ABSTRACT

This study, the first comparative examination of Australian and New Zealand literature, investigates the idea of nationalism in the nineteenth-century creative writing of both countries. The four Parts of the discussion consider the main preoccupations of literary nationalism, its central issue, its most important instrument, and some of its results.

From the very beginnings of their literatures, Part I demonstrates, Australian and New Zealand authors were preoccupied with problems of identifying their new environments. Some of the principal directions of the search for a national literature are traced in the earliest slim volumes and ephemeral periodicals of the two countries.

Part II focuses directly on the 1890s, the period in which literary nationalism in Australia and New Zealand became most sharply defined. In Australia, the 'nineties saw a crucial debate, hitherto unexamined, which began as a challenge to the historic preoccupations of Australian literary nationalism. As a result of this debate, both literary nationalism and Australian literature itself were irrevocably altered. Literary
nationalists in New Zealand conducted their own dialogue of the 'nineties, a continuation of their earlier concerns, but crystallised by the Australian debate and the literary policies of the newspaper in which it appeared: the Sydney Bulletin. Thus Australia emerged during the 'nineties as one of the major parties in New Zealand's literary dialogue.

In Part III the relationship between literary nationalism and the Bulletin is examined. Following an analysis of the paper's role as a publisher of Australian literature, together with its special understanding of literary nationalism and the authority of its literary editors, the Australian verse and short fiction actually printed in the Bulletin are related to commonly accepted views of the paper as an instrument for fostering Australian literary nationalism. By the 1890s, moreover, the Bulletin was the most influential literary periodical circulating in New Zealand, and the paper's effect on literary nationalism in New Zealand is considered.

Part IV is concerned with the apparent coalescence of history and literature into myth to form a national "identity". After an investigation of the function of Australian literary nationalism -- and particularly of the Bulletin -- in this process, the comparable situation in New Zealand is examined, when the possibility of federation with Australia faced literary nationalists with the question of whether a New Zealand "identity"
had emerged from her literature at all. The study concludes with some reflections on the differences between literary nationalism in Australia and New Zealand as they revealed themselves by the end of the nineteenth century.
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Aspects of
LITERARY NATIONALISM IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND
with Special Reference to the Bulletin, 1880-1900

by
BRUCE NESBITT

Volume I

All my own original work

Being a thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in the Australian National University

Canberra

1968
All my own original work

[Signature]

28 February 1965
PREFACE

The study of which this thesis is the principal result was made possible by an award under the British Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan. As a Canadian, I am conscious throughout of a speech by a former president of the Language Association of America, in which he defined an "expert" as "a damned fool a thousand miles from home". And yet perhaps it is symptomatic of what A.R.D. Fairburn once called the "fog over the Tasman" that a Canadian should attempt the first comparative study of the literature of the two countries. "Looking at the state of cultural relations between Australia and New Zealand", Fairburn noted in 1947, "I can't help thinking of two shipwrecked Englishmen who lived together for years on a desert island without speaking, because they hadn't been introduced." While my investigation is scarcely
The study of which this thesis is the principal result was made possible by an award under the British Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan. As a Canadian, I am conscious throughout of a speech by a former president of the Modern Language Association of America, in which he defined an "expert" as "a damned fool a thousand miles from home". And yet perhaps it is symptomatic of what A.R.D. Fairburn once called the "fog over the Tasman" that a Canadian should attempt the first comparative study of the literature of the two countries. "Looking at the state of cultural relations between Australia and New Zealand", Fairburn noted in 1947, "I can't help thinking of two shipwrecked Englishmen who lived together for years on a desert island without speaking, because they hadn't been introduced." While my investigation is scarcely
intended to provide a letter of introduction, it does attempt to examine some of the literary conditions of the fog. For that "fog over the Tasman" originated in the nineteenth century, when no New Zealander could have spoken as Fairburn did in the twentieth.

I am indebted to numerous libraries in Australia and New Zealand for their help, and especially the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, for extraordinary assistance during two extended periods of research in New Zealand; to many scholars and (as it turned out) friends in both countries, for their hospitality; to T. Inglis Moore, O.B.E. for his welcome encouragement during my first explorations; and to G.K.W. Johnston for his invaluable guidance. What follows belongs only to my wife, to whom it is dedicated.
The colonial is a stranger in a new environment. His surroundings are new: they symbolise his actions, like the borders of Eden for Adam. He is a new man: for good or evil his actions have located him in a new place. And so he feels compelled to define his environment and himself, to reconcile act and symbol by asking "Where am I?" and "Who am I?"

This study is principally concerned with the first question, "Where am I?", as it was answered by poets and novelists in two different colonial societies in the nineteenth century. Most authors in Australia and New Zealand believed that new nations and national literatures must develop within their two new worlds. For some of them, literary nationalism discovered something not far from A.M. Klein's portrait of the "Poet as Landscape", who was found some place in a narrow closet, like a corpse in a detective story, standing, his eyes staring, and ready to fall on his face.
But others managed to capture for a moment that same poet's "single camera view upon this earth":

its total scope, and each afflated tick, its talk, its trick, its tracklessness -- and this, this he would like to write down in a book!

The four Parts of my discussion consider the main preoccupations of literary nationalism, its central issue, its most important instrument, and some of its results.

From the very beginnings of their literatures, as Part I demonstrates, Australians and New Zealanders were preoccupied with problems of identification. Some of the principal directions of the Australian search for a national literature, as chapter 1 suggests, were as well-established in the ephemeral periodicals and slim volumes of the 1820s, 'thirties and 'forties -- which have received comparatively little notice from literary and cultural historians -- as in the later and better-known work of men like Harpur and Kendall. The early literature of New Zealand, considered in chapter 2, has fared little better than that of Australia, particularly in the absence of comprehensive literary bibliographies; before this study could begin, in fact,
it was necessary for me to compile the first checklist of New Zealand verse of the period, *New Zealand Poetry: a Preliminary Checklist to 1914*.  

**Part II** focuses directly on the 1890s, the period in which literary nationalism in Australia and New Zealand became most sharply defined. In Australia, the 'nineties saw a crucial debate, hitherto unexamined, which began as a challenge to the historic preoccupations of Australian literary nationalism. As a result of this debate (the subject of chapter 3), both literary nationalism and Australian literature itself were irrevocably altered. Literary nationalists in New Zealand conducted their own dialogue in the 'nineties; this dialogue (treated in chapter 4) was a continuation of their earlier concerns, but crystallised by the Australian debate and the literary policies of the paper in which it appeared: the Sydney *Bulletin*. Thus Australia emerged during the 'nineties as one of the major parties in New Zealand's literary dialogue.

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1 Wellington: National Library Service, 1965 (processed). A revised and expanded version is being prepared for publication. See bibliographical note to my Bibliography below.
In Part III the relationship between literary nationalism and the *Bulletin* itself is examined. Despite references to a "Bulletin school" or "tradition" in Australian literary criticism, few commentators appear to have read with any thoroughness the paper's files of the 'eighties and 'nineties. Chapter 5 analyses the *Bulletin*'s role as a publisher of Australian literature, its special understanding of literary nationalism, and the authority of its literary editors. In two further chapters I consider the Australian verse (chapter 6) and short fiction (chapter 7) actually printed in the *Bulletin*, relating it to commonly accepted views of the paper as an instrument for fostering Australian literary nationalism.

By the 1890s, moreover, the *Bulletin* was the most influential literary periodical circulating in New Zealand; I discuss in chapter 8 the paper's effect on literary nationalism in the country it habitually called "Maoriland".

Part IV is concerned with the apparent coalescence of history and literature into myth to form a national "identity". Chapter 9 investigates the function of Australian literary nationalism -- and particularly of
the Bulletin -- in this process. Chapter 10 then considers the comparable situation in New Zealand, where the possibility of federation with Australia faced literary nationalists with the question of whether or not a New Zealand "identity" had emerged from her literature at all. In chapter 11 I present some concluding reflections on the differences between literary nationalism in Australia and New Zealand as they revealed themselves by the end of the nineteenth century.

My concern has not been to write a critical history of literature in Australia and New Zealand, nor have I compiled an index in prose of every "indigenous" or "national" literary allusion in the several thousand volumes of verse, prose fiction, and drama written in the two countries. Neither a purely critical nor a simply bibliographical approach enables us to appreciate the exact role of literary nationalism in Australia and New Zealand during the nineteenth century, especially in its last two decades. My concern has rather been to investigate the idea of nationalism in literature at a time when it was undeniably important but misunderstood.
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How funny it'll seem to come right out among the people that walk with their heads downwards! The Antipathies, I think... but I shall have to ask them what the name of the country is, you know. Please, Ma'am, is this New Zealand or Australia?

-- Alice in Wonderland
April 1790 was a gloomy month for the garrison at Sydney Cove. March had been very wet, the colony's few gardens were producing indifferent crops, and on the fifth of April Governor Phillip learned that one of the settlement's two ships, the *Sirius*, had been wrecked off Norfolk Island. Rations were cut by more than half, and the tender ship *Supply* had to be made ready to sail to Batavia for desperately-needed provisions. With the *Supply* went a letter from a demoralized officer, who lamented to his patron that "the country, my Lord, is past all dispute a wretched one, a very wretched, and totally incapable of yielding to

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1 *La Peyrouse, Poème... par XXX* (Paris, 1827), pp. 20, 21.
Great Britain a return for colonizing it."^2

Nearly three years earlier this unknown
officer had sailed with the first fleet for Botany
Bay; the colony had heard nothing from England since.
The Bastille fell nine months before the *Supply* left
for Batavia, and as he was writing, Edmund Burke was
preparing *Reflections on the Revolution in France* for
publication in London. Had the officer been in London,
he might have noticed a copy of William Blake's
*Marriage of Heaven and Hell* in the bookshop of Joseph
Johnson; his interest would more likely have been
captured by a street-singer hawking broadsides of "Botany
Bay, a New Song":

> Let us Drink a good health to our schemers above,
> who at length have contriv'd from this land to
> remove
> Thieves, robbers and villains, they'll send 'em
> away,
> To become a new people at Botany Bay.\(^3\)

As it was, he found himself not in the vanguard of "a
new people", but mounting guard (as the song had it)

\(^2\)Quoted in John Cobley, *Sydney Cove 1789-1790*  
(Sydney, 1963), p. 187. The letter was published in
England in the *Oracle* on 25 April 1791.

\(^3\)Sources of exceptional scarcity are hereafter
cited by their entry number and date in Sir John Ferguson's
*Bibliography of Australia* (Sydney, 1941-) as, in the case
of this broadsheet: Ferguson 77 for *ca.* 1790. A heavily
edited transcription of the song appears in Hugh Anderson's
*Colonial Ballads* (Melbourne, 1962) at pp. 7-8.
over "whores, pimps, & bastards".

i. The New People

"A new people": although no race of noble savages had been discovered by the end of the eighteenth century, the possibility of recreating a new Eden of social justice still tantalized philosophical radicals. As Robert Southey wrote from his rooms in Oxford, Captain Cook claimed for England not only "all the perils of a world unknown", but the very "realm of Nature!"  

If Australia was not the playground of that Swiftian "perfection of nature", the Houyhnhnm of Gulliver's Travels, then it must at least provide a new Juan Fernández for later Robinson Crusoes. Southey saw in Australia a balance between the two, where:

as yet unknown
The crimes and comforts of luxurious life,
Nature benignly gives to all, enough,
Denies to all a superfluity.  

4 "Botany Bay Eclogues" in Poems (London, 1797), pp. 80, 81. Later editions date the verses as "Oxford, 1794". At this time Southey had just met Coleridge; their Godwinian "Pantisocracy", however, was projected towards Pennsylvania and the banks of the Susquehanna instead of Botany Bay. See also Bernard Smith, European Vision and the South Pacific 1768-1850 (Oxford, 1960), passim.

5 Ibid., p. 81.
In such an atmosphere, Thomas Campbell suggested with similar ignorance four decades later, the Arts would "all spontaneous rise", and Australia would have her own minstrels imbued with "native fire", singing in distinctive accents which caught "th' Ionian blandness" of her climate.  

In Australia itself, faith in the power of "native fire" to define a new people was equally firm. "National poetry", a contributor to the Sydney Gazette wrote in 1827, "is in itself an object of curiosity. It always presents human nature modified by circumstances, and under an aspect in some respect new." How

---

6"Lines on the Departure of Emigrants for New South Wales", Poetical Works (London, 1837), p. 245. In the notes to his poem Campbell cited Peter Cunningham's Two Years in New South Wales (London, 1827) as the source of his information on Australia.  

7 The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser [hereafter cited as "Gazette"], 29 October 1827, p. 4. Government notices, the first publications printed in Australia, appeared in November 1795 from a press carried out with the first fleet. Governor King authorized George Howe ("an ingenious man, who manages the Government printing press") to publish this first Australian newspaper in 1803; the first weekly issue appeared on 5 March. After Howe's death in 1821 his son Robert edited the Gazette until his own death in 1829. Publication continued under various editors until 1842; the last known issue is dated 20 October. See Ferguson 383 for 1803 and especially J.A. Ferguson, A.G. Foster, and H.M. Green, The Howes and Their Press (Sydney, 1936).
literature expressed the modification of "human nature" in Australia, however, was a question that remained to be settled long after Australian writers could confidently look back on their own, "Australian", literature.

Colonial bards and "native minstrels" lacked no encouragement in their efforts to discover images and themes that would capture Australia in the minds of their fellow countrymen. The Gazette not only disapproved of the "imitations" of English and Scottish styles in Charles Tompson's volume of verse - the first collection to be published by a native-born Australian - but also suggested gently that Tompson should consider "the propriety of letting his similies and metaphors be purely Australian":

He will soon find his account in doing so, as they will infallibly possess all the freshness of originality. In this respect he has a decided advantage over all the European poets, because here nature has an entirely different aspect. Let him select from the treasures by which he is surrounded -- let nature be his exclusive study -- and Australia will have it in her power to boast of the productions of her bard.  

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Ibid., 1 November 1826, p. 3. The reviewer noted that Tompson's "Mira, the Flower of the Vale" was "nearly a transcript of Tannahill's 'Jessie, the flower o' Dumblane'".
The new society of convicts, jailors, and free immigrants was small, but it took its literature seriously. Fifteen years after settlement began, the colony of New South Wales contained less than 7200 souls. Even fifty years later, when the last load of convicts arrived in Eastern Australia in 1853, the population of what had become five colonies reached only 600,000. And as early as 1804, when Australian literature consisted of barely two dozen poems published in George Howe's newly-founded *Sydney Gazette*, Howe was already predicting confidently that "the season rapidly approaches when the native genius of our soil shall undergo probation":

> seminaries rise in distant quarters, all which unite with one accord to give the polish to the infant mind, to ornament it with the sublime and graceful tints of literary knowledge, and to adapt it to the busy scene of chearful commerce and the smiling arts which prepare to animate the stage of their nativity. That the flame of virtuous emulation may be kindled by the torch of Reason, and the youthful principle be formed upon the inviolable basis of integrity, let us not supinely hope, but actively exert ourselves in the promotion of the genuine object.\(^9\)

\(^9\)Ibid., 26 August 1804, p. 3.
The native genius of Australia certainly needed active promotion from the Gazette, for it had little from the Government of the colony. As late as 1829 Henry Savery, author of the first novel to be printed in Australia, was forced to issue his Hermit in Van Diemen's Land anonymously; publication was a punishable offence for Savery, a convict on ticket-of-leave.\textsuperscript{10} And when William Charles Wentworth anonymously circulated a "pipe" satirizing the commanding officer of the 46th Regiment in Sydney, the Regiment's officers advertised a reward of two hundred pounds for the author's apprehension. The Governor matched their reward by offering a free and unconditional pardon to any prisoner who would reveal of discovery, as he wrote to Alexander Riley on 29 January 1830.\footnote{Mitchell Library, MS note to the first volume of a copy of Quintus Servinton (Hobart, 1830). Part of the note - which is tentatively identified as being in the hand of James Bonwick - is reprinted in Ferguson 1589 for 1832. See also Cecil Hadgraft's "Biographical Introduction" to his edition of Quintus Servinton (Brisbane, 1962).}
the identity of the author. Wentworth prudently left for Cambridge, where his poem on "Australasia" took second place (after Winthrop Mackworth Praed's) for the Chancellor's Medal.  

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11 Gazette, 2 March 1816 and 16 March 1816. The gravity of the offence of circulating "pipes" can be too easily overlooked; Governor King considered four pipes libelling him to be seditious, and the resulting courts-martial nearly precipitated a rebellion among the officer corps of New South Wales. (Historical Records of Australia, ser. 1, IV [1803-June 1804], 159 ff. and especially 167-171) Evidence on pipes was taken during Commissioner Bigge's inquiry into the state of the colony (September 1819 to February 1821); see, for example, the Appendix to Bigge's Report (Mitchell Library, Bonwick Transcript Box 16, p. 1948). See also J.V. Byrnes, "William Charles Wentworth and the Continuity of Australian Literature", Australian Letters, V, 3 (April 1963), 10 - 18.

