I cld do something."⁴¹

Nettie is revealed as a bit of a tuft-hunter and busybody, which some of them did not like. Richardson was one of those who was ambivalent in her attitude, finding her bossy and full of hard little nuggets of fact, though she appreciated what Nettie did for her as her publicist in Australia, self-imposed duties that extended even to promoting Richardson's case for a Nobel Prize. But her journal shows Palmer had a gift for noticing and recording the salient detail, and her own lack of competitive feeling means she is always unenvious and sympathetic. Though she offers few useful generalizations and had no gift for deeply analytic criticism, *Fourteen Years* is not just a record of superior literary gossip about Britain. She is asking, with more unabashed cultural egotism than anyone before, what England could do for her, as an Australian with a clear nationalistic agenda, rather than vice versa. In doing that, neither of the Palmers was unsympathetic to the draw of London, but staying was not an option for them at any time.

That is not to say it was an easy choice. Speaking of Helen Simpson and Jack Lindsay in 1937, in the wake of Stephensen's splenetic attack, Vance Palmer asked what right one had to ask clever people to stay; for "what was there in this dusty country, where the chief events were cricket matches and elections, for an imaginative writer to take seriously? Was it worth bringing one's art to a subtle perfection for a people mainly interested in the personalities of third-rate politicians, tennis-players, successful real-estate salesmen?"⁴² But he concluded, from his own experience, that flight was no panacea for Mack's "half-past-two-in-the-afternoon" feeling. A writer's heart's desire was not to be found by shifting countries. The Palmers confronted head-on what has been called the Archibald paradox (referring to the would-be cosmopolitanism of the *Bulletin's* editor): inescapably, the dominant culture is centered Elsewhere; but, unless one bails out altogether, the task of participating credibly in it must necessarily be conducted Here.⁴³ By what rationale? Because there simply has not been enough time to amass a sufficient depth of soil, or of coral reef, or whatever metaphor one chooses, to nourish the roots of a native literary talent of really global importance. The question then is whether those of modest talents choose to leave or stay to add their humble quantum to the layer of deepening humus.

People who accepted this logic, and stayed, took the view that they had to be nationalists without being parochial. It was a position sincerely held, but in the long run history has been against it. Even while Vance Palmer was

writing his rather dull, earnest novels of outback life and trying to encourage the indigenous theatre of his friend Louis Esson, his potential audience was screaming with laughter over the antics of Charlie Chaplin, delighting in the populist poetry of Rudyard Kipling, or wrestling with the gnomic intricacies of T. S. Eliot. Most of that audience would not have known that all three were expatriates in their own way. The comedian began life as an urchin in the East End before making his fortune in Hollywood; the second regarded himself as an Anglo-Indian; and the third was a transplanted American. Nor would the audience have cared if it had known these facts. The Palmers lived and died without realizing that cultural separatism—the notion that there is, and must be, a special privileged standard for Australian writing, even in the limited form of emergent nationalism that they espoused—would soon be a very obvious dead end. This misapprehension caused the Palmers and Esson to join with the journalist-playwright Harrison Owen in founding an Australian Authors' and Writers' Guild in 1916.⁴⁴ The aim of the guild was unashamedly protectionist. It got up petitions to persuade the federal government to put a duty on imported magazines and the imported proofs of syndicated serials. Such petitions always fell on deaf ears and the Guild did not last long. Writers themselves were divided on the issue. Its opponents, like Miles Franklin, called it a tax on knowledge. And even the most extreme of the prohibitionists never suggested that the exodus of writing talent should be regulated. How could it have been? Harrison Owen himself succumbed to the lure and left for London in 1919, making a name for himself as a dramatist—without, however, including any Australian content in his amusing comedies.

The Palmers and their friends were swimming against the tide. They entirely underestimated the force of popular culture, which, for better or worse, was even in their day becoming an international one, especially in the sphere of anglophone letters, radio, and the cinema. The philosopher John Anderson saw which way the wind was blowing by the 1930s, when he told them bluntly that there is no more an Australian literature than there is an Australian philosophy or an Australian mathematics. "Australians," he said, "should contribute to the literature of the world."⁴⁵ Trying to force a nationalist culture into existence by splendid isolationism, by pulling the gangplanks back on to the dock, was never going to work. Francis Adams had been righter than he knew, at the turn of the century, when he had coined his metaphor of the coming "cloudy, colourless day" of transnational literature, though his adjectives are, as things have turned out, unnecessarily emphatic. The consequent decline in the emotional temperature of literary expatriation from the end of the Second World War and onward into the 1950s will be explored in the last chapter.

CHAPTER 9

NO MORE PAP FROM THE TEATS OF LONDON: FROM EXPATRIATION TO TRANSNATIONALISM

In denying that England is, in contemporary reality, “home” to the Australian-born . . . I am seeking a basis for indigenous culture in Australia, for a state of mind from which Australian culture can emerge. . . . We must find our own culture and define it; we cannot suck pap forever from the teats of London.

P. R. Stephensen (1935–36)

46a Philbeach Gardens, Earl’s Court, bloody London, S.W. fucking 5.

Philip Lindsay (1946)¹

People who talk about expatriates are still living in the nineteenth century.

David Malouf (1979)

THE DEATH IN LONDON IN APRIL 2010 OF THE POET PETER PORTER WAS something of a milestone: it marked very nearly the end of the era of expatriation covered in this book. Before his death at the age of eighty-one, Porter was one of the last survivors of a group of novelists, journalists, and poets who left Australia as soon as the Second World War ended and travel became safe again. Every member of that group but two had predeceased Porter: Richard Beynon, Russell Braddon, Paul Brickhill, Charmian Clift, Dymphna Cusack, Catherine Gaskin, Geraldine Halls, George Johnston, Alister Kershaw, Jill Neville, Rex Rienits, and Marjorie Robertson. The last member now of that final group is the novelist Jon Cleary, who is in his

nineties and has had a literary career of prodigious length and productivity, from *You Can't See Round Corners* in 1947 to *Four-Cornered Circle* in 2007. He has published a book in almost every one of those years and sold about eight million copies in all. He was an expatriate in England and America for many years, but he visited Australia regularly and returned permanently in the 1970s, to continue his career as productively as ever into the new millennium.

Of the others now deceased, all but four were in their twenties when they left, just like most of their predecessors of earlier decades; and, like them, none had any distinct intention to return and about half of them never did. Although to arrive in drab, impoverished, bomb-cratered London just after the war was an even more depressing experience than it had been at any earlier date, new opportunities opened up with surprising speed. Thanks, among other things, to the patronage of the BBC and the rise of television particularly, every one of this group found some success and some became famous very quickly. Beynon (1925–99) was an actor, playwright, and BBC producer for the *Z-Cars* police series and many others. Braddon (1921–95) left after celebrating his twenty-eighth birthday in a psychiatric ward in Sydney, having had a mental breakdown after his wartime captivity. While in hospital he reported an orderly who threatened him with shock therapy if he did not supply sexual favors, was discharged and sailed in May 1949, having spent almost all his savings on a first-class single cabin. He reached England with just £5, but in 1952, when he published *The Naked Island*, his lurid account of four years as a Japanese prisoner of war, it sold 70,000 copies in two months and made his reputation.² He went on to become a well-known historian, novelist, biographer, and frequent broadcaster. Even quicker off the mark was Brickhill (1916–91), author of *The Dam Busters*, *The Great Escape*, and *Reach for the Sky*. Despite enjoying very large sales with these real-life war adventures, it seems Brickhill gave up authorship altogether eventually. His last book was a thriller, *The Deadline*, in 1962, and at some point he returned to Sydney. Cusack (1902–81), Clift (1923–69), and her husband Johnston (1912–70) all spent long periods away, but their important work belongs to Australian literary history.³ Gaskin (1929–2009), who left when she was eighteen, became an internationally successful romantic and historical novelist who lived for taxation reasons on the Isle of Man. Halls (1919–96), who also wrote as Geraldine Jay, is remembered for her literary crime fiction and passed her last years as an antique dealer in Adelaide. Kershaw (1921–95) lived and died as a freelancer in rural France. Neville (1932–97) became a well-known journalist, novelist, and social commentator in London. Rienits (1909–71) was a radio dramatist and miscellaneous writer, often on Australian topics. Robertson (1908–56) was a legal editor and crime novelist before her untimely death. Very many more Australians

would be following this first group of postwar expatriates over the next fifteen to twenty years, but they all had more in common with one another than with any of the earlier departures. The last two of the “old” type were perhaps Eric Lambert (1918–66) and Murray Sayle (b. 1926). Lambert was a communist and author of the controversial war novel *The Twenty Thousand Thieves*, who went to the Helsinki peace conference in 1955 and never returned. Sayle was perhaps the last of the old breed of adventurer-journalists. He left in 1952 and pursued a long career doing the rounds of the world’s trouble spots and taking on Action Man projects like climbing Mount Everest for his employer, *The Sunday Times*, during its great days under the editor Harold Evans. He died in Sydney in September 2010.

The departures from the mid-1950s onward were of a rather different ilk: too young to have served in the war, mostly with a university education either behind them or with graduate studies in prospect, and certainly far more aware of the possibilities of the electronic media and of the pleasures of international mobility. The seven best-known literary absentees of the second half of the twentieth century are Barry Humphries, Robert Hughes, Clive James, John Pilger, Germaine Greer, Peter Carey, and Peter Conrad. They were all born in the years from just before to just after the Second World War, and they left at dates between 1959 and 1968. They belong to a different world, with different hopes and expectations, and by the time they had reached the midpoint of their careers, the concept of expatriation as it has been described in previous chapters had mutated into something rather different to what it had been earlier, if it had not quite evaporated altogether.

The other way in which these later departures are different to the immediately postwar group is that they are still all alive, productive, and mostly household names. In earlier days no mechanism existed comparable to the media slingshot that propelled these familiar names of the 1960s expats into the stratosphere of international celebrity culture. The author-expatriates of earlier generations who made a success of their lives did so in a cooler, greyer, and above all a more private way. They had their channels of publicity too, and the invention of the intimate interview and literary gossip magazines like *The Bookman* did bring them before the public as personalities separate from the name on their book-jackets; but it was a long way from that to the talking head appearances, the chat show, the “name” television series, the international book-signing tours and the writers’ festivals of later decades.

The end of the war unfroze travel in the other direction too, and for some this opened up a new prospect: going home. In some quarters, for various reasons, continuation as a postwar expat did not seem particularly inviting. The literary love affair with Paris, based ultimately on the cheap franc, was

long over. Three of the great exemplars of modernist expatriation, Yeats and Joyce and Gertrude Stein, were dead. Ezra Pound had been shipped back to America and was in a mental hospital, facing treason charges. Leaving one's homeland had, during the war, acquired some strongly negative connotations for the first time, especially when it involved departure to a safe haven. The Englishmen W. H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood, and Aldous Huxley had all been excoriated for departing to, or remaining in, California during the war, and there had been unpleasant talk of rats and sinking ships.

Nor did the future in Europe look inviting. Parts of it lay wrecked and bankrupt. The Iron Curtain had descended, the Cold War was starting, and a nuclear war in the Northern Hemisphere was a fearsome threat. In England the first postwar years were particularly grim. Austerity prevailed, without any foreseeable ending, and it fell hardest on the struggling middle class, to which writers, in theory anyway, belonged. A socialist government was in power, and it raised taxation to unheard-of levels. Food rationing was worse than during the war. Everywhere in London were bombed-out buildings and peeling paint. It is not surprising that there were surges of discontent among rather older Australians who had been living overseas for a long time. One of those whose thoughts turned more and more nostalgically to the sun was Philip Lindsay. He had had an easy war and was only forty, but by 1946 his health was bad, his drinking was worse than ever, his sales were sliding downhill, and he was being patronized insufferably by a "fat bastard in a morning-coat and striped trousers at Hastings" (his bank manager).⁴ He had applied for aid from the Royal Literary Fund during the war, but it could only have been a drop in the ocean of his debts. The only cure for his woes seemed to be bankruptcy and flight home:

The income tax have me in such a vice that I am not even gradually going mad. The bastards leave me a fiver a week on which to live and then threaten to squeeze more, cripes knows how, from me. The debt to them is about £800, not including the last couple of years, and I have no refuge but bankruptcy. This will mean being sold up, of course, but I'll be rid of a nightmare. And once my possessions have gone under the hammer—I'll save of course my pictures and the more precious books with friends—then there'll be nothing to hold me here.... Financially I've never been in a worse mess. I've left Hutch[inson] for Sampson Low which meant months of no money in between while I hurried off a novel, for I was relying on royalties, but bloody Hutch swiped every penny over £300 because my early books with them hadn't reach the advances and they'd never deducted through the years for any of the copies I'd ticked up. Now I have three books floating about, apart from the novel (which is taken) looking for a publisher, as the slump here had driven everybody into a panic and books have tumbled, no one wanting to risk anything except on novels, and of course I'm tied for them. I have to

live—no, exist—like a snail in a terribly expensive shell—over £40 a quarter I pay for this bloody house—with no hope of escape except to Australia and bankruptcy.

But as you say, we've had good times and they can't be robbed from us.⁵

Lusting by now as much for Australia as, twenty years earlier, he had for London, Lindsay wrote enviously to an old Sydney friend that if he had had the money he would have set sail at once. "England can offer me nothing more and it was a grand country until the war came, everybody now being so broke that they don't dare venture from their burrows, so that I see few friends. Before the war, however, there were excellent groups of writers and artists whom one could meet in certain pubs. Now they're gone, those able to afford it fleeing abroad, the others, like myself, skulking in the country. My return rests, not on my desires—I'd be there now if that was all—but on cash. Therefore it drifts far into the future." He toys with the old idea, dating back to Patchett Martin's day, in the 1890s, that it "ought" to be possible to continue with a British writing career in Australia:

It's true I'd exhaust Australian history before long, but I know the middle-ages pretty thoroughly and I could lug my library—a hugous one—out with me I'd have all the reference-books I need and could write of old London just as well in Sydney as in Sussex. But this is a dream I must reluctantly put by and hope that something will turn up.⁶

But, of course, it *was* just a dream. If Lindsay, a sick alcoholic, could barely make a living in England, whoever would have employed him in Sydney? In any case, he seems not to have appreciated that the Sydney he had known in the 1920s had vanished utterly and, rather pathetically, he still thought of his friends there as hell-raising young men. His death from pneumonia in 1958 left his wife Isobel penniless.

There were, however, two cases of actual repatriation after years of absence, though only one proved to be permanent. Until 1948 it seemed that Patrick White was destined to be yet another Pommy Aussie Permanently Overseas. Born into a rich, Anglophile, grazier family in 1912 in Knightsbridge, London, he spent his first thirteen years in Australia. But after that, with one interlude of two years, his education was in England, in orthodox upper middle class style: first Cheltenham College, then King's College, Cambridge. After Cambridge he remained in England, though he travelled widely in France, Germany, and America, and served in the Middle East in the war. It was not until he had reached the age of thirty-six, almost halfway through his life, that he decided to stop sucking pap from the teats of London. He felt, he said much later, an increasing desire "to nuzzle once more at the benevolent teats of the mother country," and in this

case “mother” quite definitely did not mean postwar England. It meant the country of his childhood. So, after many years of living as a typical “pomio,” White repatriated himself permanently. It was the making of him as an author, but why did he do it?

Perhaps it was in part a gesture, typical of White, of a determined swimming against the tide. Yet it was contemporaneous with the same decision by another writer to try out the life of the ex-expatriate, now that the war was over at last. This was the perpetually restless Martin Boyd, made temporarily rich on the proceeds of *Lucinda Brayford* and family inheritances. He sold his Cambridge house and set sail in July 1948 accompanied by his antique furniture, his Aubusson carpet, and his Old Masters, planning to restore the Boyd family home, The Grange at Harkaway in Victoria, as a setting for the recreation of himself as a kind of nineteenth-century squire. It was twenty-seven years since he had seen Australia. The plan did not work out and Boyd was back in Europe again, this time for good, by 1951, defeated, as he put it, “by the strong bourgeois ethos of Melbourne” and, one gathers, his failure to secure any sufficiently deferential domestic staff as bit-players in his fantasy creation.⁷ As for The Grange, it was swallowed up by a gravel pit.

White, on the other hand, stayed and triumphed. After a long time—ten years, during which his fame grew steadily—he gave his reasons in an influential piece called “The Prodigal Son.” He told how he had looked forward to enjoying, quite literally, the fatted calf that welcomed the original prodigal son. British wartime austerity had made him greedily eager for good food and drink. He did not, however, have any illusions about what else awaited him. “The Prodigal Son” is, at best, just two cheers for repatriation. White found, when he got back, just as expected:

The Great Australian Emptiness, in which the mind is the least of possessions, in which the rich man is the important man, in which the schoolmaster and the journalist rule what intellectual roost there is, in which beautiful youths and girls stare at life through blind blue eyes.

And more, much more, then and later, in the same vein. Such judgments had been made many times over the previous century; indeed, they were still being made by other people. Yet White directed much the same sort of invective against London life as well—“parasitic,” “pointless,” “a spiritual graveyard,” etc.—and despite the gloom repatriation proved the right move for him. Just as a friend had foretold, new colors came flooding back on to his palette of effects; and the new struggle he had set himself, “to create completely fresh forms out of the rocks and sticks of words” had worked.⁸

White’s essay made a considerable noise at home because it mounted a rather startling and novel argument: the notion that repatriation might

succor or invigorate literary genius. (Both *The Tree of Man* and *Voss* had appeared by the time he wrote his essay, which seemed to prove it.) So was White's decision a straw in the wind? Was expatriation slowing as the infatuation with London diminished at last? Was repatriation about to become fashionable? Was it time to go home, or to stay at home?

Not at all. The flow of talent heading northward in the opposite direction to White and Boyd did not slow after 1945. Indeed, as the restrictions imposed by the war gradually vanished, there was a great spurt of departures of all kinds of creative people. Among visual artists, the so-called Merioola Group left almost as a body, and for good. It included the photographer and so-called Australian Cecil Beaton, Alec Murray (1917–2002), and his lover the costume designer Jocelyn Rickards (1924–2005), who left at the age of twenty-five, to become nearly as famous for her high-profile affairs as for the films she “dressed”; the theatre designer Loudon Sainthill (1918–69) and his partner Harry Tatlock Miller (1913–89), the art critic and gallery owner. Young actors rushed to leave too—Leo McKern, Peter Finch, Keith Michell, the actor-director Michael Blakemore, the comedians Bill Kerr, Dick Bentley, and Joy Nichols—all to pursue their cinema, stage, or television careers and in due course to become household names in both countries.⁹ They did so for reasons that one of them, the freelance Alister Kershaw, tried to articulate long afterward. “At that particular point in the forties, for some reason that we ourselves didn't fully understand, we had to leave our beautiful, frontierless, unending continent. . . . What we wanted was to head ‘home’, to Europe, or rather to that lugubrious outpost of Europe called London.”¹⁰ Perhaps Kershaw did not appreciate fully just how long such sentiments had been commonplace. The truth is that in the very first postwar years the push-pull motives for going were much the same as they had ever been. Australia was still a culturally remote place, and what improvements there had been served to heighten rather than diminish the sense of being in a backwater. Communications and transport were not that much better. Travel to Europe was still overwhelmingly by ocean liner, plying the same routes at the same speeds as they had for decades past. Electronic communications had improved technically, but in no ways very obvious to the user. The main reliance was still on the telegram using ageing submarine cable. The phone service, such as it was, still used an unpredictable radio connection. Both were still expensive. There were, of course, no satellite links and no television. So writers who were looking for signs of incipient cultural liveliness once the war was over quickly concluded that Australia in 1950 was not much different to the Australia of 1930 or even 1900; and they expressed their dissatisfaction in terms almost identical to those that had been used by their parents, grandparents, and even their great-grandparents.

A particularly valuable source of impressions at this time are those supplied by expatriates who returned on a visit as soon as peacetime conditions

allowed, after a period away that had been neither so short as to lose a distancing perspective, nor so long that memories of how things once had been were dimmed. In that respect a better guide than Patrick White is Alan Moorehead. He had opinions to offer that were much more immediate than White's, and they are telling. He returned just before White, in 1945–46, to collect material for a book, and stayed six months. Moorehead by this time was a very different man from the unknown youth who had left Australia ten years earlier to escape the "banal succession of days" that had so troubled him. He had arrived in England with nothing but some experience as a factotum on the Melbourne *Herald*, and had no one of influence to speak for him; yet through sheer determined brashness he had become the *Daily Express's* star war correspondent. By the end of the war he was so famous for his breathless and vivid dispatches from the front lines that he half-expected the reward of a knighthood. For him, this first return trip was a hiatus. He was thirty-six. His journalist's life was behind him and his new career as an historian had hardly started, but great things were ahead. He became in due course one of the best-known literary figures in both countries and, in his heyday, certainly the best-known of the expatriate writers of popular history. So his visit was an opportunity for reflection and, as might be expected, his observations are shrewd and, beneath the surface objectivity, replete with personal questionings. Had he been right to leave? Had anything changed for the better to make him regret abandoning his homeland?

He found some positives. He was reminded afresh that his ex-countrymen had some admirable qualities. They were still, as they had always been, "kindly and generous and intensely alive." For "the ninety-nine per cent of human beings who do not happen to be artists and those others who are not rooted in European traditions," Australia, he was sure, was a good place to live, especially compared to ravaged Europe.

But what about the remaining one per cent? That small fraction to which Moorehead and his readers belonged? (He was writing for the highbrow British *Horizon* magazine.) *Their* Australia was a much less appealing place. The country, he had to report, was in all important respects just the same wasteland as it had been prewar. Its qualities could be defined as a series of negatives, and Moorehead set about him with relish. Lots of cinemas, now, but no real theatres showing proper plays, and no playwrights doing anything worth noticing. Few restaurants, all serving the Anglo-Saxons' meat and two veg. Lots of pubs with beer being swilled down against the clock, but no café life or night life. Labor shortages everywhere, so that workers could pretty much set their own terms, which usually meant going for shorter hours rather than higher wages. Domestic service so despised that "even the family laundry is done at home." Zero interest in what little history there was; no folklore or unifying myths; no underpinning peasant

culture; nothing distinctively national to be found in dance, film, music, clothes, wine, or cooking. Everywhere from coast to coast, grating on the ear, the same crude demotic speech, whose slang lacked even the American "aptness and richness." The mindless, jovial egalitarianism, and the mental laziness. The obsessive interest in horse-races and cricket and football and a shrugging disregard, outside the universities, for any intellectual activity. The housebound women, withering before their time in the hot sun. The ramshackle townships and dreadful vacuity of rural life. There was, indeed, "a body of first-rate journalism," but there was still no proper literature. (The only work of literature Moorehead found worth mentioning in his article is the visitor D. H. Lawrence's *Kangaroo*.) Why is this? Because

in Australia there is no climate for the mind. Or at least for the intellectual European mind. A writer would be lost for the lack of other writers and in the end, like Lawrence, he would have to go away. There is no atmosphere of writing in that small community (it is two-thirds the size of London), nothing upon which to whet his mind but his own contact with nature and the soon-ended rush of ideas which come with the arrival at a new place and the tasting of a new atmosphere. Perhaps Proust preferred to work in a padded cell in the Faubourg St. Honoré. But could he have worked in a padded cell in Wagga Wagga?¹¹

So had he taken the right decision, ten years earlier, to get out? What a silly question.

Moorehead was a shrewd observer with strong opinions, but he was not a seer. He cannot be blamed for failing to detect in 1946 any of the incipient changes that he did come to notice on his future visits—of which, as things turned out, there would be several. In particular, very slowly starting around 1950, the inevitability of England as the goal of the expatriation adventure began to shift. Almost imperceptibly at first, its charm began to diminish. Two reasons for this can be distinguished: the first was politico-cultural; the second technological.

In the case of the first, enough has been said in earlier chapters to make it plain that for virtually the whole of our period there existed one special way of handling the vexatious problem of self-definition for Australians abroad. It was to internalize and glory in a share of the manifest imperial destiny. For a certain mentality it was uplifting, if you were in London permanently after 1905, to study the new statue of Boadicea on the Thames Embankment and to take in the boastful lines on its plinth: "Regions Caesar never knew / Thy posterity shall sway."

This was a much more powerful message than can easily be appreciated today. You, an Australian, came from such a region, terra incognita to Caesar. But rather than being "swayed" by Boadicea's posterity, you could

anticipate, perhaps, doing a little swaying on your own account—at least in parts of Oceania; in New Guinea, say, once the Germans had been kicked out of there. So, the Australian could easily be dressed up in the most purple of prose as “not an Englishman perhaps; but he is something greater—he is an Empire man, one of the children of silence and slow time, returned in the eternal cycle to worship at this shrine. It is his. The living, passing in their thousands, may be indifferent; the dead are his.” By drawing the imperial toga close around oneself (and pulling it over one’s head, the cynic might add), the decrepitude of the capital, the East End slums, for instance, could be waved aside as something “largely accidental, and apart from the great central stream of life.”¹²

This sort of comforting assurance shows that some Australians were quite able to internalize the hypocrisies so abhorred by others and be “Empire men” on their own account. Some who promoted this sort of Australian-imperial ideal got a good deal of mileage out of it, like Douglas Sladen (1856–1947). Although he has an entry in the *ADB*, Sladen was more of a visitor to Australia than an expatriate from it, since he arrived as a young man after Oxford and left five years later, because, as he put it romantically, “The call of Classic lands was too strong for me. In those days I heard the West a’calling—Italy and Greece.”¹³ However, after he got back home he did become a tireless promoter of Australian literature for the rest of his long life. He set his novel *Fair Inez: A Romance of Australia* (1918) in the year 2000, when airships ply between the two countries taking just five days for the trip. In *Fair Inez* (whose scientific marvels he had assessed for plausibility by a Fellow of the Royal Society), he puts Australia’s population at fifty million and imagines the world dominated by “two great groups of Democracies,” the Britains and the Americas. The former consists of a federation of the British Isles, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and India. The countries of continental Europe, China, Russia, and all the rest of Asia do not figure at all in Sladen’s global carve-up and are, presumably, of little account. George VIII is on the throne and all’s well with the world. In 1918, in both hemispheres, this was an immensely reassuring message to hear from the future.

Sladen had many irons in the fire and promoting Australia was only one of them; he was the editor of *Who’s Who*, among other things. The most completely focused of the literary imperialists, Frank Fox (1874–1960), was unambiguously of the emigrant type. He reached London as a slightly older man than most—he was thirty-four—but soon made a name as a facile, prolific political journalist and novelist. The First World War came at just the right time for him. He volunteered at once, was commissioned, and until he was wounded on the Somme was a star war correspondent for his paper, the *Morning Post*. Surviving the war, he embellished his career by reaffirming

and cementing the imperial bonds from both ends, and by writing a string of books telling the English about themselves from the standpoint of an Establishment, if colonial, sympathizer. He earned a knighthood for his efforts. He visited Australia once but never returned.

People like Douglas Sladen and Frank Fox displayed an enviable certainty of purpose, but even those who were less sympathetic to the notion of Empire loyalty found it hard to resist its charm. Arthur Adams, journalist and poet, had a tough time in his London years, yet he could not repress a certain glow of satisfaction when he noted the brass nameplates outside the Agents-General's offices in Victoria Street. "Where beats the heart of England?" he asks dramatically in one of his *London Streets* poems. Not in Whitehall, for sure; or in Parliament (that is full of "windy parlay"), or the Tower of London (a "shambles" of "maimed faith"); certainly not in the Bank of England nor even in Westminster Abbey. Rather, it is those quiet offices that will "wake the Empire pulse," because they represent "The Nations Four"—presumably Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Canada—who together are the "Satraps of the Empire."¹⁴ The last term is particularly apposite because it combines the idea of subordinate rule with ostentatious self-confidence. Adams's poem, after all, appeared only eight years after Kipling's famous "Recessional" poem of 1897, and shares the mood of self-doubt growing at the heart, though not yet at the periphery, of empire. After the Great War Adams grew more skeptical about the whole enterprise. Australians, he asserted, were just not that interested in the Empire—or if they were interested, then they shouldn't be. It was not their business. "For the Empire—that motley collection of mottled peoples—the Australian had only a polite or blasphemous interest. It was an unworkable old machine, but somehow it seemed to get along. Anyway, it wasn't their concern; they had quite enough to do to develop their own continent."¹⁵

These later opinions of Adams's, though perceptive, were far in advance of their time. Things looked different in the first few years after the Second World War. The postwar massive immigration of southern Europeans, and all the changes they would bring, had only just started. Robert Menzies was Prime Minister again in 1949, and by the time his eventual record run of eighteen years in that office was over Menzies seemed to have become an immovable national fixture and the British-to-the-bootstraps values he stood for next to eternal. In 1954, the year after the coronation of Queen Elizabeth, and with a regal visit in prospect, there appeared in London a compendium of essays put together by the Society of Australian Writers (the extra phrase "in Britain" was dropped about this time). Its title was *The Sunburnt Country*, and an advance copy specially bound in kangaroo hide was presented to the Queen. Edited by an ex-Sydney journalist and theatrical agent and with a cover design by Loudon Sainthill, there were sixteen

contributors, most of them expatriates. Nearly all were still wedded to the idea of empire loyalty no less firmly than the imperialists of fifty years earlier had been. Any Australian reader who was disposed to think otherwise was dealt with in no uncertain terms that required the use of many capital letters. The charge was treachery. "A great deal of that family conception of the political world still survives, especially in our own Empire, and it is significant that those who are most actively trying to disrupt the Empire are also trying to destroy the ideal of family life. As far as that disruption has proceeded, it has corresponded with a disintegration in the home life of the people," skeptical readers were lectured in best finger-wagging style. "The Australian whose patriotism does not extend beyond his own shores, and who would minimise the influence of the Throne, is working against the wholesome strength of the British Commonwealth, and consequently against his own survival." Family values, Australian style, were the best bulwark. Judy Fallon, a journalist and socialite, delivered her opinions on Australian womanhood, making, according to the editor, "no claim on their behalf to careers and intellectual achievement. These she chooses to regard as base metals. The gold of a woman's life, she feels, is something very different": that is to say, the support of a husband and manager of a home.¹⁶ Not surprisingly, this tome attracted a good deal of mockery in certain quarters of the sunburned country itself. Cutting references were made to its "synthetic ecstasies," the "shimmering afterglow of filial affection," under the spell of which the older contributors had written; and the general tone of "creamy-smooth propaganda."¹⁷ The obvious question presented itself: If their homeland was so very wonderful, what were its contributors doing overseas at all?

As the 1950s opened, young writers who were considering expatriating themselves had a good look about them, saw through the propaganda, read what the more forthright of those who had preceded them to London had to say about Australia, despaired, and headed straight for the shipping offices. Their logic was that since one's own country was seemingly doomed forever to be a satrapy of Britain, then one might as well go and live there now that peace had returned. The Festival of Britain of 1951, the first big cultural event after the war, hinted that the mother country was down, but certainly not out. The services of old warhorses like Churchill were no longer required. It was supposed to be a New Elizabethan Age, under a fresh young queen. Brave new things were perhaps going to be happening.