12 Wentworth was certainly aware of the dangers of discovery; as he wrote to Alexander Riley on 25 August 1818, "when I was on the point of leaving the Colony, the two friends, who knew I was the author of the pipe against Col. Molle (my Brother was one, but I do not conceive myself at liberty to name the other) recommended me to write another, and to leave it with them for distribution, after my departure; in order that it might serve as a cloak to cover me and them from any suspicions, that might arise, with respect to the probability of my having been the author of this production." (Mitchell Library, Wentworth Papers, Letters from William Charles Wentworth, ff. 101-2). Copies of the Molle pipe, and later ones, are to be found in the Wentworth Papers. In a letter to his father on 18 March 1823 Wentworth revealed one of his motives for writing "Australasia": "If my success corresponds with my anticipations... I shall have distinguished myself here in a month: which John McArthur [sic] could not contrive to do, during the four years he resided here." (Ibid., f. 215d.)
Compliance with military law, on the other hand, could bring clear benefits to the willing author. Michael Massey Robinson ("than whom no more artful and litigious character does not exist in any part of the world", Governor King confided to his notes 13) advanced his emancipation by writing fulsome Odes on appropriately Public Occasions. 14 They strike a later reader as so fulsome, in fact, that several of them were undoubtedly satirical. Nevertheless Governor Lachlan Macquarie was sufficiently impressed in 1818 to issue Robinson "Two cows from the Govt. Herds, as a Gift, & Compensation from Government, for his Services as the Poet Laureate of the Colony." 15


14Robinson's "Ode on His Majesty's Birthday, 1810", reprinted in that year, was the first verse written in Australia to be published separately in the colony. George Mackaness' Odes of Michael Massey Robinson: First Poet Laureate of Australia (Sydney, 1946) discusses the history of the Odes and Robinson's occasional verse, and includes transcriptions of their texts. Ferguson lists those separately published at entry 506 for 1810; 525, 526 and 527 for 1811; 547 and 548 for 1812; 567 and 568 for 1813; 589 and 590 for 1814; 624 and 625 for 1815; 666 and 667 for 1816; 694 and 695 for 1817; 726 and 727 for 1818; 765 and 766 for 1819; and 798 for 1820.

15Mitchell Library, Macquarie Papers, "The Governor's Diary & Memorandum Book" [from 10 April 1816 to 1 July 1818], 31 January 1818, f. 138. Macquarie repeated his gift on 28 January 1819.
Colonial neo-classicists were thoroughly familiar with the Rules through which true literary freedom should be sought. In New South Wales the only rules that mattered were those of military law. Until 1824 all publications were subject to the Government's censorship, and Howe's Gazette was the only outlet on mainland Australia for any "native genius" in literature. Despite censorship, Howe's Government Press was a lively sponsor of Australian writing. The press itself was used to reprint Robinson's Odes and to print Barron Field's First Fruits of Australian Poetry (1819), while the Gazette's columns were open to the first nineteenth-century discussions about the values of literature in Australia. The Gazette's masthead proclaimed the brave motto "Thus We Hope To Prosper", but Howe had stated his aims more accurately in Van Diemen's Land -- the colony's name was changed to "Tasmania" in 1856 -- the Derwent Star and Van Diemen's Land Intelligencer appeared briefly in 1810, when the total non-Aboriginal population of the island was 1321. It was revived in 1812 with a composite issue for 20 November 1811 to 7 February 1812. Only one issue of each is known; see Ferguson 494 for 1810 and 535 for 1812. The Van Diemen's Land Gazette and General Advertiser appeared at roughly fortnightly intervals for nine issues during 1814; see Ferguson 596 for 1814. For later Tasmanian papers see E. Morris Miller, Pressmen and Governors: Australian Editors and Writers in Early Tasmania (Sydney, 1952).
in his Prospectus: "to reclaim an Order of Society".\textsuperscript{17}

A society that was not only fallen, but was seen to be fallen provided an awkward subject for Australia's early versifiers. Hope, it would appear, was all there was for the country, but even that was difficult, wrote a poet whose ears were constantly "shocked with blasphemy to God":

\begin{quote}
when on fam'd, on lov'd Britannia's shore,
Hope whispered "sorrow ye shall taste no more;"
But ah! how oft hast thou deceived me, Hope!\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

Australia, certainly, could be celebrated for her peacefulness, or at least absence of wars; as one "Song" appropriately set "To the Tune of Rule Britannia" put it:

\begin{quote}
While Europe's Pow'rs in conflict dire
Exhaust the Flower of the brave,
Here peace shall flourish, shall flourish -- none conspire,
With human blood thy soil to lave.
\end{quote}

The rousing chorus, however, implied that the country had a long way to come:

\begin{quote}
Rise, Australia! with peace and plenty crown'd
Thy name shall one day be renown'd.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17}The Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, holds the only known copy of Howe's "Prospectus" for the Gazette.

\textsuperscript{18}Gazette, 25 September 1808, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., 1 February 1818, p. 3.
In post-lapsarian Australia, Hope was Memory's extension, not its opposite.

For those early nineteenth-century authors who chose to explore Australia's moral geography, the central feature of the country was that it was fallen, and its dominating landmark, the convict. References to "this land of crime" became so common by 1824 that "Lorenzo" referred to it as a platitude in his verses "To Miss ++++++ on her arrival in New South Wales":

The Sons of Australia's Clime
Shall soon redeem their Country's shame;
No more the penal "Land of Crime;"
But Nurse of Science, Truth, and Fame. 20

Yet even in his trite expressions of devotion, "Lorenzo" felt obliged to compare the "Freedom" of England with the condition of New South Wales ("Here, Slavery spreads her sombre wing"), and to note that his friend's charms were bountiful enough to "forge new fetters, and to steal!"

20 Ibid., 29 April 1824, p. 3. As an example of the "land of crime" in verse, a "Sonnet" written in Sydney by "Scotus" is representative:

Australia! I have thought of thee,
When far beyon myon troubled sea;
In a distant and a colder clime,
I have wistfully thought of this land of crime!...

(ibid., 12 June 1823, p. 4).
The chains of convictism appeared with almost indecent frequency in the first sixty years of Australia's literature, and on the most incongruous occasions. One versifier humorously celebrated the inauguration of the new Sydney Bank in 1826 not with the chiming of bells, but by the rattling and clanking of pokers, tongs, "and chains". And New Year's morning in Tasmania for another author was a time when "British ideas of a New Year's Day pastime are completely superseded by a converse locality":

21Ibid., 1 March 1826, p. 3. Perhaps compositors should be allowed a slip of the stick to pass unnoticed, but not at the risk of losing such a delightfully prison-oriented mis-set as one in "The Exile's Last Farewell":

When the time-stricken Trunk all its honour has shed, 
  There the scion of freedom shall flourish and spread;
  As born to new vigour shall spring the free soul.
While industry points to ambition the gaol [sic].

("Extract of an original poem entitled "Auld Lang Syne" addressed by an English borderer to a Highland laddie, in Van Diemen's Land", Hobart Town Courier, 22 December 1827, p. 3.")
No cloud pollutes the sky;
But white with bloom is ev'ry thorn,
And orange-bright the mellow corn,

Yes New Year's morn -- sweet New Year's morn,
The Exile views thee gild his chains.22

Australia conceived in sin soon became a literary cliché, but the idea was no less potent for being the overwhelming concern of numerous "national apostrophes". For poets who had never visited Australia, even more, it was an ideally "poetic" topic. To Thomas Kibble Hervey, the Aboriginals themselves shared in the Fall. Earlier poets considered these children of nature as mere victims of nature's unguided judgement; Hervey represented them as weighed down with their own "curse of crime".23

22"Original Stanzas", *The Tasmanian Almanack for 1825* (Hobart, 1825), p. 8. The poem concluded somewhat ambiguously:

Come then, O come, sweet infant morn,
Pregnant with happiness for those
Whose fleece of fortune Fate has shorn.
And whom the blust'ring winds have borne,
Where Tasman's water flows!

23"Australia", *Australia; with Other Poems* (London, 1824), p. 26. The Gazette reprinted extracts from the poem on 3 February 1825, including Hervey's hopes that Australia's Aboriginals could regain "the images which hope has left behind". Hervey later became editor of the *Athenaeum.*
The other side of Hervey's vision of hell, inevitably, was his celebration of Australia's potential. As he explained in the preface to his poems, he came to "look upon Australasia in the east - like America in the west - as upon a young and promising nation; giving, in the vigour of its youth, the pledge of a glorious maturity". Australia was "destined to act a mightly part upon the theatre of this world; and to perpetuate the memory of its ancestral isle, when it shall lie a ruin upon the waters."  

For new arrivals, such as the Rev. John Dunmore Lang, Australia was very much a "guilty land", although Lang's professional interest virtually dictated that he should see it as guilty.  

And Henry Parkes, later

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24 Ibid., p. xxi.

25 "Hymn on Embarking for New South Wales", *Aurora Australis; or Specimens of Sacred Poetry, for the Colonists of Australia* (Sydney, 1826), p. 26. He repeated the phrase in "David's Pride and Penitence" (p. 143), in which he ascribed "an Epidemic Catarrh" in Sydney during 1826 to "righteous Heaven's command". Lang's early views of Australia - in contrast to his later, more radical political opinions - may be gathered from the "Prospectus" of his *Australian Magazine*, the first magazine published in the country: "Its uniform design and tendency shall be to instruct [the Reader] 'to fear God, and honor the King, and meddle not with those who are given to change.'" (Gazette, 26 November 1827, p. 4.)
to become Premier of New South Wales, first saw his adopted colony as a "wilderness of woes". Lang, like Hervey, celebrated "Australia! land of hope!" in a predictable "Australian Anthem". Far more significant, however, was the "Australian Anthem" of Lancelot Edward Threlkeld, who was a well-established resident of Australia by 1850. Sung to the tune of "Rule Britannia", his anthem recited the woes of Australia, "doomed...to infamy" by Britain's "band of outcasts", while Britain's "crimsoned cheek / Blushed for her sons". Perhaps depressed by the

27 "My Native Land", ibid., p. 113.
28 "Sonnet", ibid., p. 131.
29 Aurora Australis, pp. 147-9.
30 This broadsheet, entered in Ferguson on the authority of a Maggs Bros. catalogue for "1850" at 5547 for 1850, is noted as "not seen". One presumably unique copy is now held by the Mitchell Library. Threlkeld, one of Australia's first linguistic anthropologists, appealed in the Gazette for translations of his phonetic transcriptions of Australian Aboriginal songs ("from any classical Gentlemen") as early as 5 January 1826.
state of the Australian colonies after six decades of settlement, Threlkeld saw Australia "Rise!" not by the earned virtue of her inhabitants, but by God's mysterious grace. However unsatisfactory a solution this may have been politically, poetically it was a highly ingenious answer to the most troublesome question bothering Australian literary nationalists. Thereafter, with only a few determined exceptions:

Triumphant rose Australia's fame,
Like morning cloud, her misery,
Passed from the scene of guilt and shame.  

ii. The New Land

From the very beginnings of literature in Australia the corollary of the Fall was regeneration. Hell by definition postulated a heaven, and it was with both

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31 Ibid. When Charles Tompson wrote of Liberty's bidding "the Negro spurn his galling chain", and how "it is a charm instructive, and which dwells / In all", perhaps it is no accident that he later emended his verse to read that "it is a charm intuitive" (Mitchell Library, "Retrospect; or, a Review of My Scholastic Days" in an author's corrected copy of Wild Notes from the Lyre of a Native Minstrel [Sydney, 1826], p. 5).
in mind that Australians continued the search for an image of salvation and identity. As for the convict:

Here, by adversity severely taught,
And rigid discipline, he studies virtue,
And if he lives, returns a character—
Regenerated! to bless his children.32

The irony of "if he lives" might have escaped "T.K." as he wrote his verses on board H.M.S. Fly in 1826, but his reference to the convicts' children was telling. Once the sins of the fathers had been expatiated, Australia's future apparently lay in the "perseverance" of her children, perseverance which

soon might change the scene
From natural uncultivated rudeness,
To bloom a smiling paradise of sweets.33

Perhaps a race of innocent Australian Adams would emerge, if only an image of the original Garden could be discovered.

For some versifiers, (more frequently living in Van Diemen's Land than New South Wales), Australia's natural beauties already furnished that "smiling paradise". The "splendour that fair Nature gives/ Of

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32 "Australia; or, the Exile", Gazette, 9 September 1826, p. 4.

33 Ibid.
light and beauty", one author suggested, might at least burst the "soul-chains" of Australians and stimulate "bright golden dreams of happier hours to come".34 And thus, "Frances" noted rather smugly, does Van Diemen's Land "make their last / Bright thoughts atone for all the sinful past".35

Other poets, such as "I.R.M.", were less certain, although they too offered Nature as a compensation for Sin:

Land of the exile -- tomb of living crime,
Awful to view -- yet lovely and sublime;
Sweet Australasian haven of the wreckt,
With every charm and every beauty deckt.36

The search for the "sublime" in Australia had actually begun in 1804, when Mr. Grant asked with fine neo-

34 "Van Diemen's Land", The Van Diemen's Land Annual for 1834 (Hobart, 1834), p. [iii]. "Frances", the author, is probably Francis Allison: see my forthcoming note on "Early Australian Poetry and its Bibliographers" in Australian Literary Studies. A typographical error in the Annual dates the poem "1883" instead of 1833.


36 Gazette, 29 July 1824, p. 4.
classical rhetoric:

NATURE! Where dwells in these Australian lands
Thy faithful Copyist? Whose art expands
Thy novel beauties o'er our ancient Globe?
Who to far distant Climes thy Charms derobe? 37

But Australia's curious landscape -- what Grant called
"Nature's thorny way" -- lent itself with difficulty to
the concept of "Nature methodised". The proper study
of mankind, in any case, was Man; behind nearly
every celebration of Australia's landscape for a
century was the first Tree, the preoccupying image
of man's Fall.

"Such is the uniformity of the climate and
scenery of New Holland", a contributor to The South-
Asian Register suggested in April 1828, "that we are
disposed to imagine, the manners of the people will
hereafter, assume a correspondent tameness and feeble-
ess of character: that they will have but little or

37 Panegyric on an Eminent Artist, Parramatta,
New South Wales, 1804 (London, [1804?]). The "artist"
was John William Lewin, in the Mitchell Library's copy
of whose Birds of New South Wales the only known copy
of this broadsheet is bound: see Ferguson 392a at
1804. The broadsheet's twenty-four lines are possibly
the earliest separately-published verse to have been
written in Australia.
no poetry, and consequently no impulse to rise in the scale of morals." While the assumptions behind his complaint are those of John Dunmore Lang -- that poetry, however excellent, "is valuable only as it is subservient to the cause of virtue and the progress of truth" -- the author's specific objections to the Australian landscape are still highly instructive.

Because his examples are commonplaces of English neo-classical verse, precisely for that reason their absence in Australia presented a serious challenge to the literary identification of the country:

Here, there is no long summer day, or long winter night; no fall of the leaf; no sudden exuberance of flowers in the spring; no song of birds; no deep continuing twilight; no season of absolute gloom, and rigor, and darkness, to cause the mind to turn inward on its own creations.

There is in Australia, he claimed, only "a medium, a plain level uniformity" (instead of scenery which is "lovely and sublime") and he concluded by predicting

38"New Holland" in vol. I, 3 (April 1828), 199. Only four numbers of the magazine (the second to be established in Australia) were published.

39"Advertisement" to Aurora Australis, pp. [vii]-viii.
that the manners of the people would be tinged too readily by the landscape's "flat, uniform, diminutive, sombre character."\textsuperscript{40}

The major obstacle to literary acceptance of the Australian landscape - however earnestly it may have been desired - was the concept of national sentiment as a historical process. Nationalism is an accretive process, partly aided by the poets of the ages whose works themselves give added meaning to a place. At its simplest level, nationalism can be equated with patriotism, the sentiment prompting an inhabitant of an ugly land to state that "because I live here, it is beautiful". And as the editor of the \textit{Sydney Monitor} noted acidly, "\textit{Patriotism is a good thing; but he that loves it better than truth, is an immoral man."\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{40}"New Holland", \textit{op. cit.}, 199, 200. He also expressed fears for the virtue of native-born Australians; poetry was the inspiration of life's "finest virtues", but "the imagery of English poetry is not understood by our children; nor will it admit of any paraphrase or translation."

\textsuperscript{41}14 July 1828. The paper, which began on 19 May 1826, was known as the \textit{Monitor} until August 1826; it died on 29 December 1841. The subject of the editorial - presumably written by Edward Smith Hall - was a long and biting comparison between Canada and New
The "truth" of New South Wales, if not of all Australia, was seen by the Monitor in its "being a very poor country". If ever it was to "become a great Country, it must be so by its situation, not by its soil and climate." Authors struggling with "this unclassic clime", "this prose-dull land", soon discovered Australia's "situation" in her potential.

South Wales, much to Canada's advantage. ("In no part of the world can the scenery be more insipid and monotonous than in New South Wales .... The trees of this Colony are certainly the most unsightly in the whole world.... Here, the seasons are the most uncertain in the world....")

42 "The Lay of the Bachelor Settler", Headlong Rhymes by a Policeman (Launceston, 1843), p. 14. An earlier edition was published in Hobart in 1840. The author was quick to challenge literary hyperbole; probably referring to the verses on Van Diemen's Land by "Frances" in the Van Diemen's Land Annual (1834), he noted that

None have discerned the broadly flowing streams
And flowery meads enrich'd by purling rills,
Except a poet whose fantastic dreams
Would make a paradise of desert hills. (p. 13)

His "Lay", however, was actually a debate between his views as a settler and those of "an ancient man" he introduced through the conventional dream.

43 Barron Field, "On Reading the Controversy Between Lord Byron and Mr. Bowles", First Fruits of Australian Poetry (2nd ed.; Sydney, 1825), p. 15.
Stated most bluntly by Barron Field, "anticipation is to a young country what antiquity is to an old". Field was equally blunt about the dangers of anticipation. In Australia, instead of "heart-communings with ancestral relics, / Which purge the pride while they exalt the mind":

We've nothing left us but anticipation,
Better (I grant) than utter selfishness,
Yet too o'erweening -- too American;
Where's no past tense; the ign'rant present's all;
Or only great by the All hail, hereafter!