Even the most prescient critic of *The Sunburnt Country* could never have spotted that its eulogy to the Anglo-Australian imperial ideal would seem foolish within five years and fatuous within ten. It appeared just two short years ahead of Britain's sordid Suez adventure—an episode that, if it makes sense ever to talk of a real watershed in a nation's affairs, certainly deserves

that label. The uplifting idea, so popular with an earlier generation, of every Australian being entitled as of right to take a fractional share in ruling a global empire, rather than just being an honorary Briton and nothing more, weakened steadily. The fall of Singapore and local naval disasters had been a foretaste. The bloody departure from India, in 1947, which few had expected to see in their lifetimes, started the final collapse, followed by Suez, and finally, for those who were able to read between the lines of Macmillan's famous "wind of change" speech in 1960, the jig was seen to be up. By then it was obvious that all those windy platitudes were evaporating with quite unexpected speed. The ideal that had entranced so many, of having a ring of quasi-British nations encircling the earth, each one bound up happily in the filial-maternal relation and with the "white" Commonwealth firmly in the driving-seat, was melting away with every passing year. London was still a great world-city, but Australians living there could no longer think of themselves as sharers in an imperial adventure. The center of global power had moved west. London called, still, as it always had; but so now did New York—more and more insistently.

For after the war it was increasingly America that seemed to offer writers the most congeniality, the most inspirational material, and the best opportunities and rewards if they lived or published there. The huge expansion of higher education in North America made the universities a munificent source of literary patronage. Grants, fellowships, travelling bursaries on a lavish scale, offers for an author's MSS, or even the contents of the wastepaper basket all contradicted the notion that it was only in England that writers could expect to be rewarded according to something like their merits. The British novelist Malcolm Bradbury caught the mood very well in his campus novel *Stepping Westward*. (This was itself something of an historical document itself by the time it appeared, for it charts the author's experiences at Indiana in the 1950s. The ex-"angry young man" hero crosses the Atlantic by liner and goes on by train to the Midwest, for example, both of which seemed a quaint way of travelling by 1965.) *Stepping Westward* and similar campus novels were quick to spread the word that, for a writer of any pretensions at all, a good long stay on an American campus, or at one of the soon-to-be-famous creative writing centers, offered a lifestyle and a generosity of spirit inconceivable at home. Australians were quick to follow suit, regarding all this American largesse as an incomprehensible but welcome turn of events, which they intended to exploit to the full before the cornucopia stopped overflowing.

The second impulse to very slow change was the advance in transport technology. The real transformative factor, fast and cheap international travel by big jet aircraft, was still years away in 1950. Qantas started a regular air service using Constellations out of Sydney at the end of 1947, but the

route via Asia took several days with five stopovers, and was noisy, uncomfortable, and very expensive indeed. Most private travelers who could afford such a fare were in no special hurry and preferred a luxurious first saloon cabin on the upper deck of a liner instead. But as the years passed, faster and more comfortable aircraft and, critically, a steep decline in the real cost of the fares subjugated the tyranny of distance at last and made a "home visit" no longer a long-term proposition. The emotional heat started to go out of the idea of the flight to London. One does not lust for long over an easily obtainable goal. Complete, lifelong expatriation without a single return visit was probably not that common even in the early years (one thinks of Miles Franklin's and Barbara Baynton's repeated transits), although the evidence on this point is skewed toward the materially successful. At any rate, it eventually it became rare, and really a matter of choice. Almost anyone could afford return visits, even to the extent of moving to and fro regularly. One index is the journeying of the poet Peter Porter. After he moved back to England in 1954, he did not return for twenty years thereafter, because he could not afford it; but after that he was able to visit almost yearly.

The huge expansion in commercial airline services, which started in the late 1950s, meant that for a favored few the writing life could become a globally peripatetic one. Alan Moorehead himself is a good example of what was just beginning to be possible. Though he was nominally resident in England and Italy with his family, he actually lived nowhere specifically, as he reinvented himself as a writer of best-selling popular histories like *Gallipoli* and his colorful account of the Burke and Wills expedition, *Cooper's Creek*. Even by today's standards his travels were dizzying, especially for one who started by thinking that postwar transcontinental air travel was "the most dangerous, uncomfortable, expensive, and often the slowest method of travel yet invented."¹⁸ His travels, after his first postwar visit back home, returned him to London in April 1946; then it was off to Italy, followed by Pakistan in a flying boat in 1947; to New York in 1948, then back to Italy, Beirut, and Berlin; back to Australia in 1952 for a research visit to Adelaide, Darwin, and Rum Jungle; flights to New York in July; to Greece and Turkey to research his *Gallipoli* book in 1954–55; in 1956 off to Kenya, Uganda, the Congo for magazine articles; to New York again; to Havana to stay with Ernest Hemingway; to Los Angeles and Chicago; in 1957 to New York again; then six weeks in Africa; then to Italy to finish a book on the Russian Revolution; in 1958, another short visit to Africa including three weeks in the Sudan; then yet again to Africa for a long expedition down the Nile; back to Australia to publicize *Cooper's Creek*, and so on; Mexico, Hollywood... and many an illicit sexual episode was fitted into these itineraries as well. Even so, he claimed in an interview in 1962 that he had never achieved real wealth and had never once travelled first class after becoming a

freelance writer. Nor, of course, should it be forgotten that all that travel was interspersed with the unromantic solitary labor of the professional writer. And it was London that was the epicenter of his life, for that was where his hugely popular histories like *The White Nile* were published and most of his research conducted. On hearing that a friend had moved back to London, he wrote, rather sadly: "Nearly everyone does in my experience. It's the dormouse in us. There's a sort of winter in one's life and London is a safe place in which to go to ground. I shall die in London."¹⁹ And that was a true prophecy; he did so, after the cruelest of fates overtook him: seventeen years of silence, when he could write nothing, caused by a stroke in 1966. The later expatriate Robert Hughes, who had a filial relationship with Moorehead and learnt many lessons about structuring popular history that Hughes put to good use in *The Fatal Shore*, saw the fierce discipline the older man imposed on himself. "He'd get up in the morning at seven o'clock. He'd be out in his little shit house, with no view, out the back of the villa at eight o'clock, and he would remain there until midday. Not stirring outside. Whether he was writing anything or not, he'd be sitting in front of the typewriter, and generally just by the sheer process of shaming himself into sitting there, 1000 words a day would come out."²⁰ If there is one thing that characterizes Australia's successful expatriate writers, it is that nearly every one of them has been a formidably hard worker.

It might be questioned whether it makes much sense to call Moorehead an expatriate—from Australia or anywhere else. He was one of a new breed, a super-expat. He belonged everywhere and nowhere, and soon, with the invention of the celebrity author, there would be many more like him, all networking energetically in the only country they called home: what has been called the "*In Transit* Lounge of the Wandering Scribe-Tribe."²¹ In 1950 Moorehead's kind of mobility was still well in the future for everyone except people with unique and marketable gifts like his, or a handful of internationally famous actors of the stage and screen such as Coral Browne. But the first signs were there. With the globalization of the book trade, and to a large extent of literature itself, the very concept of being, distinguishably, an expatriate, even an expatriate writer, began to disintegrate. Or, to be more exact, people began to *say* that this was happening, and so began to vie for the right to proclaim themselves the last of the breed.

The First Last Expatriate—or the first to define himself explicitly as such—was Alister Kershaw. By 1958 he had been long resident in France, making a sparse living as a miscellaneous writer, and that year he argued in an essay that people like himself were, metaphorically, disappearing. He mocked those who, so he said, thought "their paint will flake and their lines no longer scan if ever they cross a frontier."²² It was a good turn of phrase, although none of Kershaw's countrymen who had actually left Australia

had ever believed any such nonsense. Kershaw's main point was that it was ceasing to matter, unless he or she wanted it to matter, where a writer was domiciled. Over the following half-century others have tried to upstage Kershaw by claiming themselves to be the very Last of the Last Expatriates. The most recent claimant is the high-profile Oxford academic and literary journalist Peter Conrad, who has mused that there might be a "glass case" waiting for him somewhere, with a label on it identifying him as the last in the extinct lineage of those Australians who have renounced their parentage decisively and permanently in favor of England.²³ But Conrad, described by one awed student as having a "faintly quizzical, hypnotic, Pacific rim drawl which generations of undergraduates have tried and failed to imitate,"²⁴ is not really very convincing as the Tasmanian Tiger of expatriation. Peter Conrad, Student of Christ Church, Oxford, a pundit about as tightly wired into the British literary establishment as it is possible to get, will never be that, no matter how many times he may drop in for a nostalgic look at Hobart, the city of his birth.

The fact is that there will be no really final Last Expatriate until the emotional temperature of the concept has dropped to absolute zero. As we have seen, the thermometer has had its ups and downs over the last century or more. At different times, in different circles, Australians who chose to leave were ignored, praised, or (rarely) stigmatized, but generally speaking Peter Porter surely had it right when he said that the word "expatriate" "explains in four syllables a lot of fact and status. It tells the listener that the person referred to was born an Australian but now lives overseas. *Unfortunately, it tells him rather more than that.*"²⁵ What else it told listeners in past decades, or what listeners chose to infer from it, has been amply illustrated in the preceding chapters. For a very long time the "E-word" denoted all at once an event, a state of mind, and a potent sociocultural identifier.

Still, the long-term trend has been for the emotional mercury to fall ever lower in its tube. In an interesting against-the-grain essay of 1988, "The Myth of Isolation," the critic Bernard Smith asked, with respect to painting, whether the breast-beating assumptions of geographical parochialism have been overdone as an influence. Is Australian tennis, he asks, doomed to be poor because we do not live next to Wimbledon? Is our cricket incompetent because we live far from Lord's?²⁶ Is it really physical remoteness that makes for the second-rate? Surely not, in any simple way at least. (And isn't it begging the question not to ask, at the start of the twenty-first century: Remoteness from whom exactly?) In one sense, for the writer as for the painter, the mind is its own place, and for any truly original creative person the true homeland is the Republic of Letters and nowhere else. But at no date up to 1950 would it have occurred to anyone to ask the rhetorical questions in quite the way Smith could ask them in the memorable year of

1988. The slaying of the distance-tyrant, above all, has made those questions viable. When the globe can be traversed in twenty-three hours rather than forty days, obviously the bottom label on the thermometer's scale is going to read "unimportant." When it becomes perfectly possible and for many quite affordable, if tiring, to take a long weekend and fly over to see a single, desirable concert at the Albert Hall and to return in time for work, then the significance of where one is domiciled—either physically or psychically—is apt to grow rather thin. A. D. Hope, in the 1970s, spotted this when he prophesied "a tendency towards the reintegration of the culture" of all parts of the English-speaking world.²⁷ Forty years later it is plain that he was far too cautious in his formulation, especially with respect to popular culture. There the reintegration he speaks of has gone forward at bewildering speed, though one may doubt whether the conservative Hope would particularly relish the result. The Last Expatriate is probably still to be born, though; and one may predict that Peter Conrad's glass case will be continue to stand empty until the time comes when people ask in puzzlement whatever it was for.

CONCLUSION

A PADDED CELL IN WAGGA WAGGA

The really significant critical reception now is the one [writers] get at home. England, drifting farther away from us, is more and more inturned, no longer as interested as she was in her crude children. And the vitality of the creative scene in Australia generally is such that this doesn't matter as much as it once did.

C. J. Koch (1987)¹

The question of where you live simply doesn't concern anyone any more. With the new technologies we can all be present everywhere, all the time more or less.

Robert Dessaix (1998)²

"PERHAPS PROUST PREFERRED TO WORK IN A PADDED CELL IN THE FAUBOURG St. Honoré. But could he have worked in a padded cell in Wagga Wagga?"³ This book has surveyed the careers of those Australian expatriates who answered Alan Moorehead's witty question, which continued to be answered right to the end of our period, with a resounding "No." During the eight decades or so covered in the preceding chapters, we have seen that, despite the manifold difficulties, many Australian intellectuals suspected that they might end up in a padded cell much less comfortable than Proust's if they did not get away. Henry Lawson set the tone early on, with his unforgettable instructions in the Red Page of the *Bulletin*. Addressing those readers who were prospective writers, his advice was uncompromising: seek prosperity and fame in exile; emigrate at once. Such a person—Lawson wrongly assumed that that person would be male—should "go steerage, stow away, swim, and seek London, Yankeeland, or Timbuktoo" or else, failing that, "study elementary anatomy, especially as applies to the cranium, and then shoot himself carefully with the aid of a looking-glass."⁴ Lawson himself took the first choice fifteen months later, though his suicide attempt after

his return suggests that for him they were not mutually exclusive options. Throughout the economic booms and busts, right up to the Second World War and beyond, plenty of people gave heed to Lawson's instruction to ship out rather than shoot oneself. In fact some had already taken his advice to leave in the pre-Federation years, before Lawson himself did; and many more would do so later, with further peaks in the late '20s and early '30s, and in the first few years after the Second World War. Some, having departed as youths, spent the rest of their lives in and around London. Others returned to Australia to live, after some or many years. A few oscillated between the two countries, willing to endure over and over the multiple discomforts of many months at sea that this entailed for most.

It is evident from all the available evidence that our expatriates invariably left for personal rather than ideological reasons, and that both the push and the pull factors remained surprisingly constant over the decades. It has been said that "arguably, the main difference between them and the later generation of expatriates is that the former left Australia to further their careers while the latter left not only to further their careers but also to escape."⁵ Yet, as the preceding pages have shown, that distinction does not apply in this period because career advancement and escape went hand in hand from the earliest times.

Certainly the first motive should not be underestimated. Many of our expatriates were, in modern parlance, economic migrants. A flight in search of prosperity was not of course limited to writers or even to creative people in general, for it was common throughout the professional labor market. Qualifications earned in either country were mutually recognized, something that could be a considerable advantage for the most capable people. Economists before the Second World War often pointed out that Australia may have been a paradise for the tradesman or the competent GP or solicitor or public servant; but for the medical specialist, the skilled lawyer, the seasoned administrator, or the really astute businessman, the potential pickings were much better in Britain. There were so many more employers or clients capable of recognizing the best, and with the means to pay for it.

This was just as true of the literary marketplace. It was the richest in the world and it had all kinds of patronage to offer. It was also the most competitive; but for those who could produce the goods there were glittering prizes to be had, and second-raters too could reasonably hope to scrape a living, even in the Slump and even after the magazine outlets started to dry up and the British publishing industry reached its nadir, as it did in 1935. Six hundred journalists were thrown out of work in that year, which certainly put a damper on the fraternizing in the pubs off Fleet Street for a while. But all was not lost. Clever young people who could manage a bright sentence abandoned the newspapers and went off instead to write film scenarios or join the ever-expanding staff of the BBC's radio services at Bush House.

Down-at-heel poets, like Gordon Comstock in George Orwell's novel *Keep the Aspidochelone Flying*, might make their peace with their artistic consciences and join an advertising agency. They might even find to their dismay that, like Comstock, they are gruesomely effective in mounting campaigns for deodorants. This relative cornucopia of opportunities was well understood in Australia, and its promise exercised a potent attraction even through the most dismal years of the Depression. Leslie Rees (1905–2000), who had cut his teeth as a staff journalist on the *West Australian*, won a travelling scholarship to London in 1929, which landed him there at a bad time. Yet by a mixture of luck, persistence, and guile, he landed a job as drama critic on the theatrical paper *The Era*, and was soon drawing a salary of £5 a week interviewing the great and the good of the literary world. He was probably the first and last Australian journalist to secure an interview with James Joyce in Paris. The maestro was not very forthcoming, but did confide that he had tried tinned kangaroo-tail soup in Zurich and did not like it.