Field accurately predicted what would become one of the dominant strains of sterile literary nationalism well into the twentieth century. In the first four decades of Australian verse the antiquities syndrome usually involved two aspects; first, noting the absence of ruined keeps and abbeys ("What though no stately mansions deck the land..."), and secondly, celebrating Australia's compensating virtues. By the end of the nineteenth century, only the first aspect had been quietly dropped.

44 Headnote to ibid., p. 14.
45 Ibid.
Nevertheless the search for an image of salvation was gradually transferred from man to the landscape, and conquering the "ign'rant present" became the central preoccupation of literary nationalism in Australia. Some authors, of course, chose to ignore Australia, and the columns of Australian literary journals and newspapers were filled with laments of exile and understandable nostalgia for the greener hills of Britain and Europe. Others, as Field predicted, hailed Australia as the Eden of the South on the grounds that she could only progress from her present condition, both moral and topographical. Still others seized delightedly on the Antipodean character of the country, listing Australia's inversions of European botany, zoology, and morals.

One of the few attempts to see in Australia a "classic clime", William Woolls' essay on "The Beauties of Australia", is noteworthy for his attempt to synthesize these various attitudes. His opening comments testify to the strength of the antiquities
syndrome:

It is a remark frequently made by persons who have immigrated to New South Wales, that this colony is not only devoid of any venerable remains of antiquity, but that it is also deficient in those interesting scenes which contribute so much to enliven and dignify the histories of other countries.²⁷

While admitting the strength of this assertion, Woolls hastened to point out that the person of refined taste could understand many Homeric allusions more readily in Australia than in "the cold and ungenial regions of the north"; the "rural pleasures" of Australia, moreover, were well suited to reading the Eclogues and Georgics. Even the locust in Australia would remind "the man of observation" of the cicada, and "the beautiful ode of Anacreon addressed to it". Australia, he concluded, (in phraseology anticipating that of A.G. Stephens by sixty years) "may, indeed,

²⁷ Miscellaneies in Prose and Verse (Sydney, 1838), p. 86. "Syndrome" is used here -- as above and below -- in its literal sense: a complex of signs and symptoms occurring together and characterising an ailment.
be poor in works of art":

but she is rich in those of nature. Instead of splendid piles and victorious triumphs, she can boast of her clear Italian sky, her woolly flocks, her vine and fig; while her stupendous mountains and awful glens are far superior to all the paltry works of human skill. 48

Faith in the powers of Australia's new landscape to generate original literature diminished scarcely at all during the nineteenth century, particularly after the first promptings of Romanticism began to be felt in the 1830s. Appealing to the vanity of Australians ("few themes can be more attractive to a true Colonist, than the prosperity of his adopted country...") , one reviewer noted how the author of "The Wanderer" had captured with "picturesque" images "the glowing colours of reality". In his verses, "the Author indeed seems to excell

48 Ibid., pp. 87, 88.
in description, that great test of a Poet's imagination". \(^{49}\)

While the Author's description of a Cockatoo that clapp'd her snowy wings and flew affrighted at the voice of man no longer claims the same appeal as it apparently had for the reviewer, it was a large step (as he put it) towards adorning the society of Australia. The images of an Australian "reality", rather than the idealized conception of her potential, were slowly beginning to appear. For the most part, however, the review still based his praise on the author's ability to suit "the scenery to the subject of the poem". That is, the author had "exhibited nature under such form as best corresponds with the sentiments he delivers: every image and circumstance tends either to aggrandize or to beautify." \(^{50}\)

\(^{49}\) The Tasmanian, 27 June 1828, p. 4. The review continued for two further issues of the Tasmanian, on 4 and 11 July; E. Morris Miller suggested that its author, "M", may have been H.N. Murray (Pressmen and Governors, p. 236). "The Wanderer" was published in the Colonial Advocate and Tasmanian Monthly Review and Register, I, 3 (May 1828), 140. The Colonial Advocate was suspended in October 1828 after eight monthly issues, because of the "peculiarity" of the publisher's "Situation". Andrew Bent was writing his farewell editorial from a jail cell. See Ferguson 1181 for 1828 and Miller, Pressmen and Governors, passim.

\(^{50}\) Ibid.
As early as 1805 an unknown Australian resident attempted to acclimatize in verse what the Sydney Gazette called the phenomena of "sportive nature"\textsuperscript{51}: the "fleet-footed Wallaba" and the "Kanguroo"\textsuperscript{52}. An admirable attempt to see the kangaroo as a noble hart ("Hoick! hoick! my bold Lurcher! Well led Kanguroo!"), the "Colonial Hunt" is more noteworthy for its author's humorous determination to individualize gum trees, described as sweeping the sky in "stately confusion". Such attempts were rare, and the gum was swiftly accepted as an undistinguished and inevitable fact of the monotonous Australian landscape. Beverley Suttor probably spoke for several generations of Australian versifiers when he described the scenery around Newcastle:

Here's a gum tree, there's his brother,  
Here his sister, and his mother;  
And backward, there are whole plantations  
Of uncles, aunts, and poor relations.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{51} 24 June 1804, p. 3.  
\textsuperscript{52} Gazette, 16 June 1805, p. 4.  
\textsuperscript{53} Trip to Maitland (Sydney, 1841), p. 15.
Similarly the kangaroo, first seized on because of "its form entirely new -- In other climes unknown", soon became merely another item in verse lists of Australia's uniqueness. Barron Field, to be sure, had chosen the kangaroo as a symbol of Australia's post-lapsarian creation, but no Australian critic was prepared to acknowledge the serious purpose behind his verse.

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54 Charles Tompson's translation of *Australia... the Latin Prize Poem of S. Smith, a Student of Hyde Abbey School, Winchester* (Sydney, 1829). The original Latin version of the poem appeared in the *Gazette* on 17 December 1829. See Ferguson 1296 for 1829.

55 Australian critics were outraged by Field's verses: not, one suspects, because they were light-hearted, but because of what Australians considered his condescension and bluntness. The *Gazette*’s reviewer ("nonsense...all the delicate workings of his cockney soul") compared him unfavourably to that consummate doggerelist, Michael Massey Robinson, "a gentleman who has really produced a number of truly poetic pieces" (25 November 1826 p. 3). The *Monitor* published an "Extemporaneous Address" in verse attacking his work ("trash...a dunce") on 6 March 1828 (p. 1021), and managed to include a slighting reference to Field in an article on dishonoured bank notes (19 May, 1826 p. 3). Even a rhyming advertisement castigated him as "pert, shallow, flimsy, unfair" (*Gazette*, 4 August, 1825 p. 3). Field was treated most gently in the *South-Asian Register*, whose reviewer simply noted that if Field’s verses "received 'the approbation of the first poets and critics of our times', we must say, with deference, that 'the poets and critics of our times' have been, on this occasion, a little merry or so." (I, 2 [January 1828], 1261). See also C.M.H. Clark, *A History of Australia* (Melbourne, 1963), I, 328 and n. 38.
Field also celebrated the Australian "fringed Violet" as an example of "the new, the pretty, and the unexpected," but few versifiers could resist the temptation to compare the beauties of the flowers of "northern climes" with the coarser or less brilliantly-coloured productions of Australia. The wattle, later to be the bane of the Sydney Bulletin, had appeared as an Australian trademark by 1828; more usually the botanic beauties of Australia were either praised generally or denied. Even the fruits of the land were in doubt; as William Cotton wrote somewhat desperately,

What though thy woods are void of fruits and bear
No luscious pulp, nor sacch'rine berry sweet
Thy fertile land ere long must yield to toil.

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57 Cotton, Sonnet 2, Journal, p. 44.
58 As, for example, "a mimosa's blossom'd boughs" in the Tasmanian, 1 August 1828.
Richard Howitt, at least, was more honest:

Australian flowers I prize nor scorn;
Let those who in this land were born
Admire them, praise them . . .
I never gathered them, nor knew,
Where I a child to manhood grew;
What have I then with them to do?

iii. "Yet as Thou Art"

Richard Howitt’s question, "What have I then with them to do?", was not a simple repudiation of the search for an Australian "identity". It was, in fact, the same question implied by literary nationalists who merely "all hailed" Australia's potential "hereafter". By celebrating Australia despite themselves -- rather than recognising what the country was and had been -- they dissociated themselves from evolving nationalism as effectively as if they had never lived in Australia.

60 Richard Howitt, "To the Daisy, on Finding One Unexpectedly in Australia, July 30th, 1840", Australia: Historical, Descriptive, and Statistic (London, 1845), p. 173. This volume was apparently reprinted as Impressions of Australia Felix (London, 1845), save for the addition of thirty-two pages of advertisements. In the latter the Athenaeum is cited as praising Howitt for his "fine taste for Nature in all her simplicity....He is healthfully English in his compositions." See also Brian Elliott, The Landscape of Australian Poetry (Melbourne, 1967) for a detailed consideration of the "environmental image" in Australian verse.
The children of Australia, to be sure, might describe their environment more effectively than immigrants and convicts ever could. But even they were preoccupied with the static patriotism of praise, rather than the more complex process of recognition. Few creative writers before the 1890s were prepared to admit the assumptions of "I.R.M.", when he proclaimed that only time could redeem Australia:

Yet as thou art -- the prison-house of crime, Still art thou sweet - the fairest of thy time; And young hope beckons at thy harbour's mouth, Welcome to the -- sweet Eden of the South!61

Hope, that is, may not yet have landed on Sydney's shores, but the scarred heads of her own harbour provided hope's semaphore. Australia had to be accepted on her own terms, as she was, both fair and foul.

The significance of this idea would not be fully realised for another six decades, when Henry Lawson's short stories began appearing in the Sydney Bulletin. Much of the delay, ironically, was due to

61 "Australasia", Gazette, 29 July 1824, p. 4.  "Welcome to the" is clearly a misprint of "Welcome to thee", but the hesitation it suggests is charmingly appropriate to the poem's tone.
the very children who were to inherit the fallen Eden. William Charles Wentworth, proudly calling himself "An Australasian" on the title-page of his poem submitted for the Cambridge Chancellor's Medal in 1823, stoutly maintained that Australia's "early blot" would have to be forgotten, not accepted, before "a freeman's soul" would nerve every Australian arm. "'Tis slavery's badge, the felon's shame", he claimed, which "restrains her song, and hangs her harp to sleep". Perhaps, once "the outcast convicts' clanking chains" no longer deformed Australia's wilds and stigmatized her plains, would

Australasia float, with flag unfurled,
A new Britannia in another world.  

As a "native bard" of Australia, Wentworth had compellingly raised the question of whether or not a native-born Australian had special claims to be heard. "Shall I be mute", he asked rhetorically, "and see a stranger's hand / Attune the lyre"? The same thought

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63 Ibid., p. 22.
64 Ibid., p. 2. In an obvious reference to Barron Field's First Fruits of Australian Poetry, Wentworth described his own poem as "the first fruits of Australasian poesy" ("Preface" to ibid., p. vii).
undoubtedly prompted Horatio Wills to place Wentworth's ringing conclusion to "Australasia" at the head of his short-lived newspaper, the Currency Lad. Wills, announcing himself weekly as "an Australian", founded the Currency Lad (he said) to advocate the "particular interests" of native-born Australians, and "to preserve our countrymen as a distinct body of the commonwealth".  

As the first generation of native-born Australians reached maturity, the attitudes of the Currency Lad's opening editorial gained strength. "It is to her sons alone", Wills had proclaimed, "that Australia will hereafter depend for that eminence by which other nations have been distinguished. They alone to whom she has given birth -- they who have felt the wild inspirations of Freedom on their native hills -- to them alone will she look for independence

65 25 August 1832, p. 1. The name of the paper reflected a term in common contemporary usage; as Peter Cunningham explained it in 1827, "our colonial-born brethren are best known here by the name of Currency, in contradistinction to Sterling, or those born in the mother country. The name was originally given by a facetious paymaster of the seventy-third regiment quartered here, -- the pound currency being at that time inferior to the pound sterling" (Quoted in Clark, op. cit., n. 40 to p. 329). The Currency Lad appeared from 25 August 1832 to 18 May 1833.
and renown."66 "Independence", however, did not mean the
that literature in *Currency Lad* denounced Britain.

Australians might take pride in the facts that Australia
was obviously different from Great Britain, and free
from the quarrels of Europe. By 1872, Anthony Trollope

66 *Ibid.* After the expression of such noble
ambitions, Australian critics were understandably dis-
appointed at the apparent failure of Australia's sons
to confer any literary renown on the country. In 1847,
for instance, one anonymous reviewer lamented that
only "rats and mice occupy the barren field of liter-
ature" in Australia, rather than that creative genius
who could "at one great stroke give Australia a name
and place in the literature of the world". Why, he
asked, in a country where "one would imagine that new
impressions, new ideas, new associations and new
scenery, would force themselves into new and vigorous
expression" was it that "so very little of literary
supremacy is obtained?" (Mitchell Library, unidenti-
fied newspaper clipping inserted in a presentation
copy of Cecil Hills' pseudonymously-issued *A Land
Redeemed, or the Past and Present; a Poem of the Year
1843* [Sydney, 1847]).
observed, Victorians considered their colony "better" than England simply because it was different. But it was still a colony. Not until the 1880s could a newspaper stridently propose republicanism for Australia and still expect to keep its readers.

The Sydney Bulletin did just that; by the 1890s the Bulletin was Australia's most widely-circulated political paper, as well as the most influential literary journal in the six Australian colonies. The British connection, in the meantime, remained as meaningful for literary nationalists in the decades before the 1880s as it was for Wentworth and the Currency Lad in the 1820s and 1830s. As Wentworth put it, Britain might decline in the future, and Australia might become the "new Britannia", but her sons would still be those of Britain. Few authors were as outspoken as Dr. Laurence Halloran, who visualized in New Holland an "infant empire" which would rival Europe, "change ravaged India's abject

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67 Australia and New Zealand (London, 1873), II, 457.
fates", and

Wrest from the Parent Country's hand,
The sceptre of abused command;
And bid revert on Britain's head
The ills, she thro' the world has spread,
Till her bright sun shall set, defaced,  
"Eclipsed by clouds, herself has raised!"  

More usual was the attitude of Andrew Bent, another indefatigable publisher, whose Colonial Times cheerfully printed (as a "National Apostrophe") lines extolling "the rapture that glows at the songs of langsyne."  

And verse in the "Poet's Corner" of the Currency Lad -- the first issue contained a lament on the death of Macquarie by a "native minstrel" -- differed little from that published in less self-consciously nationalistic papers. "Valentia"'s verses

68 "Extract from a Poem, Entitled Deportation, Written at Sea in 1819", the Gleaner, 16 June 1827, p. 4. Halloran was editor of the paper.

69 19 August 1825, p. 4. Although Bent inserted the poem with the notation that he entered "fully into the feelings it expresses", his Colonial Times was a staunch opponent of the government of Tasmania. Political nationalism at the time was as complex as literary nationalism, as one Launceston editor demonstrated in 1829. Heading his opening address "Hail, Independence, Hail!", he asked "is it impossible to be at once truly loyal and discreetly patriotic... Surely, a friend to the Government may be a patriot!" (The Cornwall Press and Commercial Advertiser, 17 February 1829, p. 1).
on "Australia", for instance, laid heavy emphasis on Freedom and Liberty in Australia, but only as a response to the wholly predictable "loud clanking chain". 70

Unlike Canada, where literary references to Freedom usually implied a political contrast to the tyranny of Demos in the United States; 71 or New Zealand, where Liberty was celebrated in essentially pre-lapsarian or economic terms, the Liberty and Freedom of Australian poets and novelists were inevitably moral and redemptionist. Their Freedom was constantly haunted by the

70 25 August 1832, p. 4; 2 February 1833, p. 4.

71 "It is well known that nearly all Old Country Whigs, when transplanted to Canada, become staunch Tories. So most moderate Reformers are classed here as Liberal Conservatives. Even English Chartists are transformed into Canadian Anti-Republicans" (Samuel Thompson, "Reminiscences of a Canadian Pioneer, An Autobiography", part IV, Rose-Belford's Canadian Monthly and National Review, VII [November 1881], 514). Charles Sangster, for example, referring to the possibility of "the rash intruder" attacking Canada, noted in 1860 that

if in future years
One wretch should turn and fly,
Let weeping Fame
Blot out his name
From Freedom's hallowed sky.

knowledge that it was the freedom of fallen man: he was free to choose his destiny, but was fallen still.

Use of the term "Freedom", in fact, became a nearly certain sign of unthinking patriotism, a denial of the past prompted by its memories, rather than an acceptance of both. Emerson's "party of Hope" and "party of Memory" were on the same platform in Australia. 72

And so when Marcus Clarke wrote in 1876 that "this our native or adopted land has no past, no story", he was not simply invoking the antiquities syndrome. 73 He was, instead, revealing how firmly literary nationalism's mood of "romance" had been established in Australia. This mood, which dominated Australian


73 "Preface" to Adam Lindsay Gordon, Sea Spray and Smoke Drift (2nd ed.; Melbourne, 1876), p. v. Clarke's well-known preface was based on two of his commentaries on a series of reproductions from the collection of the National Gallery, Melbourne [now the Melbourne Art Gallery]. The eighteen-part series, issued from October 1873 to March 1875, was collected under Clarke's editorship as Photographs of the Pictures in the National Gallery, Melbourne (Melbourne, 1875). Parts VIII (May 1874) and XII (September 1874) furnished most of the text of his preface. See Brian Elliott,
writing throughout the nineteenth century, was the impulse of an author or reader determined to recreate his environment imaginatively by idealizing it. From his study of the convict system, Clarke knew better than most Australians (native-born or not) what Australia's "past" meant. Instead of denying the past, he recreated it.

Clarke's *His Natural Life* first appeared as a newspaper serial in 1870; by 1880 it was widely regarded as the finest novel yet written in Australia.  

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74 After running in the *Australian Journal* for two and one-half years (from March 1870 to June 1872, and later serialised in the magazine four times), *His Natural Life* was published in book form in Melbourne (1874), London (1875 and 1878), the United States (1876), and translated, in Germany (1877): see Elliott, Marcus Clarke, ch. 8. F.T. Macartney, in his revised and extended edition of E.M. Miller's *Australian Literature: a Bibliography to 1938* (Sydney, 1956), incorrectly refers to the title of the serial version as *For the Term of His Natural Life* (p. 112a); the longer title was not adopted until 1885, four years after Clarke's death.
The source of its appeal is not difficult to locate: Clarke had wholly inverted the system of values symbolized by the convict and, in effect, righted the Fall. Yet Clarke's creation of Rufus Dawe's virtues from the necessity of Australia's past did not mark a change in the central preoccupations of literary nationalism. The directions of the literary search for Australia had been set by the end of the 1840s, and Australian literary nationalism underwent no significant change of emphasis until the 1890s. Literary accomplishment matured in the interval, but the preoccupations were constant.

Not unexpectedly, native-born Australians turned more readily to celebration of Australia's potential Freedom than the "guilt and shame" of her past. Perhaps it is no accident that most novels and volumes of verse touching on convictism were written by immigrants. From Henry Savery's *Quintus Servinton* (1830-1) -- the product of an "old lag"'s personal experience -- through the anonymously-issued *Rebel Convicts* (1858), Caroline Leaky's *Broad Arrow* (1859), and G.M. Sterne's *A Strong Will and a Fair Tide* (1860) to James Brunton Stephens' *Convict Once* (1871)
and John Boyle O'Reilly's *Moondyne* (1879): the drama, pathos, and excitement of an Eden with bars were industriously exploited for the English and American markets. And when Australia was the subject, rather than convictism itself, convicts ranked with kangaroos as distinguishing characteristics of the country. Henry Kingsley's *Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn* (1859), for instance, presented Australia as "a new heaven and a new earth!", where "all creation is new and strange". Melodrama triumphed over regeneration, however, and a ruffian, "(colonial oath!)-ing convict, an "embryo assassin" was sent sprawling with a backward kick of the sub-hero's left foot.75

To Australian-born literary nationalists, on the other hand, the convict had as little relevance to Australia's "reality" as the "patriot" hero of Thomas Christie's five-act "native drama" had to nationalism. Christie's *Panting Patriot of the Pattern Parliament; or the Palmy Parient of the Peerless Prodigies* (1867) may have appealed briefly to habitués

[75](London, 1924), pp. 170, 229.
of the theatre as a political farce, just as the convict of fiction undoubtedly appealed to readers for his melodramatic possibilities. Both were better forgotten. What was called "reality" by the Tasmanian's reviewer in 1828 was another matter. For Australian authors of the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s had already discovered an acceptable literary link between Australia's "new people" and the new land itself.

The Tasmanian's reviewer had praised the anonymous author of "The Wanderer" for his ability to suit "the scenery to the subject" of his verse. In the first inversion of his praise lies the basic assumption behind the search for an Australian "national character": not to suit the scenery to the subject of literature, but to suit the subject to the scenery. And as the editor of the Currency Lad noted, Australia should look for national eminence among those "who have felt the wild inspirations of Freedom on their native hills".

The process of this inversion may be gathered impressionistically from the title-pages of Australia's four earliest novels. The first two, written by a convict, were published anonymously between 1830 and
The third was issued pseudonymously in 1838, by an unknown "Australian". The fourth appeared three years later, also pseudonymously; this time, however, William Christie was well known to be its author, "a Bushman". The story of literary nationalism in Australia until the 1890s is virtually the story of those title-pages: from anonymous convict through an unidentified "Australian" to an identified "Bushman". But how could the convict — the man proved guilty, Australia's distinguishing figure — be transmuted into the man born innocent, the representative figure of Australia's "native hills", the man of "the bush"?

76 Henry Savery, The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land (Hobart, [1830]) and Quintus Servinton (Hobart, 1830-31). Savery used the pseudonym "Simon Stukeley" when The Hermit was first published serially in Andrew Bent's Colonial Times during 1829.


78 A Love Story, by a Bushman (Sydney, 1841).
The Australian landscape was the key to it all. Simply to celebrate Australia's uniqueness and beauty was to ask Richard Howitt's question once more: "What have I then with them to do?" But by associating an Australian "reality" with its physical environment, literary nationalists could ignore the "guilt and shame" of the past. Australia's "bush", consciously or not, was approached with the same motives proclaimed by George Howe for his *Sydney Gazette*: to "reclaim an Order of Society". The original impetus of Australian literature's pastoral bias -- the extraordinary predilection of her authors to turn to nature as the source of the country's special virtues -- was based on the denial of a fallen society, rather than the attraction of the landscape's own beauty.

Nineteenth-century Romanticism alone was not responsible for this pastoral bias. Charles Tompson, Australia's "native minstrel", had isolated the problem in 1826 with fine eighteenth-century diction and assumptions. Art may have been "civilizing", he wrote, but the instrument of Australia's civilization was the "spoiling axe" which falsified the "true" nation:
The landscape shines beneath a borrowed hue,
But graceless more, and different from the true.

The "true" Australia, that is, could not be completely discovered through descriptions of the "ignorant present". It had to be recreated through literary nationalism's mood of romance, the mood linking eighteenth-century human "Nature" with nineteenth-century physical "nature".

Charles Harpur described the "first great Australian poet" as the man who would be thoroughly conversant with Poesie's "Creations of Olden Time", moulding "new matter" from the sublime bulk of those creations; most importantly, however, he should quarry from Nature's everlasting frame

The sculptured beauty of his lofty Rhyme;
Then mirrored ever in his polished page
Shall glow his Countrywomen's lustrous eyes;
And future Patriots a righteous rage
Thence catch or stimulate.

79 "Retrospect; or, A Review of my Scholastic Days", Wild Notes, p. 17.
80 "The First Great Australian Poet", Thoughts: a Series of Sonnets (Sydney, 1845), p. 10. Harpur's first recorded publication, "An Australian Song", appeared in the Currency Lad on 4 May 1833. Donovan Clarke, in his selection of Harpur's poems (Charles Harpur [Sydney, 1963]), mistakenly assigns Harpur's first publication to "Tegg's Magazine, 2nd December 1837" (p. 50). The publication to which Clarke refers was Tegg's Monthly Magazine (March 1836-July 1836); the verse to which he refers actually appeared in the Literary News (August 1837 - February 1838).
The work of the "great Australian poet" would then be a mirror of his nation, just as the poet himself, clothed in a "robe of flame", would be a lamp to guide it. No wonder the poet who regarded himself as a disciple of Harpur's, Henry Kendall ("Native Australian Poet"), included a dazzling vision of a lyre-bird in the bush in his search for "the Muse of Australia". A prophet in flaming robes and a flying visitant too bright to be faced: imagery of the Old Testament came almost naturally to Harpur and Kendall, for the literary search for Australia's "reality" was as much moral as it was aesthetic.

No "great Australian poet" emerged before the 1890s, but by 1876 Marcus Clarke was able to point to "something very like the beginnings of a national school of Australian poetry". And he too, like Harpur and Kendall, turned instinctively to the Old Testament in his remarkable description of the "true"

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Australia. "The dominant note of Australian scenery", Clarke wrote, was "Weird Melancholy". The "solitude" and "barren hills" of this unique landscape shaped the soul of the "dweller in the wilderness", enabling him to identify "the beauty of loneliness" the "subtle charm of this fantastic land of monstrosities":

whispered to by the myriad tongues of the wilderness, he learns the language of the barren and the uncouth, and can read the hieroglyphs of haggard gum-trees, blown into odd shapes, distorted with fierce hot winds, or cramped with cold nights when the Southern Cross freezes in a cloudless sky of icy blue. The phantasmagoria of that wild dreamland termed the Bush interprets itself, and the Poet of our desolation begins to comprehend why free Esau loved his heritage of desert sand better than all the bountiful richness of Egypt.82

By 1876, however, literary nationalists in New Zealand would have appreciated the irony of Clarke’s reference to Esau better than Australians. For Esau was Jacob’s elder twin, and both were sons of the same mother; as the Lord had told Rebekah, "two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels: and the one people shall be

stronger than the other people, and the elder shall serve the younger". Esau subsequently sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of lentil soup, while Jacob, re-named Israel, inherited the land of their father Isaac. And that land, New Zealanders knew, was no Eden with bars, a "heritage of desert sand". Australians might well search for "the Arabian desert of the human mind":

Hoping, if still from the deserts the prophets come,
Such savage and scarlet, as no green hills dare
Springs in that waste. 

New Zealanders, in the meantime, were convinced that they had already founded the authentic new Eden of the south by exercising their birthright among those same green hills.

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83 Gen. 25:23.

EDEN WITH A VERANDAH

We all see faces in the water....
Sometimes by a trick of circumstances
or dream or a hostile neighbourhood
of light we see our own face.¹

"When the place is settled", Samuel Revans
wrote of New Zealand in 1841, "we shall have a beauti-
ful country.... We ought to raise a nation of

poets.\textsuperscript{2} Three years earlier New Zealand could boast less than 2000 European settlers, and even a dozen years after Revans' prediction only thirty thousand more had arrived. Nevertheless he was right: as early as 1843 Robert Croudace Joplin, author of the first volume of New Zealand verse, was celebrating New Zealand's sublime scenery, the romantic nobility

\textsuperscript{2}Alexander Turnbull Library, "Letters to H.S. Chapman, 1839-1842", 2 June 1841, quoted in John Miller, \textit{Early Victorian New Zealand} (London, 1958), p. 51. Revans (1808-88) and Chapman (1803-81), both true \textit{hommes engagés} of the Empire, emigrated from England to Canada, where they founded the radical \textit{Montreal Daily Advertiser} in 1833. Revans hurriedly left Canada for England in 1837 after associating himself too closely with Louis Joseph Papineau and the Rebellion of Lower Canada, joined the Chartist movement, and established New Zealand's first newspaper, the \textit{New Zealand Gazette and Britannia Spectator}. The first issue (21 August 1839) was published in London before Revans sailed for New Zealand; the second was printed in a hut on Petone beach eight months later. Chapman, in the meantime, had returned to England in 1834; six years later he founded the \textit{New Zealand Journal} in London, and edited it until he left in 1843 to become New Zealand's first puisne Judge. Among other activities, Chapman later served as Colonial Treasurer of Van Diemen's Land, Attorney-General of Victoria, and lecturer at Melbourne University; he retired in 1875 after a further eleven years on the New Zealand Bench.
of the Maoris (cannibals though they might be), and the beginnings of man's new Eden. ³

New Zealand, of course, was a raw young colony despite her plans for organized settlement, and the country (it was said) could scarcely reproduce the social refinements of Home in those first years. Like Australia's earliest poets, literary nationalists in New Zealand chose simply to celebrate the generalised potential of the "Britain of the South". The specifics of her "ign'rant present", after all, could surely come later. For a poet such as William Golder, New Zealand's colonial materialism was in itself a good argument for ennobling literature. His New Zealand Minstrelsy, he hoped, would "add to the literature of our Colony, thereby extracting some of the sweets which lie hid among the many asperities of colonial life." Golder's grander

³New-Zealand: a Poem in Three Cantos (Auckland, 1843). Joplin was editor of the Auckland Chronicle and New Zealand Colonist.
motive, however, was nothing less than to create a
New Zealand national character:

to endear our adopted country the more to
the bosom of the bona fide settler; as
such, in days of yore, has often induced
a people to take a firmer hold of their
country, by not only inspiring them with
a spirit of patriotic magnanimity, but also
in making them the more connected as a
people in the eyes of others. 4

4 "Preface", p. v. New Zealand Minstrelsy,
printed in Wellington in 1852 for Golder's 314
subscribers, was reviewed in the Southern Monthly
Magazine twelve years later. Golder, their reviewer
noted in his mildest comment, "evidently entertains
the belief that poetical sublimity and grammatical
accuracy are in an inverse ratio to each other." 4
("Helicon in New Zealand", III, 21 [November 1864], 172).
Golder still retained his own firm hold on the sort
of British society New Zealanders hoped to see repro-
duced in their "adopted country"; his Minstrelsy was
dedicated to the "Nobility and inhabitants in general
of Port Nicholson". Even the names of the three main
settlements on the shores of Port Nicholson were
appropriate to his dedication. European "inhabitants
in general" could savour "Hutt" (where Golder lived),
named after Sir William Hutt, sometime chairman of
the New Zealand Company. Maori "inhabitants in
general" might have appreciated "Britannia"'s being
re-named "Petone", from "Pito-one". And for an element
of "nobility", there was "Wellington", once "Lambton
Harbour", but re-named in honour of the Duke's support
of the New Zealand Company, and to perpetuate the
"association of the Mother Country with the future of
the town" (quoted in R.G.H[eerdegen], "Wellington City",
Encyclopaedia of New Zealand [Wellington, 1966], III, 614). Golder had published Recreations for Solitary
Hours before he arrived in New Zealand; some of these
effusions were included in a twenty-two page "Appendix"
at the end of his Minstrelsy.
By 1884, however, Rutherford Waddell could identify the other half of what would become New Zealand literature's principal preoccupation: "before there can be a national literature, there must be a national character." Waddell went on to note confidently that "a national character, like an individual, is of slow growth and late maturity", and that even if New Zealand's national character was not yet found, "one must needs look for it -- hope for it -- work for it, if one can." But the dilemma remained: New Zealand literature must create nationalism, but without nationalism there would be little New Zealand literature.

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5"Introduction" to Thomas Bracken, Lays of the Land of the Maori and Moa (London, 1884), p. 8. Waddell (1849-1932), a Presbyterian minister, arrived in New Zealand in 1877. He was once charged with heresy for his theological radicalism, while his protests at the plight of Dunedin seamstresses stimulated the establishment of a Royal Commission on the subject.
that plagued Australians. As Robert Joplin noted in the preface to his verse, "the materials for construct-
ing such a work as the following might, to a casual or careless observer, appear to be numerous, and diversi-
fied." Joplin, for all his readily-acknowledged debt to Dr. Johnson, was no "casual or careless observer". New Zealand, he conceded, did indeed present "much picturesque and romantic scenery; as beautiful as most countries can boast". Yet for him, and for generations of New Zealand writers after Joplin,

there still pervades the whole, a kind of indescribable peculiarity of sameness and monotony; a death-like sombre gloom; anything but inspiring! and I have often felt a chasm in my subject; a want of imagery; and an exhaustion of theme; even when the muse has favor'd me with her choicest smiles!  

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7 Ibid., pp. 6-7. William Golder met a related attitude in a friend while they were both working on the Hutt stockade. "during a little conversation, I asked him why he did not compose something on New Zealand; when, with a strong affirmation, he declared he saw nothing in the place worth writing about. I thought differently, but said nothing..." ("Preface" to The Pigeons' Parliament, a Poem of the Year 1845 [Wellington, 1854], p. iv).
Here was none of Marcus Clarke's "weird melancholy", but a cry of frustration at the poet's own honesty. Joplin knew that while he had possessed his new land, the land had not yet possessed him.

In their attempts to satisfy New Zealand's "want of imag'ry", literary nationalists soon discovered that the "themes" generated by the country were far from exhausted. By the end of the 1880s, after only five decades of writing, New Zealand's literary preoccupations had developed as definitely as those which emerged during Australia's first fifty years. Appropriately enough, the directions of the search for a national "imag'ry" in Australia and New Zealand were as closely related as Esau and Jacob. While the same mother produced both colonies, New Zealanders were quick to claim for themselves the birthright of "true" Englishmen.

Not unexpectedly, the first literary celebrations of New Zealand were grounded on the economic motives for emigration. To Martin Tupper,
the children of England are thronging
There for true riches securely to search;
Not for thy gold, California, longing,
But for sweet home, with enough, and a Church! 8

Tupper's reference to California is significant, for
as "children of England" New Zealand settlers had not
come to the "Queen of the South" simply to earn money.
British law and order - the source of "true" riches -
were the pride of New Zealand, while in the United
States (a Mrs. Abdy pointed out emphatically) "mid
lawless numbers, ye may crave redress in vain, / And
find the gold so lightly won, less easy to retain". 9

8"Poetical Offerings in the Nature of a 'God
Speed' to the Canterbury Pilgrims", Canterbury Papers
(London, 1850-2), IV, 115. Retitled "New Zealand",
the poem was reprinted ("from the 'Anglo-Saxon!'") in
a "Supplement" to the New-Zealander for 20 November
1850. The New-Zealander was founded in Auckland by
John Williamson in 1845; R.B. O'Neill erroneously
gives the date of its first issue as 3 April 1865 in
"New Zealand Press", Encyclopaedia of New Zealand,
II, 667.

9"There is Gold in California", New Zealand
Magazine, I, 2 (April 1850), 140. The idea that
England's sons were better off with British law and
order than with American money and lawlessness was
widely shared by Canadians. In his drama Tecumseh
(1886), for instance, Charles Mair advised the "cal-
culating sons" attacking the Canadian provinces during
the War of 1812 to "leave the home of mercenary minds":
Tupper's idea of a "sweet home", moreover, was not that of Alan Mulgan in the 1920s, when Home was proclaimed with defiant nostalgia to be England. Later writers (such as "N.Z.", caught up in the enthusiasm surrounding the marriage of Princess Alexandra of Denmark and Edward, Prince of Wales in 1863) could state plainly that "Our hearts pulsate with England's". C.J. Martin saw New Zealand as a Land of his Own: that is, "truly British, good, happy, and strong" and -- the height of his aspirations for New Zealand -- with "a Prince of the Blood on the

And wing with me, in your uplifted thoughts, 
Away to our unyielding Canada;
There to behold the Genius of the land,
Beneath her singing pine and sugared tree,
Companioned with the lion, Loyalty.