Even so, it is doubtful whether the chance of making money really predominated at any date over the simple need to get away. The urgency of a Moorehead, a Mack, a Patchett Martin, as well as the creative works by Boyd, Stead, and Richardson, makes it clear that Escape was at all times the predominant motive. True, we have seen that the notion of Escape had several different facets. For some writers it had a sharply personal edge. There might be, for instance, the wish to sidestep unwelcome family expectations, as was the case with Christina Stead and her heroine, Teresa Hawkins. And in a different way it was certainly true of the Lindsay clan. The inability to get away from the deep shadow cast by their father Norman, as both Jack and Philip managed to do, was probably the downfall, creatively speaking, of the third Lindsay brother, Ray. Certainly both expatriate brothers agreed about that, if about little else. Or there might be the chance to leave behind a wretched marriage or—in at least three cases—the ignominy of a prison sentence. Escape might offer the chance of making a living out of risqué or sexually explicit works, or to act out a social identity that would have excited disapproval or even invited police attention in the small cities of Australia.

For most, though, Escape meant simply escape from the country itself. There was so much less going on in Australia; so much less, one might say, to escape *from* than there would be after the middle of the twentieth century. The “less” included the perception of the vapidness of cultural life, which generally the escapees saw was a product of the country's small population and therefore the small audience to reward any kind of talent adequately; and the huge separation—both geographically and psychologically—from the prime source of nourishment, the European literary tradition. In addition, there was the wish to escape the materialism and money-grubbing intrinsic to what was culturally still a raw society; and also the desire to get away

from the perception of hostility, both active and passive, to any manifestation of intellectual life—something that was evident long before either the “cultural cringe” or the “tall poppy” catchphrase had been heard of. Others were alienated by the determined parochialism, the refusal to consider anything but the most tediously Australianate copy, particularly by magazine editors. Often the reasons for departure were put into words as some vague formulation such as *the wish to get in touch*; or were simply felt as the gnawing of boredom, frustration, or poverty. Equally, if they never returned, it was usually for the simplest and most honest reason of all: because they did not want to. Most would have laughed at the idea that there was any reason to feel guilty about jumping ship. They went off without any sense that they owed anyone anything; that, indeed, they might count on approving nods when they went. As we saw in [chapter 8](#), there were only two brief periods in more than a century when expatriation was frowned on by anybody, and even then it was only ever a marginal and disregarded disapproval. For much of the time expatriates were emboldened by the idea that they were engaging in socially licensed behavior, even behavior that should be financially supported. The example of Henry Lawson and his patrons and, decades later, the strange Vernon Knowles case discussed in [chapter 4](#), both attest to this.

Whatever the mix of motives, it is clear that expatriation in early life—not just in literature, of course—has been a striking cultural phenomenon in Australian history. Attitudes to it beyond the personal have left traces still detectable in cultural artifacts such as books of reference. One common reaction has been to appeal to a mysterious Australian DNA as a way of “excusing” it: a sort of ritual obeisance to the notion that expatriates are always and forever “essentially” Australians for whom their birth country is always their “real” motherland. (But how many adults, some of these subjects might have responded tartly, want to settle for life with mother?) Defensive self-justifications from people who had long been considered as “lost” by themselves and others are not hard to find, like this from Jack Lindsay:

True, many Australian writers did like myself get stuck in the English situation and fail to return, but one cannot say that this happened to an extent widely harmful to their homeland. I myself never “decided” to stay here; circumstances engulfed me, as I tell in *Fanfrolico and After*, after the failure of the attempt to breach English culture by the N[orman] L[indsay] Renascence, Australian brand. It was in coming down to earth in the English situation that I learned to value justly the whole Australian tradition and realise my roots there.⁶

Lindsay’s repeated use of the phrase “the English situation,” as though he had spent sixty years in a state of mind rather than another country, is curious but rather typical. Here Lindsay is explaining his own attitude, but

famous expatriates have never lacked for inventive claims being made by others on their behalf. For instance, G. A. Wilkes once claimed, as evidence of “how much of an Australian” H. H. Richardson had continued to be during her life overseas, that she called fields “paddocks” and could on occasion swear inventively. These were all proofs positive of the genuine “Australienne,” according to Wilkes.⁷ The painter Sidney Nolan dealt neatly with this kind of thing when, at the airport on one of his regular (but never prolonged) visits, an importunate journalist asked him what used to be the inevitable loaded question on such occasions: Did he ever think of Australia while living in London? This time Nolan replied, “Oh, yes! Every night.”⁸ Such cheerful mockery of an attitude that the media of the earlier twentieth century agreed to treat reverentially was not well-received.

Nor was it only the media. An interesting sidelight on how expatriation was regarded around the middle of the century can be found in the entries in biographical compendiums. Even today it is almost an article of faith among biographers and historians that when Australians choose to become expatriates, the arbiters of culture covertly declare them “unpersons” and sees to it that they are deleted from the hall of fame. For example, in his history of postwar expatriation *When London Calls*, Stephen Alomes remarks in passing that “distinguished Australian expatriates often do not appear in Australian biographical dictionaries, apparently ‘written out’ of Australian society.”⁹ Similarly, with respect to the initial ignoring of Frederic Manning’s war memoir *Her Privates We*, Manning’s biographer has said: “It is not difficult to guess why. Frederic Manning had become an expatriate. Australians, who are always so quick to claim any writer or artist as Australian, even if he (or she) was born in another country, are equally quick to disown any Australian-born writer who has the temerity to leave Australia.”¹⁰ These two assertions date from 1999 and 1974, respectively, so this is no extinct point of view. It still recurs regularly, and many would accept it without question as a statement of fact. But does it happen to be true, at least for the period up to 1950?

The best, because in principle the most disinterested, evidence on this point is to be found in the way expatriates are treated in authoritative reference works. These are particularly useful because, whether they are continuously accumulative (as online versions now are) or are issued in annual volumes (like *Who’s Who*), they are rarely or never pruned of entries once they are in place. They preserve, therefore, the fossil remnants of cultural attitudes that once governed the selection of entrants but that in some cases no longer apply. (One thinks of the inclusion in the past of aristocratic or military nonentities, or today’s greatly increased tally of entries about women of note.)

The two most important biographical compendiums of information about authors are the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (ADB) and *Austlit*:

The Australian Literature Resource. The first defines its scope as being those "individuals [i.e., not necessarily Australian citizens] who have made a prominent contribution to the Australian nation...including representatives of every social group and sphere of endeavour."¹¹ The second, which started in 1999, has a much wider coverage than the *ADB*, but its biographical details are usually more abbreviated. It declares that its "inclusion criteria" encompass authors "born in Australia and resident overseas but maintaining links to Australia."¹² What is meant by "maintaining links" is deliberately left vague.

The *ADB* was first projected in 1957 and the first volume appeared in 1966. Since its subjects have to be dead to be considered for inclusion at all, and since a time lag of around thirty years after death before an entry appears is normal, the first cohort of authors with entries is made up of those people whose careers had ended at any date up to the later interwar years. Entries for those who had died or were in the last phase of their careers at our closing date of 1950 reflect attitudes current in 1980 at the earliest, and since many more from this group have in the course of nature become eligible later, they reflect attitudes more recent still. How, then, are literary expatriates dating from the first half of the twentieth century and earlier treated in the *ADB*?

A sampling does not bear out the claim of deliberate deletion from the public record. Quite the contrary. The mere fact of birth and a few years of education, even when followed by a total lifelong disconnection from the country, has sometimes been deemed sufficient for an entry. It is not too much to say that some of these inclusions are peculiar. Does Joseph Jacobs (b.1854) deserve his article in the *ADB*? Consider: he left Australia forever as a young man of nineteen to start his formidable career as an anthropologist and linguist. He gained an international reputation as the foremost historian of Judaism after moving to New York in 1900. How much of a future could he have had in those roles had he stayed at home? He had no further contact whatsoever of a public kind with Australia. The same is true of the philosopher Samuel Alexander (b.1859), who left Melbourne at the age of eighteen, having won a scholarship to Balliol College, Oxford. The last of the big metaphysical system-builders in the wake of Kant and Hegel, his *Space, Time and Deity* was acclaimed for a while. He spent his entire career at Manchester University and died there in 1938, having utterly lost his connection with Australia. In what ways did either of these men make a "prominent contribution" to the nation?

A similarly puzzling case is the entry on Richard Hodgson. The athletic and boisterous Hodgson trained in law, but soon discovered he was more fitted for science and philosophy. He already had an interest in parapsychology before leaving Australia for Cambridge in 1878, when he was twenty-three,

where he held for a while a minor teaching post in philosophy. More importantly, he was one of the founding members of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) in London in 1882 and became a tireless investigator of, and entertaining writer on, claims for the supernatural. His first great success was his devastating critique of the frauds of the guru Madame Blavatsky, for which he travelled to India. He lived in America from 1887, existing in one room on a tiny salary while devoting himself entirely to paranormal research and writing reports for the SPR, and he returned only once to England and never to Australia. Although there were psychic circles and mediums in Melbourne at the time of Hodgson's acute investigations, as Richardson's *The Way Home* amusingly attests, he would never have had the opportunities there that he had in Boston. In particular, he would never have met the "Queen of Mediums," Mrs. Leonora Piper, whom he investigated minutely for seven years and regarded as absolutely genuine. It was she who convinced him of postmortem survival; so much so that in 1905 he told a friend that "sometimes I can hardly wait to get over there. I am sure that when I do I can establish the truth beyond all possibility of doubt. . . . But I suppose I am good for twenty years more at least." He died within two weeks. Some communications from him were received afterward via Mrs. Piper and others, but despite Hodgson's cheerful assurances nothing very convincing emerged about life on the Other Side, any more than it ever did from the mediums of Down Under who also sought to hear from him.¹³ If he had any postmortem existence, as he supposed, then after death, as in life, Hodgson's Australian antecedents never figured in any way in his career. What he did to deserve his entry in the *ADB* is a mystery.

The philosopher Samuel Alexander, like other expatriate authors of note, has not only an *ADB* entry but also one in the British *ODNB*, the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (to give it its current name). This august reference tool, which started publication in 1885, declares that it treats those "noteworthy" people of all times and all walks of life, no matter where domiciled, who have left their mark on the history of the British Isles and its "possessions and colonies." It will be seen how broad this ambit is: in principle, it could include any "noteworthy" Australian, whether an expatriate or not, up to the date of Federation, just as it might include any American up to the end of the Revolutionary War, whether resident in the United States or not. In practice, the policy for inclusion seems to be a good deal tighter than that, but it is still quite extensive as far as Australian authors are concerned. Naturally the *ODNB* has entries on those who spent much of their lives in England and became famous there, like Martin Boyd, Vere Gordon Childe, Alan Moorehead, Rosa Praed, H. H. Richardson, Christina Stead, and Patrick White. But it also has a generous range of entries about many others active by 1950 with Australian backgrounds of varied definiteness who also

appear in the *ADB*, such as Francis Adams, Carleton Kemp Allen, F. M. Alexander, Oscar Asche, Will Dyson, Fergus Hume, Arthur Lynch, Colin MacInnes, Frederic Manning, Jill Neville, Grafton Elliot Smith, Catherine Helen Spence, Angela Thirkell, Walter Turner, and Anna Wickham.

Some especially striking points emerge about the Australian unwillingness to “surrender” its expatriates in the case of those people with parallel entries in both reference works. One noteworthy person in this category is Gilbert Murray (b. 1866). It is inconceivable that Murray, the son of a politician, could ever have become the most able classics scholar of his generation, and a tireless promoter of peace via the League of Nations, had he stayed in Australia. In fact the issue never arose. Murray was removed to England as a boy for his schooling, and the single return visit he made as a young man, in 1892, did not detain him.¹⁴ He had no further creative interaction with his birth country whatsoever, and the long and thorough article on him by Christopher Stray in the *ODNB* devotes about five lines, surely the right amount, to his antipodean origins. Despite this, there has been a marked reluctance to hand over Murray to the world of English scholarship. He has even been claimed as an “Australian” dramatist, on the grounds (so it has been said) that his translations and staged performances of the Greek playwrights “suggest Australia is being played out by means of texts which never overtly invoke Murray’s homeland.”¹⁵ This is surely drawing a very long bow. Why should Murray’s translations ever have been encoded in such a fashion? What possible motive could Murray have had for doing so? Although he married into the aristocracy he was perfectly at ease with his place of birth and quite capable of writing about it when he wanted to. He started to write an autobiography in his old age in which his boyhood experiences figure disproportionately, and on the strength of that it has been claimed that “the fact that Murray chose to construct himself as the boy from the bush is almost as important as whether or not that construction is historically verifiable.”¹⁶ Apart from the question whether people’s attempts to “construct” themselves as anything should be accepted at face value in a biography, this is to skew the perspective entirely. Murray hardly began to tell his life story (he rightly called it a “fragment”) and took it up only as far as his professorial appointment at Glasgow in his early twenties, by which time he had already spent half his life in England. *Seventy years* of his overseas life are missing altogether. Had he taken it right up to his ninetieth year (he died in 1957 at the age of ninety-one), no doubt those first eleven years would have fallen into their proper place: important to the degree that youthful experiences are always important, but negligible over the span of a very long and productive life spent entirely in another country which had his total allegiance.

The *ADB* also has an entry on Murray’s colleague and protégé at Cambridge, Melian Stawell (b.1869), another brilliant classical and literary

scholar. At Melbourne University she so overwhelmed her examiners that one said she was not merely a scholar of Greek, but *was* an ancient Greek. Melian Stawell must have been a formidable character: aquiline in features, imperious in manner, and idealistic in attitude, who even as a baby was said to have a “kind of visionary look.”¹⁷ She left home forever in 1889 at the age of twenty to attend Newnham College, where she took a first in the classical tripos. She held a tutoring post there in 1894–95, but resigned after a year for health reasons. She never married and lived as an independent scholar. She was one of the first students of classical philology to demonstrate that some of the Minoan writings, especially those on the indecipherable Phaistos Disk, were probably an archaic form of Greek. Her books, which were few and conceded nothing to popular tastes, could never have furnished a living, and presumably she lived on family inheritances. (Stawell’s mother was widowed at Naples while escorting her daughter to Cambridge, and the two lived together until 1921.) It is unlikely that Melian Stawell gave a minute’s thought to returning permanently. She died at Oxford in 1936. One might think that Stawell is far more deserving of an entry in the *ODNB* (which, surprisingly, she does not have) than in the *ADB*, since her scholarly endeavors contributed nothing to Australian culture. Her only claim there is that she was the youngest daughter of the ten children of the chief justice of Victoria.

A more recent example is Eric Partridge, the hugely prolific lexicographer of slang. Once again, it is instructive to compare his entry in the *ADB* by Geoffrey Serle with its equivalent lengthy account in the *ODNB* by Jonathon Green, where Partridge’s entire antipodean background is given just a few lines. Partridge (1894–1979) is indeed a very unlikely character to “count” as an Australian writer. He does not even begin to meet the *ADB*’s inclusion criteria. He was not born in Australia and he left permanently after taking his first degree in Brisbane in his early twenties. For all his vast output as a self-supporting man of letters, Partridge wrote nothing on any Australian topic whatsoever except for a little booklet on part of the history of Queensland University. A memorial volume published just after his death skips over his antipodean origins so quickly as to imply they are hardly worth mentioning.¹⁸ He occupied almost daily the same seat K1 in the Reading Room of the British Museum for over fifty years and in the course of a long life never showed any disposition to return. He was the complete immigrant expatriate. Did he make a “prominent contribution” to his birth country?