(J.W. Garvin, ed., Masterworks of Canadian Authors [Toronto, 1926], XIV, 139.)

Home: a Colonial's Adventure (London, 1929). On Mulgan's first visit to England, just after the coast was sighted, "a fellow passenger asked me what I thought of England. I replied, not with any trace of rudeness, I hope, that you might as well ask a man what he thought of his wife" (p. 19).

"Alexandra", Southern Monthly Magazine, I, 5 (July 1863), 217. Reports of the wedding also prompted the gold-miners of Lower Dunstan (otherwise Manuherikia) to change the name of their settlement to Alexandra South.
Vice-Regal throne". In the 1850s, however, "sweet home" was intimately connected with the idea of "enough"; self-sufficiency could defeat the strongest promptings of nostalgia. Those "hearts bowed down by grinding toil" in England, one early versifier claimed, "Should find, as Labour brings them Wealth, / Their Summer and their Eden here." In New Zealand, Joplin pointed out, the humble plodding man "not only builds and cultivates, / But OWNS both house and ground:" Joplin may not have seen the same significance in a verandah as "St. George" did, but he would certainly

12"A Land of Our Own", Martin's Locals (Christchurch, 1862), p. 11. See also Julius Vogel's utopian novel Anno Domini 2000; or, Woman's Destiny (London, 1889), which concluded with the Emperor of the future British Commonwealth marrying a New Zealander.

13"The Verandah", New-Zealander, 19 July 1851. "St. George", the author, used these lines again in his "Summer", also published in the New-Zealander, 17 January 1852. I have not been able to identify "St. George", although his style is similar to that of Joplin (who occasionally wrote as "Centaur").

14"New Zealand, as it is", "Supplement" to the New-Zealander, 1 May 1847.
have agreed with the sentiments of "The Verandah":

Oft in the colder north I've seen
   The same light form arise,
But never speaking to the heart
   as 'neath these warmer skies;
Only the rich, the haughty, there
   Can place it o'er their door,
But here it shades, and beautifies,
   The dwellings of the poor.\(^1\)

The idea of New Zealand as Eden with a verandah, however circumscribed it may have been, was swiftly sharpening the distinction between "there" and "here".

"So great and pleasant...is the liberty a man finds here", Samuel Edger wrote of Auckland in 1863, "a perfect freedom in the rise of his thoughts & limbs, that I do not see how any but the best trained slave could after a few years here, tolerate the laughable & often mournful restrictions of English society." He thought of his old fellow-country-men "crowded in some stifling Hall to roar out 'Britons never will be slaves!': a sound, he confided, "very like humming 'Hush abye Baby on the tree top ['] &c to a man in his

\(^1\)"St. George", loc. cit.
40th year. 16

The "freedom" of literary nationalists in New Zealand, on the other hand, implied the recognition of England's "there" in New Zealand's "here". Like Canadians, New Zealanders did not feel compelled to make a choice of loyalties between "there" and "here". They were subjects of an inclusive Empire, not merely citizens of an exclusive nation. To celebrate Great Britain was to celebrate New Zealand, just as the celebration of New Zealand (by the logic of the Imperial idea) implied the celebration of Great Britain. Unlike Australians, New Zealanders assumed "freedom" to be an inherent attribute of the country simply because they were Britons, and intent on maintaining the British connection. By accepting what Edward Jerningham Wakefield insisted on calling "the birthright of our race", 17

16 Mitchell Library, "Letters from Mr. Edger after his departure from New Zealand", pp. 138-9. Edger was a Congregational minister who had emigrated from England the year before he wrote this letter.

17 "Past and Future" in [Crosbie Ward, ed.,] The Book of Canterbury Rhymes (Christchurch, 1866), p. 22. William Pember Reeves edited a second enlarged edition of this anthology in 1883, in which the contributors — who signed with initials only in the first edition — are fully identified.
New Zealand would adapt only the best of her heritage to become the new "favoured Britain of the South".  

The process of recognition in New Zealand, then, was less one of particularising the landscape than it was of insisting on its potential similarities to England's. Wakefield, for instance, having compiled the usual list of absent "ancient mansions" and Gothic spires, asked rhetorically "what, then, shall patriot minstrels sing / Of our adopted land?" One answer was a strangely blank landscape, where man could be proud that

No Roman wall or Danish camp  
Obstructs the fittest line;  
No dyke or tower stands to cramp  
The architect's design.

But free to choose both stone and spot,  
Unfettered in our plan,  
Whether a palace or a cot;  
We may build all we can.

New Zealand was a wilderness to be "crushed" and "reclaimed" by "design" and "plan", so that "England's

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18 George Willmer, Zealandia's Hope (Christchurch, 1874), p. 5.


20 Ibid., p. 23.
trees to new abodes / Shall give a homely grace".  

By placing an imperative and Imperial "design" before identification of their landscape, early New Zealand authors created awkward literary problems. C.M. Harkness, at least, was careful not to include a village smithy "Beneath a branching Ngaio Tree"22, but Robert Donaldson's two "Homes" illustrate both the ambiguities of identification and part of the "design" itself.

His "Ruined Home" described one of those "fair copies of old England's homes, which poets love to praise", raised by "English hands", and destroyed by Maoris during the Taranaki campaign. The "home", however, was not simply a happy one, but "English"; to hesitate in impressing English values on the environment was to see those values destroyed utterly.23 Donaldson's second "Home", that of the settler, presented the design's triumph:

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21 Ibid., pp. 22-4.

22"The Ngaio Tree", The Ngaio Tree [and] A Dream ([West Rangitikei], 1865). A copy of this broadsheet is held by the Alexander Turnbull Library.

'Twas like a scene in England, the lawn outspread before,
Of English grass, was closely mown up to the cottage door.
Nevertheless the ambiguity of the design challenged its triumph:
The Ngutu kaka's straggling vines twined o'er the trellis neat,
Its scarlet flowers, with monthly rose o'erspread this cool retreat.24
The ngutu kaka had become a rose, but it was a ngutu kaka still. Some values were better adapted than eliminated, even if they required constant pruning.

ii. "Altogether Un-Australian"

To a visitor like Anthony Trollope, the result of the Imperial design was that "in New Zealand everything is English".25 That he was comparing New Zealand to Australia at the time would have escaped no New Zealander, for Australia was the touchiest of the stones by which New Zealand literary nationalists

25Australia and New Zealand, II, 324.
measured their own attempts to define the country. The United States had gold, republicanism, and lawlessness; Australia had gold and the sons of convicts; "St. George" was happier with Hauraki Bay:

Let others vaunt the stars and stripes,
Or sing of green Tasmanian hills,
Or where rich sands of Austral gold
Flow ceaseless through auriferous rills;
Better I love the healthful spot
Where an eternal spring presides. 26

"It would be impossible to imagine any country more unlike Australia", Trollope said of New Zealand in 1872. Both countries, he observed, had squatters and miners, but there the similarity ended, not only in the forms of government and "outward features", but most significantly "in the manners of the people". "The scenery, the colour and general appearance of the waters, and the shape of the hills, are altogether un-Australian." 27

"In New Zealand everything is English": too English for Trollope's taste. "After crossing the world and journeying over so many thousand miles, you


27 _op. cit._, II, 321, 324.
have not at all succeeded in getting away from England. When you have arrived there you are, as it were, next door to your own house...."  

Again he turned to Australia for a shrewd comparison which has become part of New Zealand's folklore:

In Victoria the boast is made with true Yankee confidence in "our institutions." Victoria declares herself to be different from England, and therefore better. But in New Zealand the assurance is altogether of a different nature. The New Zealander among John Bulls is the most John-Bullish. He admits the supremacy of England to every place in the world, only he is more English than any Englishman at home. The accuracy of Trollope's observation mattered less than the fact that he made it. New Zealand literary nationalists could be flattered: the design had succeeded.

Overt reaction to Australia was relatively scarce in New Zealand literature before the 1880s. But no New Zealander would have been puzzled by an author like George Willmer, when he noted off-handedly that New Zealand drew "from Britain's Isle no coward

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28 Ibid., 332.
29 Ibid., 457.
New Zealand settlement, it was determined, would never repeat the follies of Australia's. Literary nationalists in New Zealand almost reflexively identified the potential "national character" of the country as both orderly and moral, two traits they unhesitatingly denied to Australia.

The New Zealand Company, as early as 1839, proposed to William Hayward Wakefield that in the absence of duly constituted legal order in their projected settlement, an "Association for Order" be established; all settlers would participate on pain of being "outcasts in the midst of an orderly and moral community." As William Pember Reeves noted in the preface to his edition of *Canterbury Rhymes* (1883), moreover, the Canterbury settlers were "of a stamp distinct in many respects from any other class of pioneer in Australasia". They had their faults, of course, but they were never convicts; they were, in a

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30 Zealandia's Hope, f. 11.

31 Mitchell Library, "Despatches to Governor of New South Wales", September-December 1839, New Zealand Company to Colonel Wakefield, 14 November 1839, pp. 616, 617.
word, "English gentlemen and gentlewomen, in the fullest sense".  

It was certainly the fear of New Zealand's becoming another Australia that prompted John Dunmore Lang to issue his confident statement: "if Colonized on right principles, New Zealand will one day be the Great Britain of the Southern Hemisphere". In an effort to bring some sort of order to the dissolute settlement of escaped convicts, whalers, and sailors, a British Resident landed at the Bay of Islands in 1833. Six years later, to head off the New Zealand Company's plans to purchase land for colonisation, Captain William Hobson was appointed Lieutenant-Governor and Consul of New Zealand under the Governor

32 Critics in New Zealand were delighted by Reeves' comments. One reviewer appropriated them as his own (Hocken Library, unidentified newspaper clipping inserted in a copy of Canterbury Rhymes), while O.T.J. Alpers quoted them at length in the introduction to his Jubilee Book of Canterbury Rhymes (Christchurch, 1900), pp. xx-xxi.

Australia as an Imperial power was a vision to tantalize her Governments. Even William Charles Wentworth called himself an "Australasian" in 1823. New Zealanders were rightly sensitive to the term; why not, they might ask, "New Zalia"? For Wentworth undoubtedly intended "Australasian" to include New Zealand, just as the *Sydney Gazette* considered it obvious in 1831 that New Zealand "must, at no distant period, form an integral and productive part of the immense Australian empire". The editor of the

34 James Busby, a free selector from Australia, was appointed Resident after exploitation of the Maoris -- and the possibility of French colonisation of New Zealand -- could no longer be ignored. But as early as 1819, acknowledging the trade in flax, timber, and oil which had grown up between Sydney and New Zealand, Governor Macquarie proclaimed New Zealand a dependency of New South Wales. Sydney was also a base for missionary activity in New Zealand, and Thomas Kendall, Henry Kendall's grandfather, was appointed as New Zealand's first Resident Magistrate in 1814. The Church Missionary Society later suspended him for (among other reasons) taking a Maori mistress.

35 Quoted in Keith Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand* (Harmondsworth, 1959), p. 29. In 1840 Wentworth and John Jones, an Australian-born whaling speculator, formed a syndicate which claimed to have purchased virtually the whole of New Zealand's South Island for £100.
Currency Lad, however, had no such illusions. New Zealanders (both Pakeha and Maori), he stated emphatically in 1833, were "foreigners". He was simply "an Australian".36

Reaction from New Zealand to government from New South Wales was not long in coming. Samuel Martin, a journalist and "lately a Magistrate", wrote to the Colonial Secretary in 1842:

The origin of nearly all the evil which has befallen this Colony, has in a great measure arisen from the ignorance of Sir George Gipps and the Government of New South Wales as to the nature of this country, both in respect of climate and soil; but more especially of the character of the inhabitants.37

New Zealanders, clearly, were determined not to let Australians forget exactly what sort of a land they lived in: the fallen realm of convicts, not free Britons; of primitive Aboriginals, not redeemable (and powerful)

36 27 April 1833, p. 3.

37 New Zealand in 1842; or the Effects of a Bad Government on a Good Country (Auckland, 1842), quoted in Ferguson entry 3451 for 1842. The Government suppressed the New Zealand Herald and Auckland Gazette in March 1842, two months after Martin began editing it. A year later he became editor of the Southern Cross.
Maoris; and of desert, not the green hills of the "favoured Britain of the South." When Robert Joplin described Australia's settlement, the imagery of the Fall came easily:

As some big Python, swelter'ring in the sun,
And slowly rolling his vast volumes round;
Such were those deserts from oblivion wrung:-
Australia's wilds of blighted, parched ground!^38

More revealingly, Joplin was prepared to think of Australians as emphatically "them" at a time when New Zealand's Pakeha population barely exceeded that of newly-settled Western Australia:

Scarce had their coasts, th' adventurer's [Cook's] effort crown'd,
When ruffian hordes of Britain's sons appear:
And wealthy Sydney's spirall'd city found,
The pompous monarch of the southern sphere,
Raised like an angel's pinion on the out-casts bier!39

By the 1860s, New Zealand's Otago settlers were known to distrust Australians -- or at least Victorians -- enough to supply the music-halls with a popular theme. At the height of the Maori Wars, Charles

\[\text{38} \text{New-Zealand, p. 16.}\]

\[\text{39} \text{Ibid.}\]
Thatcher sang, the "Old Identities" liked Victorians as much as they liked Maoris:

they view us poor Victorians
With the same dislike and fear,
And they tell us plump and plain -- Eh mon!
We dinna want you here.  

And when Thatcher advised the "Old Identities" of Dunedin on "the way to be Provincial", he devoted three of his song's five verses to the same theme. Gold-seeking Victorians were flooding into Dunedin with "new-fangled" ideas, and were only too ready to

40 "The Maoris and the Old Identity", Thatcher's Lake Wakatipu Songster (Dunedin, 1863), p. 11. In 1909 A.G. Stephens noted that "the designation 'old identity' is common in Australasia; but few who employ it know its origin. It sprang from New Zealand, and from Dunedin. Mentioning "a tempestuous horde of Victorian gold-diggers, whose immigration is still locally referred to as 'the Victorian influx'"; Stephens continued: "Edward Cargill, one of the sons of the revered Father of Dunedin, had uttered the settlement's abhorrence of new-fangled Australian dealings with the decent, slow-going Scottish burgh; and Thatcher wrote a set of topical lines that had instant vogue and wide circulation" ("The Bookfellow", Evening Post [Wellington], 24 July 1909, p. 9).
"load the 'guid folk' with abuse", to "run down things provincial". Revenge was easy: "chouse [cheat] the new Victorian blood", tell them to "gang hame" with their complaints, "gang to the kirk" regularly, and "on ancient customs never trench".41

The guid Scots settlers of Otago probably took Thatcher's satire lightly, although his suggestion to "read Barr's poems every night" as a sure way to Provinciality might have been somewhat too fine. John Barr's verse in Scots dialect was so popular that he was created "Poet to the Caledonian Society of Otago".42 But Thatcher knew his audience, and his chorus' scarcely-veiled reference to Australia's origins was guaranteed to ward off rotten eggs:

41 "The Way to be Provincial", Thatcher's Dunedin Songster...Second Number (Dunedin, 1862), pp. 6-7.

42 Title-page of his Poems (Dunedin, 1874). Thatcher was referring to Barr's Poems and Songs (Edinburgh, 1861).
So all you Old Identity,
No matter what your pedigree,
Just listen, and you'll learn from me
The way to be Provincial.\footnote{43}

Thatcher's use of "Provincial" had a special meaning for New Zealanders, one not wholly related to the country's system of internal government. For the difference between literary nationalism in Australia and New Zealand emerged in terms of the difference between a colony and a province. If Trollope was correct in saying that Victoria -- and possibly the whole of Australia -- "declares herself to be different from England, and therefore better", then Australian writers by the 1890s were defiantly colonials.

\footnote{43}{"The Way to be Provincial", \textit{op. cit.}, p. 6. Thatcher's immense success in New Zealand -- he published a dozen different "Songsters" during his tours of the country -- led at least one versifier to try his hand at the style: "Since singing local songs is really all the go, / I'm just going to sing one accordin';..." ("Jordan" in C.J. Martin, \textit{op. cit.}, p. [23]). Thatcher's satire was not always appreciated; Robert Mitchell felt that he was a "vulgar bore" because of his taunts at Oamaru:

His ready wit it's low and rude;
Some folks with wit are curs'd:
Methinks on gall and wormwood
This satirist was nursed.

(untitled, \textit{Rhymes and Rambles} [Dunedin, 1889], p. 24). See also Hugh Anderson, \textit{The Colonial Minstrel} (Melbourne, 1960).}
A sense of superiority was frequently rooted in the resented knowledge of "colonial" inferiority. Australian literature before the 1880s only rarely reflected a sense of superiority based on Australia's distinctiveness. Nevertheless Australian authors had long since turned to Australia's distinctive landscape as the source of a national literature; it only needed the *Bulletin* to make the same connection between "different" and "therefore better" for Australian literature to reveal the resentfulness behind colonial nationalism.

New Zealand authors, on the other hand, felt that they were superior to Australians: a sense of superiority based on similarities to Great Britain, not differences. New Zealand, in effect, was a cultural province of the British Isles. This provincialism, furthermore, raised as many problems for literary nationalists in New Zealand as did Australia's colonialism. Like Canadians, provincials in New Zealand were soon preoccupied with what has been termed "Emerson's Law": the fact that "in a provincial society it is extremely easy to reach the highest level of cultivation, extremely difficult to take one step beyond
that". The writing that results from this pre-occupation tends to be "academic in the pejorative sense of that term, an imitation of a prescribed model, second-rate in conception, not merely in execution". 44

Imitative or not, by 1907 New Zealand poets could look back with some satisfaction on the workings of Emerson's Law. "As a general rule", the British-Australasian's reviewer noted in London that year, New Zealand's poets "possess considerable technical skill, which puts them in noticeable contrast to most of the Australian poets." They had, in fact, "reached and maintained a very high level":

they do not put forth any great pretensions, and no one has followed the regrettable examples of certain Australian patriots who with distressing enthusiasm have discovered an Australian Keats and an Australian Wordsworth. 45

Emerson's Law was undoubtedly self-defeating: "real standards can only be established, not met". 46 For


46 Frye, loc. cit.
New Zealand writers, however, their preoccupation was essential to their being New Zealanders. The standards they were attempting to meet were precisely those which they thought would distinguish them from Australians.

### iii. High Seriousness

Standards in New Zealand writing were more easily talked about than met. One critic felt that New Zealanders should aim at an "intellectual character"; another, at "good sense", "sobriety of judgment", and "correctness of taste"; and still another, at "knowledge". Whatever the usefulness of these noble strictures to an aspiring author, both he and his critics agreed on two fundamental points. Literature was important as an end in itself, and it

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47 W.E. Grimstone, opening address "To Our Subscribers", *New Zealand Magazine*, I, 1 (January 1850). His address was dated 1 November 1849.


49 "Helicon in New Zealand", *ibid.* III, 21 (November 1864), 179.
was particularly important as a principal agent in the formation and refinement of a "national character".

Authors and critics alike readily accepted the high seriousness of their calling, a high seriousness that shaped their attitudes to Britain and New Zealand as well as to Australia. Vague though it may have been, this almost sacerdotal seriousness was the motive linking literature written for the sake of literature with literature written for the sake of New Zealand.

The link was revealed as early as 1849, in W.E. Grimstone's opening editorial for New Zealand's first quarterly journal, the *New Zealand Magazine*. "The Australian Colonies", Grimstone remarked, "have more than once been reproached for their want of liberality, and the apathy with which they have met any effort to establish a Periodical devoted to Literature and Art." Aussies could certainly appreciate the force of his comment. Approximately three dozen magazines of a more or less literary character had been founded in Australia since the *Australian Magazine*...
Magazine appeared twenty-eight years earlier; only the weekly Atlas of Sydney lasted longer than two years, and it had died the year before. Grimstone had more faith in New Zealanders. Depending on their "intelligence and liberality", he was "inclined to believe that the Colonists of New Zealand will sustain their intellectual character, and will prove by the encouragement which they will bestow upon this attempt to effect so desirable an end that they, at least, are free from such a censure." New Zealanders, regretably, failed to rise to the occasion, and the New Zealand Magazine folded after its second issue. Later "literary" magazines, however - one more in the 1850s, seven in the 'sixties, and two in the 'seventies - stoutly maintained appeals to the "intellectual character" of New Zealanders, and confirmed high seriousness as the dominating mood of

51 The Australian Magazine; or, Compendium of Religious, Literary, and Miscellaneous Intelligence appeared in May 1821; at least fourteen monthly numbers were issued. The Atlas, Sydney Weekly Journal of Politics, Commerce, and Literature, was published from 30 November 1844 to 30 December 1848.

52 Loc. cit.
New Zealand writing. They did so, moreover, with almost frightening rigorousness. Poetry, a reviewer in the *New Zealand Quarterly Review* stated flatly, is not "unreal", and he went on to condemn any suggestion that a young colony had no time for "intellectual training and culture". Such a view confounded the reality of the "genuine spirit of poetry" with "mere sentimentality". When G.T. Chapman, editor of the first monthly magazine in New Zealand, rejected verses which were simply "not up to the standard which we wish to establish for the poetical corners of this Magazine", his readers well knew what he meant.

So anxious were New Zealand critics not to make swans of their geese, that occasionally even the egg was denied. Reviewing Charles Bowen's verse in 1863, the *Southern Monthly Magazine* noted that "it is the business of the reviewer to remember that he does little honour to the colony when he boasts that it pro-

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ducès good poetry, and forgets that it possesses good sense." The "sobriety of judgment" and "correctness of taste" of New Zealanders were of more moment than simply encouraging "productions of inferior merit for the sake of boasting of the increasing literature of the country." For these reasons, the reviewer believed,

a book of verses, which would attract little attention in England, has an importance here, and the critic is called upon to be even more inexorable in a young country than in one which already enjoys a literature whose glory can never be destroyed by any number of unfounded and unrefuted pretensions. 56

National literature, that is, was important not as evidence of New Zealand nationalism, but because analysis of its claims will sharpen the correctness of New Zealanders' taste.

Correct taste, furthermore, was seen as an essential ingredient in the "character" of New Zealand. Recognition of New Zealand's landscape was all very well, another reviewer commented dryly, suggesting as it does that the "pursuit of literature", inspired by the New Zealand bush, might relieve the monotony of life in the "outdistricts". "But our duty to literature

56 Loc. cit.
itself will not allow us to permit false wares to pass without detection; and if our criticism seems in some respects harsh and unnecessarily minute, it is because we believe a correct taste in literature to be a thing not merely desirable, as a source of amusement and recreation, but of vital importance to the mental tone and character of a nation.57 "Pure" literature, in other words, was more valuable in the formation of New Zealand's "character" than literature written from overtly nationalistic motives.

Not all journalists in New Zealand accepted the assumptions of high seriousness, as the editors of several literary periodicals frequently complained. "The Colonial press is vapid", James Grant claimed in 1864, "and, to use an expressive Scotticism, 'feckless' in the extreme. It comes in very conveniently for rolling up parcels, igniting fires, or, perhaps, for more equivocal purposes". Grant's Saturday Review was intended to remedy this situation, and help Dunedin play her part as "Athens in New Zealand".58

57 "Helicon in New Zealand", ibid., III, 21 (November 1864), 179.

Despite Grant's remarkable career as an editor, Dunedin was no Athens of journalism by the 1870s. "Newspaper literature", a reviewer for the New Zealand Magazine remarked tartly in 1877, was "a class of literature for which we have no place in

59 James Gordon Stuart Grant (1838-1902) was a university-educated Scot of unusually single-minded eccentricity. He established the Dunedin Saturday Review (which ran through 119 irregular issues between 20 February 1864 and 3 June 1871) in order to "embark in the editorial vessel of journalism, so as to spread out our sails before the propitious gales on the troubled waters of politics and social questions"; that is, to counter what he believed to be a series of vendettas against him and his "great, glorious, almost divine" plans for Dunedin. The Saturday Review was satirized in a Monthly Review of Mr. J.G.S. Grant and the Saturday Review (16 April 1864, erroneously dated 6 April 1864 in Park, op. cit., p. 2), and again in a Monthly Review of G.S. Grant and His Supporters (21 May 1864, held by the Alexander Turnbull Library, and not noted in either Park or the New Zealand National Library Service's Union List of Serials). Grant wrote the Saturday Review himself, as well as its successors: the Delphic Oracle (22 issues from 1866 to 1870); the Stoic (12 issues from 1871 to 1872); the Dunedin Review (six issues from 1882 to 1886); and the Literary Magazine (six issues in 1885).
these pages". He was reviewing Thomas Bracken's *Flowers of the Free Lands* at the time, a collection of verse which had previously appeared "in the columns of various New Zealand and Australian newspapers, and...British and American periodicals". The *New Zealand Magazine* was not impressed. "The very qualities which acquired for some of his productions an ephemeral fame as scraps of newspaper literature, must preclude them from securing anything higher and more solid". The reviewer concluded with "a word of advice": Bracken ought to "give all the leisure of the next few years of his life to the study of the best masters of lyric poetry" if he was ever to discover that "something higher". Bracken's collection, ironically, was dedicated to Marcus Clarke: "a Writer whose works have contributed largely to raise the standard and elevate the tone of


61 Ibid., pp. [190]-191, 197.
Australasian Literature".  

After only eight years in New Zealand Bracken had already caught the characteristic phraseology of his critics.

By the 1880s appeals for an elevated tone of New Zealand life appeared to be bearing more, if not better, fruit. While only two periodicals devoted to literature emerged in the 'seventies, eleven were founded during the next decade.  

Some, like two more

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62. "Flowers of the Free Lands" (Dunedin, 1877), p. [iii]. After spending thirteen years in Australia, in 1869 Bracken took up journalism in New Zealand at the age of 26. While he was editor of the Dunedin Saturday Advertiser in 1875 he ran a competition requesting music for his verse "God Defend New Zealand" (published as "National Hymn" in Flowers of the Free Lands); through the efforts of a Post Office engineer the Government adopted "God Defend New Zealand" as New Zealand's "national hymn" in 1940. Before his death in 1898 Bracken published twelve volumes and pamphlets containing his verse, including one while he was still in Australia: The Haunted Vale; a Legend of the Murray, and Other Poems and Lyrics (Sandhurst, 1867). T.M. Hocken incorrectly notes that Behind the Tomb (Melbourne, 1871) was Bracken's earliest collected publication (Bibliography of Literature Relating to New Zealand [Wellington, 1909], p. 271).

63. See Park, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-7.
of James Grant's periodicals, were simply platforms for an eccentric; the majority, however, were established in the cause of "general literature", and invited contributions from all sections of New Zealand society. Only the annual production of the Otago University students' association in Dunedin lasted more than two years, but during their brief - and in the case of the New Zealand Illustrated Annual (1880-1) and the monthly Zealandia (1889-90), relatively distinguished - careers, several were anxious to publish the fiction and verse of local authors. Although standards slipped, and the quality of their political and anthropological commentary overshadowed that of their imaginative writing, an informed audience was growing.

The appearance of these journals was itself another reflection of the provincial world of journalism, one demonstrated to J.A. Froude on his brief visit to New Zealand during the 'eighties. The moment he was off the boat, he wrote, interviewers were "down upon us, demanding our opinion, as if at the pistol's mouth, about confederation, about the Egyptian war, about the quarrel with Russia, the House
of Commons vote, the New South Wales contingent...."

New Zealand during the 'eighties was indeed well served by daily newspapers of an unexpectedly articulate character. Even the Bulletin in Sydney noted rather wonderingly in 1885 that New Zealand's population of "only 500,000 supports 100 newspapers", of which thirty were dailies. New South Wales, on the other hand, with a population nearly double that of New Zealand, maintained "not more than a dozen daily papers". 65

The Bulletin suggested nothing about the quality of these dailies, but comparative statistics can be revealing. In 1882 New Zealand supported four times as many daily newspapers per capita as both New South Wales and Victoria. 66 New Zealanders,


65 23 May 1885, p. 22. Although the source of these statistics was not given in the Bulletin's paragraph, it was clearly The Australasian Printer's Keepsake: a Selection of Tales, Essays, Sketches, and Verse, Illustrative of the Craft in Australia, by Victorian Compositors (Melbourne, 1885).

66 As well as listing the number of newspapers which appeared other than daily in New South Wales and Victoria during 1882, the Printer's Keepsake noted that New South Wales supported nine dailies (four in Sydney and five "country"), and that Victoria supported eighteen (six in Melbourne, twelve "country"). The total population
moreover, imported over two million newspapers (one-quarter of them from Australia) in 1881: an average of one newspaper a month for every family of three.  
And the variety of overseas magazines circulating in New Zealand was also wide, if the evidence of a "working man" on the reading room of the Christchurch Working Men's Club is representative. The Club, in 1880, subscribed to the Graphic, Illustrated London News, Punch, Builder, Family Herald, Australasian, Melbourne Leader, "and others". The hunger for information, apparently, was as well-developed in New Zealand as the need to publish verse.  

of New South Wales (809,403) and Victoria (892,765) was 1,702,168 in 1882; thus there was one daily paper for approximately every 63,000 inhabitants of the two colonies. New Zealand supported 35 daily papers at the same time; on the basis of her total population at the 1881 census (534,030), New Zealand had one daily paper for approximately every 15,260 inhabitants, or four times the per capita average in New South Wales and Victoria combined.  

More precisely, 508,408 newspapers were received by post from Australia, and 1,542,029 from overseas points other than Australia. Quoted in R.D. Arnold, "New Zealand in Australasia, 1890-1914" (University of Melbourne, unpublished M.A. thesis, 1952), Table VI at p. 35.  

The Battle of Life, or Reminiscences of a Working Man (Christchurch, 1881), p. 137.
Public libraries, too, were expanding, although none so handsomely as the Auckland Public Library, thanks to Sir George Grey's munificent bequest in 1887. His eight thousand volumes more than doubled the library's holdings. Significantly enough, Sir George took the opportunity at the "grand opening ceremony" on 26 March to speak to the "rising generation" of New Zealanders. Among his audience, he believed, "there are many who will endeavour to qualify themselves to pursue that difficult task which it is their duty to carry out - to render New Zealand, their own home, a model to this part of the world."

Here, Sir George continued, "here may arise a population that will be a model to all who are in this part of the world, fitted to exercise the duties of government throughout the whole Pacific, and to consolidate the Anglo-Saxon power in this portion of the Southern Hemisphere". His audience knew precisely to

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69"Sir George Grey's Address", General Catalogue of the Grey Collection...Auckland Free Public Library (Auckland, 1888), p. xiii. A preliminary count of the catalogue's main literary section suggests that he gave 133 "prose works of fiction" (in 209 volumes), of which four may be considered New Zealand novels; and 206 volumes of verse, including 23 by New Zealanders.
whom he was referring, the nation for which New Zealand would be a "model". Prolonged applause following his address was cut off by the choral society singing "Ye nations offer to the Lord wisdom and might."

iv. The 'Eighties

Grey was one of New Zealand's most distinguished public men: twice her Governor, and once the country's Premier. But in 1887 he was 75; was the young rising generation confident enough of a "national feeling" in New Zealand to respond to the call of "duty"? Sir Robert Stout seemed to think so, when he told the House of Representatives in Wellington that "we have a national feeling in New Zealand, weak, exceedingly weak, at present, but yearly getting stronger." Australia, however, still presented a marked contrast:

there is a far stronger national feeling in Australia than in New Zealand. One cannot be in Melbourne for instance, without realising that there exists a feeling of Australia for the Australians such as does not exist in New Zealand.... I was struck with the strength of feeling amongst all classes that Australia was a nation that had national life and feeling.70

70New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 50 (1884), 515, quoted in Arnold, op. cit., p. 13.
When he turned to the subject of a "national literature" in 1890, Stout was as guarded as he had been in the House six years earlier. Writing an historical sketch for the verse "musings" of Thomas Bracken, he observed once more:

> a national feeling is no doubt arising among us. We are forgetting we are English, Irish, Scotch, German, or Norse, and we are coming to feel that we are New Zealanders. As the years roll on there will be still greater solidarity, and that seems needed before a national literature can arise.\(^{71}\)

Yet only five years earlier James Adams had introduced William Wills' verse with high praise because Wills was "helping to create a national feeling".\(^{72}\) The pioneering optimism of the Imperial design had apparently foundered on the dilemma of the 'eighties. New Zealand literature must create a national feeling, but without a national feeling there would be little New Zealand literature.

It was during the 'eighties that native-born

\(^{71}\)"The Rise and Progress of New Zealand", Musings in Maoriland (Dunedin, 1890), p. 19.

\(^{72}\)"Introduction" to A Bunch of Wild Pansies (Auckland, 1885), p. 11.
Europeans began to outnumber immigrants; for the first time a New Zealand poet could dedicate an "epic poem" to the native-born children of European parents. And it was during the eighties, for those who cared to think about it, that New Zealand emerged as simply another materialistic colony. Despite the introduction of free, secular, and compulsory primary education in 1877, and the spread of university education, the sons of the pioneers failed to share in their fathers' vision of a cultural Athens of the South.

The malaise of the 'eighties was principally economic, as Julius Vogel's expansionist economic policies of the 'seventies -- which in the twentieth

73 In 1864, 75% of New Zealand's Pakeha population was overseas-born; the census of 1886 was the first to reveal that native-born New Zealanders formed a majority of the Pakeha population.

74 James Meek, An Epic Poem (Christchurch, 1886). The dedication to the poem ("New Zealand") appears on the paper wrappers.

75 The University of Otago was founded in 1869; in 1873, together with the newly-created Canterbury College, it affiliated with a statutory examining body, the University of New Zealand. Auckland University College opened in 1883, and Victoria University College was created in 1897.
century might be regarded as Keynesian -- led only to a massive loss of confidence by the London money market in 1880. For the first time in forty years Australia offered brighter prospects for labour and capital than New Zealand. Migration between Australia and New Zealand, for instance, had supplied New Zealand with an average net gain of 731 immigrants per year between 1882 and 1884. As the depression intensified, New Zealand suffered an average loss of nearly 3,500 emigrants annually from 1885 to 1892.76

When the search for employment overshadowed the search for a "national feeling" in New Zealand, even the Imperial design appeared to fade away. James Adams was not merely acknowledging the optimism of New Zealand literature's first forty years when he praised William Wills' verse in 1885. In terms dangerously close to those of Australian literary nationalism, Adams also claimed that "in a young colony like ours everything has to be created. A new order

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76 Calculated from "Gain or Less to New Zealand on Intercolonial Migration" in Arnold, op. cit., Table I at p. 25.
of things is being brought about. Our colonial youth will never be content with weak and worn out systems from the Old World."