A last notable case must suffice: that of the colorful novelist-journalist Evadne Price. Some mystery surrounds her earliest life. She is said to have been born in a ship off the Australian coast in about 1896 and there exist records showing that she spent a few years of her childhood in NSW. But she

must have been taken to London (probably by a surviving parent) before she was out of her childhood, for she was acting on the stage by the age of fifteen and had become a London newspaper columnist before she was seventeen. Later she found fame as the author of the fictionalized memoir of the First World War, *Not So Quiet: Stepdaughters of War*, written under the pseudonym of Helen Zenna Smith. She was a war correspondent between 1943 and '45, and was the first female reporter into Belsen, where, surrounded by corpses and introduced to the "beautiful beast" of the camp, Irma Grese, she knocked her down with a punch in the face. She also got into Hitler's abandoned fortress at Berchtesgaden, where she wrote her name triumphantly across the Fuehrer's giant bedroom mirror in lipstick. None of her highly varied work, which included a long stint as a magazine's astrologer, relates to Australia, and she had no further connection whatever with the country until she returned to Sydney in her old age, to die at Manly in 1985. Bafflingly, in an oral interview of 1977, she asserted she had been born in Sussex and, further, that she had "never been to Australia" until arriving there the year before. This is just one example of Price's muddying of the biographical waters, especially with respect to her marriage to Ken Attiwill, another expatriate journalist.¹⁹ Price's eventful career has already earned her an entry in the *ODNB*. It is unclear whether she will be regarded as "lost" to the country by the *ADB*, as her death date has so far precluded an entry. Still, elsewhere she is regarded almost universally as an Australian author—by *Austlit*, for example—and, again, on the most tenuous grounds.

In both the *ADB* and *Austlit*, therefore, the way certain people are presented as "Australian writers" implies a marked reluctance to surrender an expatriate, even in the teeth of the evidence that the experiences that forged them happened overseas, where such reputation as they still enjoy was made. The main issue for present-day editors—if it is an issue at all—should be inconsistency. Gilbert Murray has his entry in the *ADB*, whereas George Egerton, who was born Mary Chavelita Dunne in Melbourne in 1859, does not. And this is despite the fact that she was taken to Dublin at the same age as Murray, and went on to become the author of the infamous story-collection *Keynotes* and other sexually radical works. It was a sufficiently striking career to earn her an entry in the *ODNB*. Yet it makes no more sense for the *ADB* to include Murray than to exclude Egerton. In these intact fossil remnants we see vestiges of attitudes, actioned by committees long disbanded, that once decided—and to a degree still decide, since entries tend to be copied from one reference book to another—whether to include or exclude a particular writer deemed to be an expatriate. At all events, there is nothing to support the contention that a permanent departure for England (or anywhere else) automatically ruled out any chance of meeting the *ADB*'s criterion for inclusion: that is to say, of having made a "prominent contribution to the

Australian nation." Indeed, the opposite seems to be the case. Australianism trumps expatriation: not always, perhaps, but very often.

This is a generalization, of course, and one of the very few this study is able to license. That is inevitable, since the assumption throughout has been that, given the paucity of statistical, objective information, the descriptive approach is the only practicable one. Autobiographical materials, or writings from which biographical details can legitimately be extracted, have proved the most productive mine; and they have shown that it in most cases—not quite all, to be sure—the decision to expatriate oneself was a private decision and rarely taken under the influence of external pressures. Those who heard London calling were so different in their personalities, backgrounds and talents, and their experiences were so extraordinarily varied, that it is impossible to find anything binding them together. It is absurd to try to find anything in common between the newly arrived young Philip Lindsay, reduced to picking up cigarette butts in the streets and living for a while on what his wife earned by delivering leaflets in the snow, and, at the opposite end of the scale, James Griffyth Fairfax (1886–1976). Fairfax was a scion of the newspaper family, though a marginal figure in it. He was sent off to England at the age of eighteen, for schooling and for Oxford, and returned only for rare visits. A friend of Frederic Manning and Ezra Pound, he published some volumes of translations and erudite poetry in the Pound manner, one in an expensive illustrated edition of 130 copies. He wrote a good deal of patriotic war poetry and eventually became a Conservative MP and a pillar of the Establishment. His life in England had nothing remotely in common with Lindsay's, and even less with that of a scapegrace and ex-jailbird like Ernest Buley, fighting for his life as a journalist freelancer with nothing but a versatile and never-ceasing pen between himself and starvation. Then again, England attracted a good range of eccentrics from Australia, but it is ridiculous to try to rope together, say, a self-proclaimed genius like Arthur Lynch (author of around thirty opinionated books, one titled *The Case against Einstein*,²⁰), a fundamentally serious sexologist, though one with a weakness for good living and a mischievous streak like Dr. Norman Haire, and a solemn self-help guru like F. M. Alexander, whose rather vague nostrums still make sense to his followers at least.

Nevertheless we can risk one other generalization: that for a century or more the one-way ticket to Britain—dreaming of it, acquiring it, and finally using it—is a great unifying theme in the socioeconomics of Australian authorship. And for some members of the literary intelligentsia it did indeed pay off. They sailed for Eldorado like Henry Lawson but their ship, it turned out, was not named *The Golden Vanity* after all. It was *The Golden Hind*. For some of those who dared, expatriation was the best decision they made in their lives: there are plenty of examples of that. Perhaps it is especially true

of women. For example Anna Wickham (born Edith Harper, 1884–1947) left the country at the age of twenty. According to one anecdote she was dispatched by her father to bring fame and fortune to the family. He saw her off with the shouted injunction from the dockside “*Punch, Anna, Punch!*” but whether this was intended to spur her initiative or to advise her to seek a post on the British comic paper of that name is unclear.²¹ At any rate, she married a solicitor and bore him four children, after which he had her committed to an asylum for some months, allegedly because he disliked her poems. Striking out on her own she gained briefly an international reputation as a poet, but this soon dissipated. She must have had a longer lasting talent for friendship, for she was, at various times, on good but rather indefinable terms with David Garnett, D. H. Lawrence, Harold Munro, Malcolm Lowry, and Dylan Thomas. She also enjoyed several lesbian relationships, one with the poet Hilda Doolittle. She was a mainstay of the bohemian Fitzrovia area of London over many years, but in later life she became eccentric, ran her home as a lodging-house, and eventually consummated her long-meditated suicide by hanging herself in Britain’s first, postwar frigid winter of 1947. She was forgotten for years, but was resuscitated in more recent times when a new selection of her poems was published by Virago. But it seems unlikely that her tentative reputation will survive the assault on it by her fellow countrywoman, Germaine Greer, in *Slipshod Sibyls*: charges of clumsy rhymes, embarrassing gusty effusions, infantile egotism, and much besides.²² Still, whatever features marked or marred her life, marital monotony as a solicitor’s spouse in some suburb was not part of it.

Even more exciting was the long life of Joice Loch (1887–1982), who until well in her twenties seemed doomed to live out her life on a poverty-stricken Victorian farm. By sheer doggedness she secured some minor journalistic work in Melbourne, married a Gallipoli veteran who proved to be her soul-mate, left for London, picked up a commission to write a book on the Irish Troubles, and then spent much of her life moving from one European disaster zone to another—Poland, Russia, Rumania, Palestine, and Greece—reporting, writing books, and supplying backbreaking humanitarian aid under appalling conditions. Loch’s autobiography *A Fringe of Blue* gives a matter-of-fact account of these adventures. Although in minor details it is not very reliable, no one, not even war correspondents, saw more at such close range of the varied horrors inflicted on the civilian populations of the twentieth century than the Loch couple.²³ For Wickham, Bowen, Mack, and Loch—and one might add Christina Stead, who, no sooner had she got to London, committed the ultimate cliché of running off to Paris with a married businessman—the expatriate life may have been hard at times, but cocking a snook at notions of female respectability led to a life in the cosmopolitan world far, far more interesting than they could possibly have experienced at home.

Yet even this may be too dogmatic and too optimistic a generalization. We should not forget that, just as military history was once the preserve of what the victors saw fit to record as true, so the history of Australian expatriates is, perforce, largely a story of achievement. The successes are the ones who have left the chatty autobiographies and whose admiring relatives packed up their personal records and dispatched them to the archives; it is they who have attracted the biographers who have dug out their stories; it is they whose work is still on the library shelves and is substantial enough for evaluation.

But these must always have been a minority, numerically, of those whose sought fame and prosperity as a writer in London. Some—was the total a handful, dozens, or even hundreds?—are quite forgotten because they turned to different ways of making a living or returned home without leaving any surviving record of their attempt on the capital. Others made a good start after they left but burnt out, or at least abandoned authorship for reasons unknown. For example, Will Ogilvie (1869–1963) came from Scotland aged twenty, and his bush ballads about the droving life made him popular. He continued to contribute to the *Bulletin* for some years after he left in 1901, but then virtually disappeared from view once back in England. Other literary expatriates had such a roaming disposition that after they left nowhere became home. One of the most puzzling of such cases was Doris Gentile (b.1894), the adventuress and minor writer, whose mostly unrecorded wanderings took her, after she left in 1925, to South Africa, the Congo, London, Paris, Vienna, Italy, Sicily, Toronto, and at long last back to Sydney again, where she died in 1972, leaving behind only some rather startling but vague reminiscences about travels in wild places and her activities among Italian partisans in the Second World War, in which it is impossible to disentangle fact from fantasy.²⁴ How many were there like Ogilvie and Gentile? In Fleet Street, one drizzling day around 1903, bluff Randolph Bedford ran into a journalist, “well up to the seventy mark.” As is usual in his lively *Explorations in Civilisation*, Bedford allows his old compatriot his soliloquy:

Yes, but I’ve had my dreams. . . . When I first came to London I was a boy of twenty. . . . Eh! But I had planned everything. I was to write a greater novel than *The Cloister and the Hearth*; and a greater tragedy than *Macbeth* and a greater poem than “The Princess” . . . Ha! ha! ha! And that wasn’t all. I planned to do a grand opera—between the hard work of writing novels—and I was to compose the music also—no less. After that I was to go into Parliament and be Premier of England. . . . We’ll go in here and have a Scotch. . . . and now I’m writing leaderettes.²⁵

After the visit to the pub Bedford leaves the strong-featured, white-haired old man stumping along on his stick. Not even his name is recorded. He

is yet another of Australia's obscure, expatriate walking wounded, totally forgotten except for the accident of being caught in the amber of Bedford's anecdote.

It is proper, in closing, to widen our angle of vision to the maximum. Literary people ever since Ovid's poems of exile, *Tristia*, 2,000 years ago, have spoken eloquently of the pain of deracination, of having a sharp spade cut through their cultural roots, and of their longing to return. There is a long tradition that people who leave their homeland permanently are necessarily conflicted, caught up in a struggle between stability and change, rootedness and deracination, responsibility and freedom. It is also traditional that the debate about expatriation and exile should take place within an adversarial framework, with nationalism confronting cosmopolitanism.

But no such fierce passions have ever been aroused in Australia, nor by Australians in England. Most expatriates were not conflicted at all and the few that were usually went back home. Certainly expatriation was a way of voting with the feet, a gesture of repudiation, and to that extent was an indictment of the society that had borne them. But it was always a quiet and personal decision and above all a free decision. No writer, as we have seen, was driven out of the country to become an exile—not in the strict sense of the word. There were no Voltaires, no Heines, no Byrons, no Marxes, no Kropotkins among them. Not a single one of our expatriates was motivated to leave by anything decipherable as ideological conviction or fear of illegal persecution. Certainly there was a handful who found it not actually compulsory, but convenient, to leave to avoid attracting the lawful attentions of the authorities; but otherwise no one, as far as is known, went to live abroad *expressly* because they were frightened or disgusted by the xenophobia, populism, puritanism, or racism of their homeland. They may have had clear-cut views about any of these things, but in no case did they leave from a fear of personally falling victim to any of them. Deciding to go and live in England could never carry the same emotional significance as it did for an Irishman leaving for Ontario at the height of the Potato Famine, or a Chopin leaving Poland, or a Vladimir Nabokov, whose father had been murdered by terrorists, leaving for the United States, or even the free choice of an American leaving for Paris in the 1920s.

It is easy to forget how very exceptional, especially over the length of the twentieth century, that was. During that century, as a historian of exile has put it, "there has been hardly a day when someone was not running for his life—or did not have cause to."²⁶ But none of these unfortunates were Australians. Compared to the vast and miserable waves of displaced persons washing to and fro across Europe looking for a safe haven up to and beyond the end of the Second World War, the emigration of a few hundred intellectuals, writers, and artists to a friendly country, to a country that barely

figured even to themselves as a foreign destination, is a minor matter. More than 2,000 of Germany's finest scholarly, artistic and scientific minds fled their country in the 1930s. To read an account of the dreadful trials of some of these *real* exiles when they arrived in a not very welcoming England, as described in Richard Dove's *Journey of No Return*, is sobering. And, of course, these exiled Germans were only one group of many—Bengalis, Jews, Italians, Irish—who have flocked to Britain, each with their own problems of assimilation. In a sense, this is a reminder of how stress-free and even self-indulgent Australian expatriation was over this period. It was a parochial matter, and it produced no writers or works of unquestionable transnational importance.

It is also a reminder that Australian literary mobility was a tiny element in a global phenomenon. For 200, even 300, years, writers have been internationally mobile. It is one of the few perks of their trade. The English Romantics preferred Italy; European writers of the nineteenth century crossed frontiers and swapped languages at the drop of a hat; in the early twentieth century, Americans sought Paris because it was cheap and exciting; eastern European intellectuals went to the think tanks of California or the great universities of New England; and scriptwriters went to Hollywood. Christina Stead, herself an expatriate for forty years, for one, refused to concede there was anything distinctive or remarkable about the Australian quest for the Old World. She thought it was no different to the desire of any peoples with untamed space at their back—Russians, Canadians, Argentineans, Brazilians—to mollify their unease and isolation by seeking out Paris, Madrid, the Riviera, New York, or whatever they perceive the center of their culture to be at any particular moment.²⁷

The fact is that more or less voluntary migration—across the country, across the Atlantic, across the world—is part of the very warp and woof of all the anglophone literatures, as represented by Beckett, Rhys, Kipling, Mansfield, Naipaul, and a hundred others. No fewer than six of the greatest names of literary modernism were all expatriates from one country or another—Conrad, James, Eliot, Pound, Yeats, and Joyce—and the seventh name that must be added to this list, D. H. Lawrence, though certainly English to the core, did good work, if not quite his best work, in Italy, Australia, Mexico, and the United States, before dying an exile's death in the south of France. One student of Miles Franklin's career finds it odd that she wrote novels about pioneer Australia over a ten-year period while sitting at a desk in the British Museum library.²⁸ But Scott Fitzgerald wrote that supremely American novel, *The Great Gatsby*, while living in France and Italy. Aldous Huxley wrote *Brave New World* in Sanary, on the Mediterranean coast, and did all his later work in California. James Joyce wrote the greatest of Irish novels in Europe and never lived in Ireland again

after leaving it. It is hardly necessary to list all of Joyce's fellow Irishmen who have found fame and fortune in the capital over the last three centuries or more. What would Goldsmith, Swift, Wilde, or Yeats have amounted to if their creative playground had only ever been Augustan or Victorian Dublin? The same may be said of the Scots. What would James Boswell's reputation ever have been, had he been stuck for life as a provincial advocate in Edinburgh? For that matter, did Robert Louis Stevenson become less of a Scottish writer, or more of one, because he lived and worked in the South Seas for six years until he died there? In this context, there is no real difference between these more celebrated cases of exile than there is in Miles Franklin giving her alter ego, Brent of Bin Bin, the "address" of seat S.9 in the Reading Room of the British Museum, or Martin Boyd writing *When Blackbirds Sing*, the last of his Anglo-Australian Langton series, while living permanently in Rome. Except in terms of achievement, these things are no odder than that the notation "Trieste-Zurich-Paris" should appear as the very last words of *Ulysses*, set on a single day in Dublin.