Adams soon regained his hold on high seriousness. The poet, he said, would contribute to the formation of New Zealand's national feeling not by exalting the country's scenic grandeur, but "by exciting those passions which lead to eminence and renown, to infuse a spirit of admiration for what is good and excellent, sublime and daring." Wills' verse, paradoxically, was helping create the "new order" because it offered an escape from the somewhat tarnished New Zion: "he bids us rise from our sordid grovelings, to come away from our depressing associations, and hoist our sail to the breeze; to rise and be off to the woodlands...."

This view of literature, and especially of poetry, was scarcely new in New Zealand. It was, in fact, an aspect of that high seriousness which impelled William Golder to set up a handpress in his cottage at


78 Ibid., pp. 11, 10.
Lower Hutt expressly to crank out his epic poem

*The Philosophy of Love: a Plea in Defence of Virtue and Truth!* (1871). And so in the 'eighties John Plimmer, "the father of Wellington", chose to write of *A Trip through Fairy Land*[^79], while Matthew Kirkbride wrote somewhat more certainly of ancient Britain.[^80]

The assumption behind these works was that of Ernest Eugster of Auckland when in 1889 he compiled his "collection of 125 choice poems, gathered in many lands." Poetry, as his anthology's title expressed it, was simply intended to bring *Words of Cheer for Young and Old*.

What was new in the literature of the 'eighties was a reaction against the idea that literature could create a "national feeling" in New Zealand, or at least an acknowledgment that it had failed to do so. The reason, Ebenezer Hay told the Otago University Debating Society in 1881, lay in the failure of New Zealanders to appreciate that only "older communities

[^79]: Plimmer (1812-1905) published his poem in Wellington in 1884.

[^80]: The Arch-Druid (London, 1885).
than ours" can bring forth truly contemplative and imaginative men. As John Christie wrote 22 years later,

How slow men of real literary gifts are to learn that literature cannot possibly be produced by celebrating the ephemerally notable persons of given localities or countries, or by panegyrising moribund queens or fledgling kings, municipal water-troughs, missionary meetings or the guzzling gatherings of testimonial mongers.

New Zealanders, clearly, were not those "contemplative and imaginative men", the "finer and maturer fruit of humanity" described by Ebenezer Hay. "As a baleful consequence" of being colonials, Hay suggested, "that unlovely and featureless idol - commonplace - find votaries in us all." Wordsworth showed how hollow mere "worldliness" really was, and "amid the sordid and debasing influences of colonial life - especially in cities - it is simply priceless to be able, by a mere act of volition, to transport ourselves into a region of poetry."

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81 Some Characteristics of Wordsworth's Poetry and their Lessons for Us (Dunedin, 1881), p. 4.

82 About Poets and Poetry; with Special Reference to "Heather and Fern": J. Liddell Kelly's Place in Literature and his Views on "Unconquerable Woman" (Wellington, 1903), p. 15.

New Zealand's landscape, of course, continued to be celebrated as energetically during the 'eighties as it had during the forty years previously. The results -- such as Alexander McKay's portrait of streams of water flowing over the bust of Westland's Mount Christina -- tended to be equally unfortunate.\(^{84}\)

For literary nationalists in New Zealand, unlike those in Australia, instinctively turned from their environment to its inhabitants. Echoing Samuel Butler, Robert Jackson lamented the frustrations of New Zealand's social climate in the 'eighties:

We've all that nature can bestow
On worthless mortals here below --
Unsullied gems perpetual glow
Before our eyes;
But ah, in intellect how slow
To seize the prize.\(^{85}\)

\(^{84}\) Lines Written on a Scene from Lake Harris Saddle (1880).

\(^{85}\) "Retrospective", Nospur Poems, Songs and Sonnets (Hokitika, 1884), p. 6. Jackson's "gems" were not metaphoric; earlier in the poem he referred to the "sparkling diamond, silver, gold" of New Zealand (beside which a reader has scribbled "never heard of any" in the Alexander Turnbull Library's copy). See Butler's A First Year in Canterbury Settlement (London, 1863); P.B. Maling, Samuel Butler at Mesopotamia (Wellington, 1960); and Joseph Jones, The Cradle of Erewhon (Melbourne, 1960).
The most significant result of this sense of thwarted destiny, curiously, was a growing body of political satire. Political "hymns", a "freethought ramble", the "colonial couplets" of two politicians, all began streaming off the presses of job printeries and newspaper offices. Earlier decades certainly did not lack local satirists, such as "Silver Pen" (Mrs. Corlett), John Barr, and Charles Thatcher. But the 'eighties first witnessed New Zealand authors, particularly poets, turning their high seriousness from celebration to overt political condemnation, and from the search for literary standards to the search for social justice.

While few literary nationalists saw New Zealand's plight during the depression in the same terms as James Meek (it was among other reasons, he felt, because of "the want of a National Bank of Issue"),

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86 See "Sam Slick"'s New Political Hymn (Oamaru; North Otago Times, 1884); "Ravensworth"'s Was it to Fade? A Freethought Ramble (Auckland: Evening Bell, 1886); and George Williams and William Pember Reeves' Colonial Couplets (Christchurch, 1889).

87 Parliamentary Skits and Sketches (Wellington, 1871). She published a second series under the same title in 1872.
most were agreed that poetry and prose had a vital role in correcting their countrymen's wanderings away from the Zion of the Pacific. Fewer still completely rejected Ebenezer Hay's belief that "worldliness" was commonplace. Like Jessie Mackay, they attacked the "sitter on the rail" who ignored the economic plight of his fellows; and like her, they continued to write verses on "The Gospel of the Nazarene" and "Dawn". High seriousness remained literary nationalism's link between the potholed road to Wanganui and the laborious road to heaven.

By the end of the 'eighties, then, the realities of New Zealand's economy seemed far removed from the old dream of Eden with a verandah. Nevertheless the literary dream persisted, for literary nationalists had never seriously attempted to define a New Zealand "reality". The mood of romance was as strong in New Zealand as it was in Australia: literary nationalists in both countries -- with distinctly differently motives -- were determined to recreate their environments.

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88 An Epic Poem, p. 6.

89 The Sitter on the Rail and Other Poems (Christchurch, 1891), pp. [1]-5, 34, 19.
imaginatively by idealizing them.

Writing in the 'nineties revealed just how different these motives were. In Australia, for the first time since the convict days, the directions of literary nationalism were altered by a challenge to the mood of romance. The source of the change was a violent literary debate about the special qualities of life in Australia, and (not unexpectedly) the "reality" of Australia's recreated landscape.

New Zealanders, on the other hand, had dissociated themselves from Australia by insisting on the maintenance of the British connection. And by insisting on the highest standards for their literature -- achieved or not -- New Zealand authors willingly confirmed their provincialism. This provincialism, in the terms of "Emerson's Law", did indeed produce academic, imitative, and second-rate writing. But it was not pretentious, as the British-Australasian's reviewer said of Australian verse; New Zealanders had at least "reached and maintained a very high level".

The sons of the pioneers were disillusioned at New Zealand's failure to generate either a "national feeling" or a national literature. Their
doubts about New Zealand's future, stimulated by the depression of the 'eighties, led in the 'nineties to an acknowledgment of New Zealand's severe limitations as the new Britain of the South. Politically, this acknowledgment created a special understanding of New Zealand's difficulties, and New Zealand came to be called the social laboratory of the world. Could literary nationalists do the same for literature? The answer lay not in an Australian debate, but in an ambiguous literary dialogue about the special qualities of New Zealand's limited life. One of the major parties to the dialogue, ironically, was Australian literature itself.

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90 By Herbert Asquith; New Zealand, he said, was "a laboratory in which political and social experiments are every day made for the information and instruction of the older countries of the world" (quoted in Sinclair, op. cit., p. 183).
Australia is eminently worthy to be loved -- both the actual land and the national ideal.

--A.G. Stephens, Sydney, 9 December 1899

The future Australian raised on your teaching would be a cynical wreck.

--A.E. Currie to A.G. Stephens, Christchurch, 2 June 1902

1Henry Lawson, Bulletin, 27 February 1897, "Red Page". The Bulletin is hereafter cited as BR.

AN AUSTRALIAN DEBATE

The bush bard...is temporarily blinded to the Real by the intensity of his vision of the Ideal. Sun-pictures fade idly on his retina; his brain is stimulated by a Light from Within.¹

"Every culture", R.W.B. Lewis has suggested, "seems, as it advances toward maturity, to produce its own determining debate over the ideas that preoccupy it."² In the nineteenth century, Australians certainly participated enthusiastically in numerous debates over the great issues of each decade: civil and religious liberties, economic theory, and the political future of the colonies. Although many of these issues were resolved by the end of the century, none of them had emerged as Australia's "own determining debate".

¹Henry Lawson, Bulletin, 27 February 1897, "Red Page". The Bulletin is hereafter cited as TB.

Australia's culture was still unformed, if Lewis is also correct in suggesting that the debate "may be said to be the culture, at least on its loftiest levels; for a culture achieves identity not so much through the ascendancy of one particular set of convictions as through the emergence of its peculiar and distinctive dialogue."

In 1892, however, readers of the Bulletin saw the beginnings of a controversy which developed into the single most significant event in the history of Australian literary nationalism. This controversy, with Henry Lawson at its centre, was in fact a coherent debate about the nature of Australia and the role of literature in shaping a colonial society. It was not the only debate in the Bulletin's columns, nor was it regarded at the time as an influential contribution to Australia's intellectual history, but the literary issues it raised later provided a focus for other non-literary debates, and helped draw them together into a distinguishing cultural dialogue.

3Ibid., p. 2.
Perhaps because it was not conducted at any particularly lofty level, the importance of the debate has been underestimated in Australian literary history. It began as a duel in doggerel between Henry Lawson and "Banjo" Paterson, and the biographers of both Lawson and Paterson, among others, have been content to accept Paterson's later recollections of the "undignified affair". But it did not stop there, and the literary results of the debate have become in the twentieth century a primary source of the Australian "identity" itself.

i. Lawson and Paterson

Writing nearly 47 years after the debate began, Paterson recalled how Lawson "suggested that we should write against each other, he putting the bush from his point of view, and I putting it from mine. 'We ought to do pretty well out of it,' he said; 'we ought to be able to get in three or four sets of

verses before they stop us." The origins of the
debate may indeed have been as frivolous as
Paterson remembered. Or perhaps he was attempting to
convince himself - and his readers - that it was less
bitter than it actually was. The issue at stake,
in any case (and despite what was written later) was
literature in Australia, not friendship or class con-
sciousness.5

5Sydney Morning Herald, 11 February 1939.
Referring to Arthur Jose's statement that "relations
between the Bulletin's two chief bards were usually
on the edge of animosity" (The Romantic Nineties
[Sydney, 1933], p. 18), Semmler devotes two pages of
his Banjo of the Bush to showing that "the truth is
that Paterson was on friendly terms with the Lawsons
for many years" (pp. 85-6). His only evidence,
curiously, is Paterson's own statements and the fact
that Paterson acted as Angus and Robertson's legal
advisor in publishing arrangements with Lawson. Yet
although Lawson's wife Bertha meticulously recorded
Lawson's friends in her reminiscences My Henry Lawson
(Sydney, 1943), she did not mention Paterson at all.
Prout, on the other hand, believes that even if the
debate was staged, it revealed "a deep and irreconcil-
able clash of views between the two men: one, in many
ways, the spokesman of the squattocracy and the
station owners, the other the champion of those born
and bred in the hells of city and bush slums" (op. cit.,
p. 102).
Lawson began the debate by publishing his "Borderland" in the Bulletin on 9 July 1892. This light piece of doggerel was a frontal attack on literary nationalism's mood of romance, the mood

prompting innumerable poets to idealise Australia's arid outback "bush":

I am back from up the country -- very sorry that I went --
Seeking for the Southern poets' land whereon to pitch my tent;
I have lost a lot of idols, which were broken on the track --
Burnt a lot of fancy verses, and I'm glad that I am back.
Further out may be the pleasant scenes of which our poets boast,
But I think the country's rather more inviting round the coast.

He then turned to the conventions of idealisation.
The "sunny plains" of the bush were actually "burning wastes of barren soil and sand"; its "peaks", stunted masses of glaring granite; its "ranges", barren ridges; and its "shining rivers", "strings of muddy waterholes".

The bush, moreover, rather than breeding a new race of free men embodying the virtues of the "true" Australia, had instead produced a barbarised race of "gaunt and haggard women" who "live alone and work like men". Lawson's lighthearted conclusion - that he will stay in town drinking beer and lemon-squashes - scarcely concealed his serious intent:

I believe the Southern poet's dream will not be realised
Till the plains are irrigated and the land is humanised.
The Australian environment, that is, had to be seen as it is: fit for idealised description only if it is changed. If man is to conquer the land before he is conquered by it, he must seize it completely, "humanise" it by accepting, understanding, and describing its grim reality.

Paterson, by 1892 one of the Bulletin's best-known authors of romantic "bush poetry", replied to Lawson two weeks later. The title of "In Defence of the Bush" indicates how thoroughly he misunderstood Lawson's "Borderland", or at least how determined he was to evade the literary issue.\(^7\) For this first poem "In Defence of the Bush" -- his only two contributions to the debate both had the same title -- was an

\(^7\) TB, 23 July 1892, p. 15. Signed "The Banjo". Semmler's scholarship must be treated with the most extreme caution; referring to this verse, he notes at p. 81 that "Paterson retorted with a forty-line poem (23 July -- the same issue that carried Lawson's memorable short story 'The Drover's Wife'...)", and then proceeds to quote, not from the Bulletin version, but from that in a later collection of Paterson's verse. In the nine lines of "In Defence of the Bush" quoted by Semmler, the Bulletin version differs on eleven points: one of substance, eight of punctuation, and two of transcription error.
inexplicably personal diatribe against Lawson himself. To Lawson's charge that the bush would never be understood by romanticising it, Paterson replied that Lawson was grossly misleading. Instead of describing the bush as a "land of no delight", Lawson should have told of the singing "in the shearers' huts at night", the carol of the magpies, and the "chiming of the bell-birds". "But, perchance, the wild birds' music by your senses was despised". If (as he suggested in 1939) Paterson knew Lawson well enough to agree to a contrived debate, then he also knew about Lawson's chronic deafness.⁸

⁸"When I was nine years old there happened a thing which was to cloud my whole life, to drive me into myself, and to be, perhaps, in a great measure responsible for my writing": Lawson suffered an excruciating earache which left him slightly deaf "till I was fourteen, when I became as deaf as I am now" (Mitchell Library, "A Fragment of Autobiography", quoted in Cecil Mann, ed., The Stories of Henry Lawson (Sydney, 1964), I, 16-17). This autobiography -- one of four written by Lawson -- has been variously dated as 1904 (Mann, ibid., [58]); 1907 (Colin Roderick, "Henry Lawson's Norwegian Forebears", Southerly, XXIV, 3 [1964], 150); and (most probable) "about" 1903 (George Robertson, Mitchell Library, Uncatalogued MSS set 426, item 26). The MS of the latest of Lawson's four autobiographies, written in 1913, is held by the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. See W.H. Pearson, "Lawson Manuscripts in New Zealand, and a Note on Lawson's Autobiographies", BiblioneWS, ser. 2, II, 3-4 (July-October 1967), 6-14. Dr. Pearson has described Cecil
As for Lawson's attacks on the conventions of idealisation, Paterson suggested that Lawson was merely ignorant. The bush changed with the seasons, as any "loyal" bushman knew. And those barbarised inhabitants of the bush:

the women of the homesteads and the men you chanced to meet --

Were their faces sour and saddened like your "faces in the street",
And the "shy selector children" -- were they better now or worse

Than the city urchins mentioned who would greet you with a curse?⁹

Lawson, of course, had consistently attacked the dehumanising influences of urban life in his verse and stories, just as he had suggested in "His Father's Mate" how man

Mann's version of this autobiography -- taken from one of two typescripts held by the Mitchell Library, and published in Southerly, XXIV, 4 (1964) -- as "edited" (op. cit., 14); I suggest from my own collation of the MS, two typescripts, and published version that it was heavily edited.

⁹Paterson is referring to Lawson's verse "Faces in the Street", TB, 28 July 1888, p. 17. The phrase "shy selector children" is a misquotation of Lawson's "wild selector's children" in "Borderland".
could triumph over that barren landscape of the outback which was his moral allegory. Paterson concluded that Lawson

had better stick to Sydney and make merry with "the push",

For the bush will never suit you, and you'll never suit the bush.

Lawson could scarcely have missed the irony of being associated with the larrikin gangs he detested as symptoms of the depersonalised city, as well as being told that he would "never suit the bush" on the very day that the Bulletin published "The Drover's Wife".\(^\text{10}\)

In his "Answer to 'Banjo'", Lawson attempted a systematic reply to all of Paterson's accusations.\(^\text{11}\)

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\(^\text{10}\) Lawson's belated response was "Billy's 'Square Affair'", ibid., 2 November 1892, p. 17, a rare example of Lawson publishing verse in the Bulletin anonymously. When he chose to be published pseudonymously, during the 'nineties, he usually used "H.L.", "Joe Swallow", and "J.S." The verse carried the headnote: "A Sydney larrikin ballad, by a just-discovered genius, describing how the captain of the 'Gory Bleeder' push sought his affinity. The ballad is to be sung slightly through the nose to some old tune that fits it."