Robert Hughes (another stay-away) once said, optimistically, that in the evolving global village, under the impact of internationalization and the universal celebrity culture, there is no center and no periphery, and therefore the old cultural relationship between metropolis and colony is rapidly becoming meaningless. Are we not all citizens of cyberspace and the beneficiaries of globalization now, where in the anglophone world even the notion of nationhood itself is growing thinner, at least as far as the practical affairs of life are concerned?

But is that really true, at the level of the individual? Clive James has begged to differ, remarking that if provincialism has ceased to exist and expatriation is dead, why is it that more of the survivors have not gone home for good?²⁹ James's logic isn't very good—if the idea of expatriation is dead, how can either going or staying make any difference?—but it still makes for a lively discussion. How far Hughes's prediction has become really true for Australia over the sixty years since the close of the period treated in these pages cannot be pursued; but most people might agree today that, while it is still interesting to know of the Australian antecedents of Hughes or James or Greer or Malouf or any other literary person whose career one follows, it's pretty uninteresting to know how often and how long they are physically present in one hemisphere or the other. That has ceased to concern anybody except themselves and their circle. Which, curiously enough, brings us back via many byways to that autumn day in 1900 when Henry Lawson, Australia's most revered writer, waved goodbye to his friends at the Sydney docks while clutching his one-way ticket and no one found it very surprising at all.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION: ISSUES OF DEFINITION AND EVIDENCE

1. Buckridge, "Kind of Exile," 111.
2. Blackmur, *Lion and the Honeycomb*, 61.
3. Wolfreys, *Writing London*, 10. Other books on this subject are John Clement Ball's *Imagining London* (2004); Alan Robinson's *Imagining London, 1770–1900* (2004); and John McLeod's *Postcolonial London: Rewriting the Metropolis* (2004). Collections of edited essays include David Feldman and Gareth Stedman Jones's *Metropolis London* (1989); Susana Onega and John Stotesbury's *London in Literature* (2002); Pamela Gilbert's *Imagined Londons* (2002); and Lawrence Phillips's *The Swarming Streets* (2004). In 1999, the journal of postcoloniality, *Kunapipi*, devoted an entire issue to readings of the city. Despite the quantity, however, virtually none of this most recent work is by Australians, or touches on representations of London by Australians.
4. Porter, "Anglo-Australian Watershed," 187. Italics added. Porter himself twice attempted suicide early in his expatriation.
5. Arnold, "Australian Books," 10.9, 10.14. See his table 10.1 and Appendix.
6. Miller, *Australian Literature: A Bibliography...Extended to 1950...by Frederick T. Macartney*. It claims to include all authors who were "connected with Australia...irrespective of whether or not they...continue to reside here" (vi). Arnold was unable to use the major reference work of which he is joint editor (Arnold & Hay, eds., *Bibliography of Australian Literature*) because at the time of writing it was incomplete.
7. Hornung has an entry in *ADB* but Roberts and Farjeon do not. Hornung, Farjeon, and Roberts all have entries in *ODNB*, where, not surprisingly, they are treated as exclusively English authors.
8. The pseudonym was based on her first married name. She was born Effie Maria Henderson, later Albanesi.
9. Nisbet, *Explanatory*, ii.
10. Blathwayt, "How to Escape," 88–90. If Woolven's article "Hume" is correct, the £50 is not the full story, for Hume had retained the dramatic rights, which must have been quite valuable as the stage version had long runs in Australia and London.
11. [Theodore Flatau obituary], 9.

12. Bowen, *Drawn from Life*, 191. She had "lent" large sums from her Australian capital to the egotistical Ford, who never repaid her. At times the two of them and their daughter lived entirely on the £20 a month Bowen had from her family's estate in Adelaide. See Modjeska, *Stravinsky's Lunch*, 54.
13. L. Lindsay, "Australian Should Travel," 11.
14. There is an account of her career in Smith, "Inez Bensusan." She apparently died in England some time after 1935.
15. Fox, *Australia*, 186.

1 SAILING FOR ELDORADO: GOING HOME IN THE LITERARY IMAGINATION

1. Tasma, *Not Counting the Cost*, 26–27.
2. H. Lawson, "The Rush to London": probably written 1900; published in *For Australia* (1913). Reprinted in *Collected Verse*, I, 386.
3. Dawson, *Record*, 136–37.
4. H. Lawson, "A Song of Southern Writers," *Bulletin*, May 28, 1892. Reprinted in *Collected Verse*, I, 199–200.
5. According to Price, "Immigration," Table 1.2.
6. H. Lawson, "The Sweet Uses of London," 167.
7. The poem, titled "The Harriet," is dated July 1920 but was never published; it is printed from an MS in H. Lawson, *Collected Verse*, III, 392–93. It imitates Kipling's poem "The Three-Decker" (1894), about novels in that format, which uses the same ship metaphor and is in the same "fourteener" metre.
8. Quoted in Roderick, *Lawson*, 246. Tasker & Sussex, "That Wild Run to London," recently uncovered new biographical information. See also Barnes, "Lawson and Pinker."
9. F. James, "London Letter," 62.
10. See also the relevant entries in Ramson, *Australian National Dictionary*. Yet, in 1911, Miles Franklin uses it quite naturally in a letter referring to a brief visit to London from Chicago: "Perhaps if I had gone straight home to London from Australia I would have looked upon it as a different country." (Franklin, *Congenials*, II, 68).
11. F. W. L. Adams, *Australians*, 41. In Mack's "A Woman's Letter" (*Bulletin*, April 13, 1901) appears this item: "Miss McEachern, who came from 'Ome with her mother, was a pretty, fragile child." The intent is obviously humorous.
12. Lawson, "From the Bush," *When I Was King and Other Verses* (1905). Reprinted in *Collected Verse*, I, 387.
13. Greater London: 7.1 million in 1911; 7.3m in 1921; 8.1m in 1931; 8.1m in 1951. (The 1941 census was cancelled.) Australia: 4.5m in 1910; 5.4m in 1920; 6.5m in 1930; 7.0m in 1940; 8.3m in 1950.
14. Koch, *Crossing the Gap*, 2–3.
15. Martin, "Pursuing Literature," 2.

16. Mack, *Australian Girl*, 240–41.
17. Boyd, "Their Link with Britain," 244.
18. Moorehead, *Rum Jungle*, 18. Moorehead titled the first, autobiographical chapter of this book "A Nameless, Hopeless Distress."
19. Foster, ed. *Self Portraits*, 60.
20. Blakemore, *Arguments with England*, 14–15.
21. Moorehead, *Rum Jungle*, 21–22. Italics added.
22. North, ed. *Yarn Spinners*, 15.
23. Howard, *Fabulist*, 165.
24. Rosman, *Tower Wall*, 236–38. Telegraph costs up to 1902 are itemized in Inglis, "Imperial Connection."
25. Stead, *For Love Alone*, 248, 251. Crow leaves in August 1933, and Teresa has a first letter in December. After answering it, she has to wait until "late March 1934" for an answer.
26. Richardson, *Letters*, III, 260. Letter of March 30, 1938.
27. Richardson, *Letters*, II, 421. Letter of October 30, 1932.
28. Richardson, *Letters*, II, 444. Letter of March 20, 1933. Rees had had the temerity to refer to her subject as "a middle-aged gentlewoman," though it was no more than the truth. Richardson was sixty-three at the time.
29. Richardson, *Letters*, III, 145. Letter of December 30, 1935.
30. Richardson, *Letters*, II, 467. Letter of July 23, 1933.
31. For example, James to Cusack, May 19, 1948, where she records that a letter from Cusack posted nine days earlier had arrived. North, ed. *Yarn Spinners*, 180.
32. Adelaide, "How Did Writers," 90.
33. P. Lindsay, *Same Life Over*, 116, 133.
34. P. Lindsay, *Mangle*, 51. The Mangle flats also appear in *Journey's End*, another MS novel set entirely in Sydney, dated 1929, presumably just before Lindsay left for London. Jack Lindsay mentions in his autobiography three (other?) novels by his brother that were never published: *Snakes and Ladders*, *Farewell Rocking-Horse*, and *Jesting Venus*. Apparently none of these has survived.
35. Autograph letter, probably 1929, Philip to Norman Lindsay, bound in the MS of *The Mangle*.
36. P. Lindsay, *Mangle*, 131–32. In fact, Stephensen's Endeavour Press republished *Jonah*, a novel of working-class Sydney life, in 1933. John Hunter, the youthful, brilliant Professor of Anatomy at Sydney, was something of a hero in the Lindsay circle. He contracted enteric fever on his way to England in 1924 and died on arrival at the age of twenty-six.
37. According to his autobiography. P. Lindsay, *Same Life Over*, 145. His passage, in a cabin with five other men, cost £38.
38. Franklin, *My Career Goes Bung*, 233. The novel was drafted in 1902, before Franklin left Australia herself for Chicago in 1906.
39. Boyd, *Lucinda Brayford*, 295–96.
40. Mack, "Impressions," 32.
41. W. James, *Bachelor Betty*, 18.

42. Pesman, *Duty Free*, 23. Inglis, "Going Home," offers similar figures, as does Bridge, "More than just Barry," 1–2.
43. Alomes, *When London Calls*, 1, 13. The money came from a settlement of a workplace injury in which McKern had lost an eye.
44. Pesman, *Duty Free*, 24.
45. Dawson, *Record*, 196.
46. Stead, *For Love Alone*, 241.
47. Undated letter, quoted by Mendelssohn, *Lionel Lindsay*, 94.
48. Thirkell, *Trooper*, 90, 93.
49. Loch, *Fringe*, 59–62.
50. Kershaw, *Pleasure*, 46.
51. Rickards, *Painted Banquet*, 2.
52. H. Lawson, "A Song of Southern Writers," *Bulletin*, May 28, 1892. Reprinted in *Collected Verse*, I, 199–200.
53. Quoted in Matters, "Journalist," 170.

2 A GOUT OF BILE: METIC AND IMMIGRANT EXPATRIATES

1. P. Lindsay, *Mangle*, 50.
2. McCarthy, "Exiles," 706.
3. Alomes, *When London Calls*, 11. The *Australian Oxford's* definition is simply "a political exile."
4. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, "exile," n.1. Italics added.
5. Igor Pomerantsev's observation, quoted in Ingram, "Introduction: On the Contrary, Outside of It," 3.
6. McNulty was an expatriate for nineteen years and died at Chelsea. See Griffen-Foley, "McNulty."
7. Buckridge, "Kind of Exile," 111.
8. Lynch had left at the age of twenty-six. As an Irishman he had fought on the wrong side in the Boer War. Fluent in six languages, he recounts in *My Life Story* how he lived for a fortnight on two shillings while trying to break into journalism.
9. Adelaide, ed. *Bright and Fiery Troop*, 10.
10. Curiously, this evocative word has no entry at all in the online edition of the *Australian National Dictionary*. The *Macquarie Dictionary* mentions "withdrawing allegiance" as part of its definition, and its example of usage refers to expatriation for cultural reasons. The *Australian Oxford Dictionary* also mentions the withdrawal of citizenship or allegiance in its definition.
11. Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 292.
12. Waugh, *The Loved One*, 4.
13. "Migrant," like "expatriate," has long had a specific meaning in Australia, suggested by a quotation from the *Sydney Daily Mail* of 1922: "Call [new European arrivals] migrants, because to go from Britain to Australia is only to pass from one part of Great Britain to another." See *OED Online*, "migrant,"

B.n.3.b. The latter clause is true no longer, yet for an Australian to refer in common speech to someone travelling the other way as a "migrant" is still inconceivable nearly a century later.

14. Richardson, *The Way Home*, 68.
15. Letter of August 23, 1929. Lawrence, *Letters*, 443.
16. Described in Munro, *Wild Man of Letters*, 82–86.
17. Braddon, *End of a Hate*, 104.
18. Alomes, *When London Calls*, xii.
19. Stow, "Excerpt," 9.
20. Wells, *Wells in Love*, 89.
21. A wide range of tourists' accounts written in this period are discussed by Hassam, *Neither English nor Foreign*, and in White, "Bluebells."
22. McMahon, *O'er the Wide Waste*, 97–105.
23. J. Lindsay, "Alienated Australian Intellectual," 53.
24. Details from Sussex, "Mary Fortune," 99–112. Sussex gives a fuller account of her career in Adelaide, ed. *Bright and Fiery Troop*, 117–31.
25. D. Stewart, *Writers of the Bulletin*, 38.
26. "Literary Market," 19.
27. Stuart, *Australian Periodicals*, 2. Stead's comment is quoted by Tasker, "Learning Journalism," 157.
28. Founded in 1880, the *Bulletin* retained its original identity throughout our period, though by 1950 its literary criticism, such as it was, had become negligible.
29. Macrae, "Verse," np.
30. There is a full treatment of this milieu in Kirkpatrick, *Sea Coast of Bohemia*, and there is comment on the Melbourne situation in Docker, *Nervous Nineties*.
31. Rees, *Hold Fast to Dreams*, 42.
32. Stephens, "Bulletin Diary", 36.
33. Mercer, "Freelance Journalism," np. Most of Mercer's (1882–1952) work was humorous short stories and poetry. He was active in union politics and a junior chess champion.
34. Park & Niland, *Drums Go Bang*, 110.
35. Sayle, "As Far as You Can Go," 116.
36. Kershaw, *Pleasure*, 43.
37. Dawson, *Daniel Whyte*, 224.

3 THE AROMA OF THE PAST: IN ANTIPODEAN LONDON

1. Advice given to the hero by his mentor David Grey, in Dawson, *Ronald Kestrel*, 67.
2. Boyd, "Why I Am an Expatriate," 13.
3. Wolfreys, *Writing London* and McLaughlin, *Writing the Urban Jungle* both develop this idea at length.

4. For example, Simon Eliot's Fig. 26 shows that 31 percent of published titles were fiction over the period 1890–99, while the next three named categories did not exceed 12 percent each. The proportion of Australian books that were British imports fell to one-eighth during the Depression years, but was back up to a quarter again by 1950. See Eliot, *Some Patterns*, 14; White, *Inventing Australia*, 62; Reid, "Publishing," 115.
5. Banfield, "A Village in Kent," 46, 49.
6. Martin, *Passionate Friends*, 75.
7. White, "Bluebells," 48.
8. All these clichés about England are taken from Rosman, *Tower Wall*, 51.
9. Manders, *Colonials' Guide*, 21.
10. Gilbert & Henderson, "Tourist Imagination," 126.
11. H. Lawson, "Letters to Jack Cornstalk," 219.
12. Adey, "Impressions," 141.
13. Shelley, "Letter to Maria Gisborne" (1820).
14. Wilcox, "Edwardian Excursion" provides an excellent impressionistic survey of Australian life in London, 1900–1910, but focuses on painters more than writers.
15. *British-Australasian*, January 11, 1900, 72.
16. This group is mentioned in Sladen, *Twenty Years*.
17. "Ex Cathedra," *London Aphrodite*, 3 (December 1928), 232; 4 (February 1929), 316.
18. The complex history of this circle and its milieu has been exhaustively treated: see Arnold, *Fanfrolico Press*; Munro, *Wild Man of Letters*; and Buckridge, *Scandalous Penton*.
19. Spencer, English-born, took up the chair in 1887. He retired in 1919 and returned to England with Jean Hamilton in 1927. The circle is treated fully in Martin, *Passionate Friends*.
20. Mack, "Little Letter," 3.
21. Sayle, "As Far as You Can Go," 125; Stephensen, *Kookaburras*, 29.
22. Daley, "When London Calls," 15.
23. Franklin, *Cockatoos*, 63.
24. Adams, *Man's Life*, 28, 72. This curious work is a series of detached memories of a man on his deathbed, and is surely highly autobiographical.
25. Adams, *London Streets*, 7.
26. Adams, *London Streets*, 28. See also White, "Bluebells," 45. Watteau's well-known *Cythera* painting, and a poem by Kenneth Slessor, empowered Christina Stead's imagination, as Rowley shows in *Christina Stead*, 69. It is not clear if she knew Baudelaire's poem of that title.
27. Beaumont was one of the models for Lord Marchmain in Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. See Byrne, *Mad World*, 131ff.
28. "Author's Note" in Conrad, *Secret Agent*, 231.
29. "'A Woman's Life': Outrage on De Maupassant's Genius," *Times* [London], November 3, 1920, 9.
30. Mannin, *Young in the Twenties*, 67.
31. See Lock, "'O that I were young again'" and Wyndham, "Verse-making and Lovemaking."

32. Plomer, *At Home*, 34.
33. Ruck, *Unkissed Bride*, 25.
34. Letter of January 21, 1941. Norman Haire Collection, University of Sydney Library, Box 3.27.
35. Most of the *Encyclopaedia* was written for money by the young émigré Arthur Koestler. The "A. Willy" joke probably derived from Koestler's cousin, the publisher Willy Aldor. Haire's exact role as editor is unclear: he probably translated or commissioned the English version. See Scammell, *Koestler*, 106–8; Koestler, *Invisible Writing*, 222; Diana Wyndham (Haire's biographer), private information.
36. "How They Starve," 7. There was no food rationing during the war until 1918.
37. Dostoyevsky, *Winter Notes*, 49. Dostoevsky visited London in June 1862.
38. Spence, "Australian's Impressions," 111.
39. Dawson, *Record*, 227.
40. A. H. Adams, "A Look at London," 55.
41. Stephens, *Queenslander's Travel Notes*, 152.
42. F. W. L. Adams, *Leicester*, I, 172–73.
43. *Graphic*, June 13, 1885; details from Tasker, *Francis Adams*, 5–6, 19.
44. F. W. L. Adams, *Leicester*, I, 179, 187–88.
45. These scenes between Bertram and Rosy are strikingly similar to those between idealistic Arthur Golding and the debased Carrie Mitchell in George Gissing's first novel *Workers in the Dawn*. Adams would have been attracted to this huge gloomy "Socialist-realist" fiction, and it is possible that he was one of its few readers when it appeared in 1880, while he was drafting *Leicester*.
46. See, for instance, "Homeless in London," 12.
47. The foregoing quotations are from Abbott, *Letters*, 9, 102–3, 317, and 147–49.
48. According to Stewart, *Writers of the Bulletin*, 38.
49. Taine, *Notes on England*, 8–9.
50. Bedford, *Explorations*, 230.
51. Meudell, *Pleasant Career*, 180, 179.
52. Franklin, *Cockatoos*, 249.
53. J. Lindsay, *Life Rarely Tells*, 504, 519.
54. J. Lindsay, "Alienated Australian Intellectual," 49.
55. L. Lindsay, *Comedy of Life*, 193.
56. Letter to Norman Lindsay, quoted in Mendelssohn, *Lionel Lindsay*, 102.
57. Marlowe, *Kangaroos*, 121. *Kangaroos* was written in America but is set around 1910, at the time of Marlowe's first arrival. Appearing in the unpropitious war-weary year of 1917, the London publisher invited its soldier-buyers to "Send a copy home for Christmas to your Wife, Mother or Sweetheart."
58. H. Lawson, "Letters to Jack Cornstalk," 216–19, and "Letters to Jack Cornstalk: II," 77.
59. Stephens, "Lawson's Last Book—A Temporary Adjustment," Red Page.
60. Reade, *Revelation of Britain*, 74. An advocate of the Garden City movement, Reade later became the first appointed town planner in Adelaide, but was

- soon driven out after a campaign against him by outraged members of the council, who objected to his colorful journalistic language.
61. Bedford, *Explorations*, 22, 225, 16–17.
 62. Pesman, Walker, and White, *Oxford Book of Australian Travel Writing*, xv.
 63. Mack, *Australian Girl*, 140–41.
 64. Spence, *Week*, 115.
 65. Hume, *Year of Miracle*, 8, 9, 148.
 66. Watson, *Decline*, 9, 47, 54–55, 89.
 67. Cited by Walker, *Dream and Disillusion*, 174. The participants must have been in London for the “Festival of Empire,” planned for 1910 but actually held in 1911 after the death of King Edward.
 68. A. H. Adams, *Australians*, 109–10. “Australienne” had a currency roughly from 1895 to 1935.
 69. Stephensen, “Bakunin,” 431.
 70. Stephensen, *Foundations of Culture*, 54. He got it right for Australia (2010 population: 23m) but hopelessly wrong for Britain: 60.7m, without any new and exclusive inventions after all. However, some *official* forecasts in the 1930s prophesied that, thanks to birth control, the British population would sink to under 30m by 1985. One estimate of 1935 thought the population a century hence would be 4.4m, with half over the age of 60!
 71. Boyd, *Lucinda Brayford*, 441–42.
 72. Stead, *Web*, 48.

4 DRAWING OFF THE RICH CREAM: THE STRUGGLE IN LONDON

1. Quoted in De Groen, ed. *Some Other Dream*, 152. Interestingly, Boyd used the same simile in talking of his own experience in returning to Australia, in “Why I Am an Expatriate,” 13.
2. Franklin, *Cockatoos*, 214–15. *Cockatoos* was written in 1927, though not published until 1954.
3. Letter of December 15, 1905. Mitchell Library ML DOC 1280.
4. Letter of August 16, 1937, from the landlord of the Mermaid pub to Philip Lindsay. Mitchell MSS 1969/3 fol 198-9. Ironically, the complainant neighbour was Radclyffe Hall, the lesbian novelist whom the *London Aphrodite* circle had defended years before.
5. Letter of May 1938 to Jack Lindsay. Mitchell MSS 1969/2 fol 249.
6. D. Stewart, *Norman Lindsay*, 58; letter of August 14, 1954. to R. D. Fitzgerald. NLA MS 7334 folder 6. For his part, Philip expressed some apprehensions to his brother about having Stewart to stay, especially as he had two young children with him.
7. Letter undated (ca.1950) to R. D. Fitzgerald. NLA MS 7334/492.
8. “Mr Philip Lindsay,” *Times*, January 7, 1958, 11. Letter of July 12, 1933, from Howard Spring to Lindsay. Mitchell MSS 1969/3 fol 17.
9. From biographical notes prepared by Peter Lindsay. Mitchell MSS 1969/10.

10. McLaren, *My Civilised Adventure*, 81, 112. This memoir is dedicated to Lindsay and his wife.
11. Praed, *Australian Heroine*, 108.
12. Praed, *Policy*, 3.
13. Franklin, *Laughter*, 75.
14. Rosman, *Miss Bryde of England*, 202.
15. Quotations from Rosman, *Tower Wall*, are from pp. 17, 30, 12, 39, 51, 52, 71, and 29.
16. Thirkell, *Trooper*, 22.
17. For Boothby's autobiographical content, see Depasquale, *Guy Boothby*, 22–25.
18. Boothby, *Love Made Manifest*, 31–32.
19. Dawson, *Ronald Kestrel*, 79.
20. Dawson, *Daniel Whyte*, 228.
21. Abbott, *Letters*, 3.
22. Dawson, *Daniel Whyte*, 229.
23. Boothby, *Love Made Manifest*, 35.
24. Depasquale, *Guy Boothby*, 22.
25. Boothby, *Bid for Fortune*, 180.
26. Depasquale, *Guy Boothby*, 26.
27. W. James, *Bachelor Betty*, 152. The content of this novel is based on her first trip to England in 1905. That same year three other women journalists and activists made the trip as well as James: Alice Henry, feminist journalist, aged 48; Muriel Matters, also of Adelaide, suffragette and actress, aged 28; and Frances Fitzgerald Elmes, feminist and journalist on the *British-Australasian*, aged 38.
28. Asche, *Oscar Asche*, 74, 79, 80.
29. In *Skyline Riders and Other Verses* (1910). Reprinted in Henry Lawson, *Collected Verse*, II, 290–91.
30. Information about Carrington from Susan Mercer of the Mitchell Library, which holds the MS at MSS QA920.5/c. Souter first drew attention to *The Quest* in *Lion and Kangaroo*, 120–27. According to *Austlit*, Carrington's total literary output amounted to a single poem in the *Bulletin* in 1905, before he left.
31. Moorhouse, "Sense and Sensibility" gives a lively account of this remarkable case. According to Depasquale, *Vernon Knowles*, 26, Knowles's surviving papers show he had other grants or pensions from the (British) Royal Literary Fund in 1952 and 1962.

5 WHO ARE YOU?

NO ONE: THE HACKING JOURNALIST IN LONDON

1. Mack, *Australian Girl*, 225–26.
2. Gibbs, *Street*, 25, 27, 28, 319.
3. H. Lawson, *Collected Prose*, II, 167.

4. "Literary England Today" in Vance Palmer, *Intimate Portraits*, 77.
5. Dawson, *Daniel Whyte*, 249.
6. Phyllis, "In the Looking Glass," 18.
7. Griffen-Foley, "Crumbs," 08.6–7.
8. Dobson, "Riddle," 98; Hancock, *Australia*, 59.
9. This is the account given by the eponymous hero in Dawson, *Ronald Kestrel*, 28. However, in *Daniel Whyte* (1899), also semiautobiographical, the hero jumps ship in Melbourne after he is treated brutally on board.
10. Dawson, *Ronald Kestrel*, 97.
11. "Who Wrote Freydon's Autobiography?," 237.
12. Dawson, *Ronald Kestrel*, 161.
13. Dawson, *Record*, 10. Further quotations are from the Constable edition of 1914.
14. Blathwayt, *Through Life and Round the World*, 154, 157. See also Waller, *Writers*, 410–17.
15. Besant, "Literature as a Career," 702–3.
16. A. H. Adams, "Fleet Street" in *London Streets*.
17. Murdoch, *Alfred Deakin*, 20.
18. A. P. Martin, "'Pursuing Literature,'" 2.
19. Mack, *Australian Girl*, 225–26.
20. Mack, "Woman's Letter," 12. The author of this lament is not identified.
21. Quoted in Phelan, *Romantic Lives*, 120.
22. Stephens, "Bulletin Diary," 53.
23. Goring-Thomas, *Lass*, 252. For Goring-Thomas, Stephens, and Mack, see also V. Lawson, *Connie Sweetheart*, 21, 28–30, and Phelan, *Romantic Lives*, 93–98. Both biographers erroneously backdate *The Lass* by ten years. It had English reviews, but no reviewer noticed its satirical intent. Goring-Thomas's death notice in the *Times* in 1914 spoke of him as "of Paris" though he died in London. The *British-Australasian* printed a brief obituary on October 8, 1914. It is unclear whether he was related to the composer Arthur Goring Thomas.
24. Mickle, *Many a Mickle*, 162.
25. Mack, "A Literary Dinner," 31.
26. Quoted in Hackworth-Jones, *Barbara Baynton*, 111 from Baynton's address to the Writers' Union, "England and the Australian Writer," *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 6, 1911.
27. Mack, *Teens Triumphant*, 100, 32–33, 103.
28. Quoted in Phelan, *Romantic Lives*, 179.
29. Johnson, *Light and the Gate*, 85–86; Langmore, "Pratt, Ambrose (1874–1944)."
30. Matters, *Australasians*, 22.
31. Schafer, "Tale of Two Australians," 113. However, Chambers has no entry in Parsons, ed. *Companion to Theatre in Australia*.
32. Marwil, *Manning*, 65. Manning did return to Australia twice, in 1925 and 1932, but left with relief after short visits.

**6 THE DEAR OLD MOTHER COUNTRY:
RICHARDSON'S *THE WAY HOME* AND
STEAD'S *FOR LOVE ALONE***

1. Richardson, *Fortunes*, 341.
2. Stead, *For Love Alone*, 278. All quotations from *For Love Alone* are from the Virago edition of 1978. A properly edited edition is lacking.
3. Letter of March 1, 1917. Franklin, *Congenials*, I, 117.
4. "Bathing in London is a hobby, and often an expensive one. That the English are a clean nation is the first illusion the visitor loses." (Marlowe, *Kangaroos*, 37).
5. Boyd, *Delight*, 17.
6. Knightley, *Hack's Progress*, 8.
7. James, *Notebooks*, 27–28.
8. Quoted in James, *English Hours*, xiv.
9. Kiernan, *Images*, viii; Hope, "Knowing Where to Stop," 204.
10. Quoted in Richardson, *Letters*, "Introduction," II, x; Richardson, "Some Notes," 17.
11. Dutton, ed., *Literature of Australia*, gives just seven lines to *Seven Poor Men of Sydney*.
12. Although this seems incredible, a search of the NLA's *Historic Australian Newspapers 1803–1954* database confirms it. The first real notice was Kathleen Fitzpatrick's, in *Meanjin* in 1949, then nothing more until 1955. See also Niall, *Martin Boyd (Australian Bibliographies)*, iii.
13. All quotations from *The Way Home* are from the edition edited by Clive Probyn and Bruce Steele in 2007.
14. Cited in Blake, *Christina Stead's Politics*, 4.
15. Letter of May 24, 1932. Richardson, *Letters*, II, 389.
16. Letter of February 15, 1933. Richardson, *Letters*, II, 437. See also letter of December 10, 1935. Richardson, *Letters*, III, 141.
17. Kiernan, "Fortunes," 202.
18. Dallimore, "Malaise," 59.
19. Kiernan, "Fortunes," 199, 201.
20. Stewart, "Fortunes," 98.
21. N. Palmer, *Henry Handel Richardson*, 75.
22. Dallimore, "Malaise," 57.
23. Stewart, "Fortunes," 115.
24. For example: "Did he settle here, it would save time and money." Richardson regularly uses this awkward construction. Another example of her possibly Germanic syntax is: "So Mahony on with his hat and off to Bealby's shop."
25. The careful account by Stoller and Emerson, "The Fortunes" covers most of the ground relating to Richardson's medical career and decline. They speculate that his "Letter from Home" might have given her "inspiration" for *The Way Home* (24). For Green's comment, see her "Walter Lindesay Richardson," 6.

26. Richardson, "Some Notes," 17.
27. Lloyd, "Viewpoints," 159.
28. Richardson, *Letters*, III, 238.
29. Richardson, *Myself*, 87.
30. Letter to Mary Kernot of December 16, 1924. Richardson, *Letters*, II, 43.
31. Rowley, *Stead*, 79.
32. Stead told an enquirer in 1981, "I wrote [it] very early in my writing life" (Stern, *Christina Stead's Heroine*, 177), but did not clarify further.
33. In the Tate Gallery there is a Burne-Jones painting, *The Golden Stairs*, showing groups of vaguely medieval young women descending a staircase, which has hung next to the same artist's *King Cophetua* (see later) since 1924, which may bear on this project.
34. Keesing, "Sons of Clovis II," 22.
35. Williams, *Stead*, 318, says "Christina spoke many times of the impact the painting . . . made on her as a child." She mentions it first in *Seven Poor Men of Sydney*. The quotation is from Lidoff, "Stead: An Interview," 60.
36. Whitehead, "Christina Stead," 233. She repeated this just as vigorously in an interview six years later, in 1980. See Wetherall, "Interview," 432.
37. There seems to be a chronological discrepancy here. Crow leaves for London in August 1933. Teresa books her own passage "in September 1935," about six months before she sails in March 1936—two years and seven months after Crow. Yet, at a point in the narrative when the date is clearly August 1934, and therefore a *full year* after Crow's departure, we learn that even then she has "still three years to go in her saving," and that "during the next one thousand and ninety-six days, she spent no money on herself." One thousand and ninety-six days is exactly three years if one is a leap year, as 1936 was. Thus, whether deliberately or not, the period of waiting and anticipation is artificially extended.
38. Macainsh, "Art of Compromise," 79–88.
39. Clancy, *Christina Stead's*, 24, 38.
40. On October 15, 1928, she wrote in a letter: 'I shall not return to Euston Road, although I shall be offered that room when the present owner goes away finally.' (Stead, *Web of Friendship*, 11). Although resident in Paris from early in 1929, Stead returned to London on business several times before she left for America in 1935, and had plenty of opportunity to remind herself of these small details.
41. Wilding, "Christina Stead's Australian Novels," 21.
42. Lidoff, *Stead*, 102. In 1930, in Argyle Street (nearly opposite the stations, between 31 and 33 Euston Road), the premises on the corner at 1-4 was a dairy, the "English & Scottish Creameries" (*Post Office Directory of London 1930*).
43. Giuffr , "Christina Stead Interviewed," 26.

7 ALWAYS THE FEELING OF AUSTRALIA IN THE AIR: MARTIN BOYD'S *LUCINDA BRAYFORD*

1. Boyd, *Delight*, 239.

2. Phillips, *Australian Tradition*, 80. This comment comes in the chapter "The Family Relationship" written in 1958.
3. Kramer, "Martin Boyd," 32. Kramer's comment about Green's judgment is overstated. Green made no such claim about Boyd either in his *Australian Literature 1900–1950* (1951) or his *History of Australian Literature* (1961–62), though he did say in the latter that "only *The Montfords* can be regarded as Australian, though others have some connection with Australia" (II, 1114). His low opinion of *Lucinda Brayford* (that it "does not stand out above the ruck of competent and clever social fiction," II, 1119) caused Dorothy Green, in her revised edition of the *History* (1984), to add a single, special Appendix to the book, specifically and strongly dissenting from this judgment.
4. Niall, "Double Alienation," 198, 204.
5. Boyd, "Correspondence," 74. His single abortive attempt to repatriate himself had ended with his final departure for Europe in 1951.
6. Boyd, "Dubious Cartography," 7.
7. References to *Lucinda Brayford* are from the Lansdowne edition of 1969. There is no properly edited edition of the novel.
8. Boyd, *Single Flame*, 23, 12, 20.
9. Boyd, "Australian and New Zealand Homes in England," 13. Baynton was still alive when *Brangane* was published.
10. Boyd, *Delight*, 211.
11. Waugh, "Preface" to *Brideshead Revisited*, 2nd ed. (1960).
12. Richardson, *The Way Home*, 123.
13. Boyd, "Dubious Cartography," 10.
14. Hope, "Knowing Where to Stop," 209.
15. Moon, "Pulp Writing and Coincidence" passes a severe judgment on Boyd's use of coincidence, but does not draw out fully the sheer improbability of the Vane/Maitland thread of the plot. As he mentions, Boyd's defence was the usual one that wildly unlikely coincidences are not uncommon in life.
16. Boyd, "De Gustibus," 7; "Why I Am an Expatriate," 13.
17. Boyd, *Lucinda Brayford*, 370. Emphasis added.
18. The calculation appears incorrect, for Lucinda lost a quarter, not a fifth, under these arrangements, if her allowance had been at par before.
19. Heseltine, "Australian Fiction," 214. Kramer, "Martin Boyd," 33 made the same point though not quite so neatly, by saying that Boyd's world "is not the kind of world to which Australians give ready sympathy, though they might secretly wish to enter it themselves."
20. Wilkes, "Achievement of Martin Boyd," 95.
21. Boyd, "Preoccupations," 85, 86.
22. Niall, *Martin Boyd*, 137.

8 A LEAVEN OF VENTURESOME MINDS: LITERARY EXPATRIATES AND AUSTRALIAN CULTURE

1. Phillips, *Australian Tradition*, 105.
2. C. James, *Even As We Speak*, 268.

3. Priestley, *Open House*, 139–40.
4. Millar, ed., *Australian Contribution*. Davie in a paper “Media and Publishing” (itself a suggestively limiting title) discusses Alan Moorehead briefly, but the *one* novelist or poet he mentions is Stead, and then only as a name published by the feminist Virago Press. Elsewhere Gilbert Murray’s translations of Greek plays are mentioned in passing.
5. Hope, “Lost Australian Nightingale,” 162. Hope himself could have been one of the lost, since despite his mediocre degree he was offered some junior academic posts after graduating from Oxford in 1930.
6. C. James, *Snakecharmers*, 9.
7. Phyllis, “In the Looking Glass,” 10.
8. Connolly, “Export,” 174–75.
9. Chisholm, *Men Were My Milestones*, 71–83. During the war Tilly was interned and apparently lost his property; he went to America where he taught phonetics. He died in New Jersey in 1935.
10. Bourke, “Intellectuals for Export,” 106. Heaton left in 1925 and Taylor in 1928. Taylor returned to Sydney in 1951 and died there in 1963.
11. Martin, “‘Pursuing Literature’ in London,” 2.
12. Stephens, “Australian Literature III,” 94, 95.
13. Stephens, “Sweet Uses,” 2. Italics added.
14. Martin, ed., *Oak-bough and Wattle-blossom*, 1. Nothing is known of Rawson or Oldmixon.
15. F. Adams, *Australians*, 83–84.
16. Stephensen, *Foundations*, 123–24.
17. Stephensen, *Kookaburras*, 13.
18. Hughes, “Culture in Australia,” 614, 616. Hughes’s remarks were so intemperate that an archbishop in Queensland threatened to sue him for libel.
19. H. James, *Stories of the Supernatural*, 756–57, 760, 736.
20. C. James, *Even as We Speak*, 259.
21. Blackmur, *Lion and the Honeycomb*, 68.
22. Matters, *Australasians*, 58.
23. Thompson and Macklin, *Man Who Died Twice*, 62–65.
24. “Dr G. E. Morrison,” *Times* [London], July 17, 1900.
25. Nicoll, *English Drama 1900–1930* lists only two plays by Tighe, both performed briefly at the small experimental “Q Theatre” in 1927, plus two collaborations. One, *Open Spaces*, is set in Australia.
26. Tighe, *By the Wayside*, 135.
27. In *Point Counter Point* (1928), another roman à clef where more people appear in thin disguise, Huxley gives recognizable portraits of Stephensen (as a drunken boor) and, more questionably, Jack Lindsay (as suffering from logorrhea). Perhaps Huxley did not know they were Australian at the time of writing. He did meet both men late in 1928 and contributed two sonnets to the third issue of *London Aphrodite* in December. In *Life Rarely Tells* (612–13) Lindsay notes their own appearance in *Point Counter Point* but makes no further comment on it. Also, as described earlier, Huxley’s close friend D. H. Lawrence had quite lengthy commercial dealings with

the young Stephensen in 1928–30 (and, briefly, with Lindsay too), but neither figures in the published Lawrence-Huxley correspondence. Stephensen wrote a kind of review (“Contrapuntals”) of *Point Counter Point* for the *Aphrodite*, praising it with admiring horror.

28. Hawkes, *Quest*, 214.
29. Undated letter to Randolph Hughes. Hughes Papers, Mitchell MSS 671/15.
30. J. Lindsay, *Come Home at Last*, 5–6. In the same year Lindsay wrote loftily to Randolph Hughes on May 29: “The USSR in fighting Civil War, had to shoot a lot of ‘enemies’; but any of their own men who showed any sadistic attitude was also at once shot. You have simply no idea whatever about the Soviet system & its *complete freedom of criticism*.” This was just about eighteen months after Stalin had unleashed the Great Terror against “free critics” and other undesirables of the USSR. Hughes Papers, Mitchell MSS 671/15. Italics added.
31. Quoted by Gillen, ed., *Jack Lindsay*, 179.
32. Letter of May 11, 1938, to Randolph Hughes. Hughes Papers, Mitchell ML MSS 671/17.
33. Gillen, ed., *Jack Lindsay*, 5.
34. J. Lindsay, “Why I am an Expatriate,” 17.
35. Quoted in Arnold, *Fanfrolico Press*, 160.
36. Letter of May 1, 1935, to Randolph Hughes. Hughes Papers, Mitchell MSS 671/15.
37. The essays “Jack Lindsay” (1983); “Jack Lindsay’s Marxism” (1985); “Jack Lindsay’s Biographies of Artists” (1984) are all reprinted in B. Smith, *Death of the Artist*.
38. Buckridge, “Kind of Exile,” 113.
39. J. Lindsay, *Life Rarely Tells*, 489.
40. V. Palmer, *Intimate Portraits*, 47.
41. Richardson, *Letters*, III, 120–21. Letter of July 29, 1935.
42. V. Palmer, “Australians Abroad,” 2.
43. S. Lawson, *Archibald Paradox*, ix.
44. “Writers Take the Offensive,” 7.
45. Quoted by Dutton, *Snow*, 135–36.

9 NO MORE PAP FROM THE TEATS OF LONDON: FROM EXPATRIATION TO TRANSNATIONALISM

1. Heading of a letter of October 28, 1946, to his cousin Peter Lindsay. Mitchell MSS 1969/5.
2. Nigel Starck (Braddon’s biographer), personal communication, June 26, 2008.
3. After leaving in 1947 Cusack lived in Peking and visited countries of Eastern Europe. She returned to Australia in 1962. Clift and Johnston lived in Greece but returned in 1964.
4. Letter undated (ca.1950) to R. D. Fitzgerald. NLA MS 7334/493.

5. Letter of June 16, 1949, to Peter Lindsay. Mitchell MSS 1969/6 fol 525.
6. Letter undated (ca. 1950) to R. D. Fitzgerald. NLA MS 7334/494.
7. Boyd, "Why I Am an Expatriate," 13.
8. White, "Prodigal Son," 125–27. The "nuzzling" phrase was actually Alister Kershaw's. White picked it up as defining his own feelings of ten years earlier. Neither man refers to Stephens's earlier use of the metaphor.
9. A fictional version of the expatriated Peter Finch appears in George Johnston's novel *Clean Straw for Nothing* (1969).
10. Kershaw, *Pleasure*, 45.
11. Moorehead, "Where Shall John Go?," 139–43.
12. Adey, "Impressions," 142, 144.
13. Sladen, *Fair Inez*, x, ix.
14. A. H. Adams, "Victoria Street, S.W." in *London Streets*, 43–44.
15. A. H. Adams, *Australians*, 241.
16. Bevan, ed. *Sunburnt Country*, 241, 135. The minor contributors about whom some information is discoverable include: Mary Elwyn Patchett (1897–1989), a children's author (she left in 1931); Colin Wills (b. 1906), poet and radio journalist (left 1939); Ian Grey (1918–1996), historian of Russia; Judy Fallon, who left about 1950 and eventually committed suicide in London; Chester Wilmot (1911–54), war correspondent; Dal Stevens (1911–97), journalist, novelist, and painter who returned to Australia in 1950; J. H. Fingleton (1908–81), cricketer; and Alan Wood (1914–57), author and lecturer.
17. L. C., "Australia To-Day," 10.
18. Moorehead, "Where Shall John Go?," 135.
19. Pocock, *Moorehead*, 256.
20. Hetherington, *Forty-Two Faces*, 119. Hughes, quoted in De Groen, ed. *Some Other Dream*, 134–35.
21. A phrase due to Hospital, "Expatriation," 39.
22. Kershaw, "Last Expatriate," 146.
23. P. Conrad, "The Last Expat," 4.
24. Delingpole, *Thinly Disguised Autobiography*, 74.
25. Porter, "Expatriate's Reaction," 44. Emphasis added.
26. B. Smith, *Death of the Hero*, 218.
27. Hope, *Native Companions*, 89.

CONCLUSION: A PADDED CELL IN WAGGA WAGGA

1. Koch, *Crossing the Gap*, 102.
2. Dessaix, *Speaking Their Minds*, 51.
3. Moorehead, "Where Shall John Go?," 142.
4. H. Lawson, "'Pursuing Literature,'" 2. That Lawson's prescription was taken less than seriously at the *Bulletin* is suggested by the slightly mocking editorial heading, probably by Stephens: "Henry Lawson unburdens his soul."

5. Arnold, "Australian Books," 10.13.
6. J. Lindsay, "Alienated Australian Intellectual," 55.
7. Wilkes, *Stockyard*, 99.
8. An anecdote of Robert Hughes's, quoted in Packer, *No Return Ticket*, 20.
9. Alomes, *When London Calls*, 4.
10. Pringle, "Her Privates We," 121–22. In fact, far from being "disowned," Manning has entries in *ODNB*, *ADB*, and *Austlit*, and these, along with his two biographies, all give full weight to his Australian origins.
11. Quoted from <http://adb.anu.edu.au/frequently-asked-questions#determines>.
12. Quoted from <http://www.austlit.edu.au.ezproxy.flinders.edu.au/about/scope-policy>.
13. Baird, *Hodgson*, 286.
14. Porter, "Australian Expatriate Writers in Britain," asserts that Murray "ventured from South Australia to become the most distinguished professor of Greek of his time" (136). Murray had no connection with that State, and "ventured" is an odd verb to use of a boy of eleven being taken to school in England by his mother.
15. Schafer, "Tale of Two Australians," 122. Murray's case for being regarded as an "Australian" scholar/dramatist was, in fact, queried long ago by bibliographers. See Miller, *Australian Literature* (1940), 12.
16. Schafer, "Tale of Two Australians," 119.
17. Stawell, *My Recollections*, 192.
18. Crystal, ed. *Partridge* (1980).
19. "Evadne Price" [obituary], *Times* [London], April 19, 1985, 14; Foster, ed. *Self Portraits*, 108–9; Acton, "Price, Evadne." Price will have no entry in the forthcoming volume of the *ADB*, presumably because she does not yet meet the date criterion.
20. Lynch also wrote a column for the *Evening News* called "The Seamy Side." The article on him in the *ODNB* by David Fitzpatrick is a barbed masterpiece.
21. Field, "Wild Colonial Girl," 4.
22. Greer, *Slipshod Sibyls*, 414–17.
23. Loch suffered a head injury in a fall before completing the book. See the excellent biography of the Lochs by De Vries, *Blue Ribbons Bitter Bread*.
24. See Pesman, "Gentile, Doris." Gentile was born Doris Dinham and published three novels in the 1930s under the name of Manners-Sutton. Ian Moffitt interviewed her two children (*Australian*, October 13, 1973, 15) without clarifying matters very much.
25. Bedford, *Explorations*, 232.
26. Tabori, *Anatomy of Exile*, 205.
27. Stead, "Another View," 519.
28. Modjeska, *Exiles*, 156.
29. C. James, *Even as We Speak*, 262.

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Endnotes in the text give author, short title, and page numbers. Full details of all references may be found here. Other details of publication, where necessary, are in square brackets. Place of publication is omitted for a university press. Anonymous items are listed by title. This bibliography is abbreviated. A fuller bibliography is maintained online.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADB: *Australian Dictionary of Biography Online.*

ODNB: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online.*

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