\(^\text{11}\) Ibid., 6 August 1892, p. 5. "In Answer to 'Banjo,' and otherwise" was reprinted in Days When the World Was Wide as "The City Bushman" (p. 147), revised to exclude references to Paterson himself. Semmler introduces his quotation from this verse as Lawson's "next sally which came to light (6 August)...", although the sixteen lines quoted in his Banjo of the Bush (pp. 82-3) appear in no known edition of Lawson's verse. Semmler's version differs from that published in the
Although he was quick to point out that Paterson was a confirmed city-dweller despite his romanticisation of the bush (and quoted some of Paterson's lines back at him to show that bush life was not all pleasant) his central concern was to return the debate to its literary basis. The bushman was not "a poet's dummy"; "Droving songs are very pretty, but they merit little thanks / From the people of a country which is ridden by the Banks":

Ah! we read about the drovers and the shearers and the like 
Till we wonder why such happy and romantic fellows "strike".
Don't you fancy that the poets better give the bush a rest
Ere they raise a just rebellion in the over-written West?

The "Eldorado of the poets of the West" may come, Lawson suggests, but not until Australian authors

Bulletin on twenty-two points -- ten of punctuation and twelve of substance -- and appears to be a pastiche of the Bulletin version, David McKee Wright's version, and errors in transcription. No further collation of Semmler's book is attempted in this essay.
portray exactly the conditions that must be reformed. In a postscript to his verse Lawson admitted that he too longed "to gallop where the reckless bushman rides", "to feel once more a little like a 'native of the land!'", and to know that "the ring of bitter feeling in the jingling of our rhymes / Isn't suited to the country nor the spirit of the times." Until that time, however, he suggests that Paterson and he should go droving together and return - characteristically adding "if we live" - and "understand each other while we liquor up the 'div'.'

Before Paterson replied, Lawson satirized him more personally in "The Grog-an'-Grumble Steeplechase". Describing a horse-race in an imaginary bush town, "in the days before the bushman was a dull 'n' heartless drudge", Lawson told how a motley horse from the bush, "the Screamer", beat a "city racer by the name of Holy Terror" by sticking out its tongue at the finish line. Protests followed from a "sportsman from the

12 Ibid., 10 September 1892, p. 20. Signed "Joseph Swallow. (Revised by Jimmy Nowlett.)"
city" (undoubtedly meant to represent Paterson, who is also "Holy Terror"), but the assembled drovers "dropped him in the river and forgot to pull him out".

Lawson might have been less oblique if he had seen Paterson's second "Defence of the Bush".\textsuperscript{13} Despite his proposal of an agreement to differ at the end of the verse, Paterson devoted his poem to a sustained attack on Lawson's abilities, integrity, and nationalism. Choosing to ignore Lawson's reason for beginning their debate, he accused Lawson of morbidity, "of writing about 'corpses' and 'the tomb'":

\begin{quote}
no doubt, the bush is wretched if you judge it by the groan
Of the sad and soulful poet with a graveyard of his own.
\end{quote}

Repeating his simple-minded charge that Lawson was in some way attacking the bush itself, Paterson implied that Lawson was opposed to a poet (such as himself) who "thinks there's something healthy in the bushlife after all." The bushman can stand the rough life

\textsuperscript{13}"In Defence of the Bush", \textit{ibid.}, 1 October 1892, p. 2. Subtitled "In Answer to Various Bards".
"if he's built of sterling stuff"; Lawson would presumably have Australians herd into the cities, let us crush and crowd and push
Till we lose the love of roving and we learn to hate the bush;
And we'll turn our aspirations to a city life and beer,
And we'll sneak across to England - it's a nicer place than here.

Paterson's motives in consistently turning a literary debate into a malicious and personal attack are uncertain; whatever Paterson's intentions, however, his charges would haunt Lawson for at least a decade.

Lawson was obviously puzzled by Paterson's second "Defence of the Bush", and the Bulletin printed his "Poets of the Tomb" a week later.\textsuperscript{14} Refuting the charge that his verse was morbid, he continued to expand his defence into a more general theme: literature's value as an instrument for the reformation of the present state of Australian society. The real "poets of the tomb" were those "bush poets" (as the Bulletin called them) who perpetuated the conventions

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., 8 October 1892, p. 20.
of romantic melancholy, those writers of "vanished hopes" who refused to acknowledge life around them:

so long as sheoaks sigh and wattle-blossoms bloom,
The world shall hear the drivel of the poets of the tomb.

Lawson had begun the debate with three charges: that idealization of the bush falsified the "true" Australia, that the conventional diction of idealization was a barrier to accepting the outback as it was, and that the outback's real inhabitants could not be understood as long as the bushman of literary romance continued to be celebrated. Paterson's first answer was wholly disingenuous, for he turned the question away from literature: Lawson was not only denouncing Australia's outback and her people, but was also suggesting that urban life in Australia was more desirable than bush life.

His second answer was more insidious, for he linked Lawson's (and by implication, any) attack on idealisation with unhealthy morbidity and a variety of anti-Australianism. Lawson's challenge to romance, in other words, attacked literary nationalism, whereas Lawson issued his challenge in the name of literary
nationalism. The result, for Lawson's future writing, was a stream of criticism of the calibre of A.G. Stephens': "Lawson hates the bush; he is blind to its beauty, deaf to the cheerful strain heard continually through the sighing of the wilderness."\(^\text{15}\)

Perhaps not coincidentally, it was at this time -- "towards the end of '92" -- that Lawson "got £5 and a railway-ticket from the Bulletin and went to Bourke".\(^\text{16}\) Whether or not Paterson's charges were responsible for Lawson's roaming, it did more than confirm his childhood memories of bush life. Like Stephen Crane's wanderings in the American west, Lawson's trip supplied material for some of his most mature work. And through his work, Lawson introduced a new mode of realism into Australian literature.

\(^{15}\text{Quoted in Macartney’s edition of Miller, Australian Literature, p. 282.}\)

\(^{16}\text{‘Pursuing Literature’ in Australia”, TB, 21 January 1899, "Red Page".}\)
The debate, far from being over, had just begun. With the two cases put by Lawson and Paterson, the Bulletin opened its columns to other contributors; interestingly enough, the earliest reactions attacked Paterson's position nearly unanimously. "H.H.C.C."'s "The Overflow of Clancy (On Reading the Banjo's 'Clancy of the Overflow')" satirised the "bush-struck towny" who perpetuates the conventions of "wattle and the bushman's lonely grave" in his "romances", and contrasted life under "the comic-op'ra stars" with the life the poet had experienced as a bushman.17 Francis Kenna, writing as "K", noted in "Banjo, of the Overflow" how he was
tired of reading prattle of the sweetly-
lowing cattle
Stringing out across the open with the bushman riding free,
and pictures himself as "Clancy of the Overflow" asking Paterson for a loan:

17 Ibid., 20 August 1892, p. 21. I have been unable to identify "H.H.C.C." When searching has failed to reveal the identity of any pseudonymous contributor to the Bulletin, citations below include the note "author unidentified".
My request was not requited, for an answer came indited
On a sheet of scented paper, in an ink of fancy blue;
And the envelope, I fancy, had an "Esquire" to the Clancy.\textsuperscript{18}

Even the title of "M.T."'s "An Unorthodox Wail" suggests the strength of the convention of celebrating bush life romantically. The author attacked both the stock phrases of colonial romanticism – specifically citing "solitudes awesome", "infinite space", and "the wail of the plover", among others – as well as "bush poetry" itself:

The sight of "a drover" is deadly,
The "crack of his whip" drives me mad,
The low of wild cattle's depressing,
And "the bleat of the sheep" quite as bad.

The bell-birds may chime for the poets,
I pine for the shriek of a tram.\textsuperscript{19}

W.E. Carew, however, wanted to make a simpler point.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., 27 August 1892, p. 17. \\
\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., 3 September 1892, p. 14. Author "M.T." ("empty") unidentified.
\end{flushright}
His "Tommy's Hut", sentimental verse about the good old days at a ruined bush shanty, ended as

the dark enleadened scrawling shadows strive to tell

Of the men the bush has deadened with its mystic, subtle spell. 20

Lawson's original case for an Australian realism was obviously becoming obscured, as Edward Dyson further demonstrated. Dyson had already asked Paterson (without naming him) "why those fellows who go buildin' chipper ditties / 'Bout the rosy times out drovin' and' th' dust an' death of cities" don't leave the cities and live in the bush. 21 A few weeks later, in "Re Those Bards", he apparently thought that the debate could be resolved by his observation that the Australian outback "plains" were both "splendid" and "dreadful":

it depends on when they're seen.

And so the bards who bless the bush, or damn it in a song --

They both are right, but each of them decidedly is wrong. 22

20 Ibid., 4 February 1893, p. 23. Italics in original.


22 Ibid., 10 September 1892, p. 5. Signed "E.D." Dyson also wrote as "Silas Snell", "S. Snell", and "S.S."
John LeGay Brereton was at least aware that Lawson was talking about literature. His verse "From Shadowland", a reference to Lawson's "Borderland", ended with a toast to Lawson, but challenged him for not knowing Australia's "sons of sin from sons of Song." Realism, that is, was not a proper mode for verse.

Nevertheless for "Toby Twist", as well as for numerous later contributors to the Bulletin, the debate raised a more disquieting problem. He acknowledged the central issue at stake, but, as he put it in "On the Road":

This realism blasts another romance of my youth:
I recollect in boyhood's days I deemed the frowsy "bluey"
A theme for admiration. Ere I cut a wisdom-tooth
I reverenced the "billy" and the weird, romantic "coo-ee".
I don't know that I'm better, if I'm wiser, for the truth.24

Lawson, in the meantime, began sending the Bulletin what he found to be the truth about Australia.

23 Ibid., 3 September 1892, p. 15.
24 Ibid., 13 May 1893, p. 16. Author unidentified.
The first literary result of his six-month trip to New South Wales' desolate interior was his well-known sketch "In a Dry Season". Less well-known is that it was written as an explicit answer to Paterson. In the original version published in the Bulletin on 5 November 1892, Lawson ended the sketch with a note that it "is written more in sorrow than anything else, and if it lacks interest it isn't my fault." Each paragraph, in fact, was a reply to one of Paterson's

The text of Lawson's prose is wholly corrupt. The standard of scholarship in available editions is that revealed by Cecil Mann (1896-1967) in his three-volume Stories of Henry Lawson, published as recently as 1964. His "guiding standard" was to preserve, "in the text, fair-average-quality Lawson for general readers rather than for particular specialists":

The "f.a.q." standard followed is that long established in the old collected edition, the nine books of which are included unaltered, save for minor emendations after collating anything doubtful with what seem the most authentic texts. There are a good many of these slight alterations, mostly typographical, and hardly any of them important: all that has been sought is to have a sound text.

("Introduction" to I, ix).

Mann was referring to the Prose Works of Henry Lawson, first published in two volumes by the Home Entertainment Library, (Melbourne, 1935), an edition apparently based on the same principles followed by Mann.
specific accusations, from the suggestion that his work was morbid ("Death is about the only cheerful thing in the bush") to the charge that he did not know the country ("Somebody said to me, 'Yer wanter go outback, young man, if yer wanter see the country....' I don't wanter; I've been there.")

The companion to this story, "In a Wet Season", published in the Bulletin one year later, was similarly intended as an answer to Paterson.26 "In a Dry Season" ends as a train pulls into drought-stricken Bourke; the second piece begins with a train leaving Bourke in the rain. Again Lawson described the erstwhile heroes of Paterson's balladry as he saw them: at their best, "cheerfully and patiently dismal", and at their worst, "apologies for men". And instead of Paterson's "vision splendid of the sunlit plains extended", Lawson found something closer to Marcus Clarke's "weird melancholy": "after Nyngan the bush grew darker and drearier, and the plains more like ghastly oceans; and here and there the 'dominant note

26 TB, 2 December 1893, p. 20.
of Australian scenery' was accentuated, as it were, by naked, white, ringbarked trees standing in the water and haunting the ghostly surroundings."

In the short prose sketches which followed his trip outback, Lawson finally raised the debate from rhetoric to fact. Instead of talking about the debate in rhetorical doggerel, his prose sustained his arguments by their accomplishment. The sardonic humour and fragmented detail of "Crawlalong" and "Hungerford" marked the beginning of Australian literary nationalism's new ironic mood. 27

Lawson was still preoccupied with Paterson's invective. In "Hungerford" he named a beaten-down old drover "Clancy"; as the sketch was first published in the Bulletin, Lawson wrote after Clancy's damnation of the Australian colonies, "Wonder whether he was 'Banjo's' Clancy, formerly of the Overflow?" And in "Saint Peter", for instance, published in the Bulletin two months after "Crawlalong", "Banjo" Paterson made another appearance:

27 Ibid., 4 February 1893, p. 15; 16 December 1893, p. 10.
I don't want to talk with angels
  Who have never been out back;
They might bother me with offers
  Of a banjo - meanin' well -
And a pair of wings to fly with,
  When I only want a spell.²⁸

But after 1893 Lawson's fiction spoke for itself, and he resorted to rhetoric only in his verse and criticism.

The crucial point of the debate was finally reached on 18 November 1893, when Lawson published an article on "Some Popular Australian Mistakes".²⁹

More than any other single critical document in the Australian 'nineties, this short disconnected column buried in the Bulletin is the focal point of a decade. "Some Popular Australian Mistakes" was Australia's first manifesto of literary realism.

²⁸Ibid., 8 April 1893, p. 19. Several other examples exist, such as "'Out Back'" (ibid., 30 September 1893, p. 19; also published in the Sydney Worker on 27 October 1894). In the Bulletin version lines 11 and 12 read:

(Ah, men of town! you have songs of woe to
tell of the rights you lack,
But only God and the swagmen know how a poor
man fares Out Back.)

Lawson revised line 11 for In the Days When the World Was Wide to read "The poor of the city have friends in woe, no matter how much they lack".

²⁹The origins of this article can be found in Lawson's note on "Bush Terms", published in the Worker on 14 October 1893.
The article consists of twenty-three points of fact and a conclusion. Most of Lawson's points concerned terminology in Australian writing, ranging from a simple statement on the correct use of slang ("swag", "sundowners", and "super.") to observations on romantic diction ("there are no 'mountains' out West; only ridges on the floors of hell.") Conventions of characterisation were attacked as strongly as those of diction, for man, Lawson recognized early, was the true subject of literary nationalism: "the poetical bushman does not exist; the majority of the men out-back now are from the cities. The real native out-back bushman is narrow-minded, densely ignorant, invulnerably thick-headed. How could he be otherwise?" His conclusion was so baldly and clearly stated that even Paterson could not misunderstand it:

We wish to heaven that Australian writers would leave off trying to make a paradise out of the Out Back Hell; if only out of consideration for the poor, hopeless, half-starved wretches who carry swags through it and look in vain for work - and ask in vain for tucker very often. What's the good of making a heaven of a hell when by describing it as it really is, we might do some good for the lost souls there?

The Bulletin's only reaction to this seminal document was to advise a "Station Hand" from Narramine that he
took Lawson's "affected cynicism" too seriously.\textsuperscript{30}

Lawson had in fact left Australia immediately after he wrote "Some Popular Australian Mistakes". Again, like his trip to Bourke the year before, his departure at this time may have been more than coincidental, for his bitter verse "Australian Bards and Bush Reviewers" was composed in New Zealand:

\begin{quote}
If you sing of waving grasses where the plains are dry as bricks,  
And discover shining rivers where there's only mud and sticks;  
If you picture "mighty forests" where the "mulga" spoils the view --  
You're superior to Kendall, and ahead of Gordon, too.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
But if you should find that bushmen -- spite of all the poets say --  
Are just common brother-sinners, and you're quite as good as they,  
You're a drunkard, and a liar, and a "cynic", and a sneak,  
Your grammar's simply awful and your intellect is weak.\textsuperscript{31}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{30}TB, 2 December 1893, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., 18 August 1894, p. 2. The poem was actually written the previous January in Wellington, where Lawson arrived on 27 November 1893. For Lawson's work in New Zealand see W.H. Pearson's forthcoming monograph Henry Lawson Among Maoris (Canberra, 1968).
After eight months in New Zealand Lawson returned to Sydney, but he had not forgiven Paterson, much less his other critics. His irritation at their unwillingness to understand his realism carried over into the preface to his first book, *Short Stories in Prose and Verse*, published by his mother shortly before Christmas, 1894. Lawson's preface was virtually a restatement in prose of "Australian Bards and Bush Reviewers", in which he damned his critics because they condescendingly called him a follower of Bret Harte or "the 'young Australian Burns'". Paterson's suggestion that he would be happier in England was dismissed contemptuously in the preface. As he would be forced to repeat endlessly throughout his career, Lawson was attacking literary conventions, not Australia. His whole concept of realism in Australian writing was rooted in literary nationalism. To falsify Australia by writing romantic hyperbole was to deny Australia by misunderstanding it.

Although the *Bulletin*’s editors rejected a contribution comparing Paterson and Lawson ("this
paper prefers both") sides continued to be taken in its columns. 33 Henry Fletcher's "In the Bush" related a conversation with a bushman who was knowingly "chained, riveted, married" to the country's dehumanising harshness. 34 Despite its slightly polemical tone, Fletcher adopted Lawson's descriptive accuracy in an attempt to make "In the Bush" a realistic sketch. Henry Ellis was more direct in his "The Delights of the Bush", in which he told a story specifically to illustrate his introductory remarks:

Among a certain fatuous class of writers there has always existed a custom of sending forth gushes of gladsome song, and warbling, in more or less tuneful warbs, about the pleasures of country life.... It is time that some hard-fisted resident of the back-country formed himself into a Royal Commission to inquire into the best mode of inflicting capital punishment, diversified with floggings, on the perjurers who so wantonly trifle with the truth. 35

33 Ibid., 13 April 1895, p. 15. Cf. ibid., 17 September 1892, p. 15, also to a correspondent: "probably, as you say, Lawson and 'Banjo' are both wrong, and the bush is perdition and the city is Gehenna. All the same, your verse isn't good enough."

34 Ibid., 31 August 1895, p. 27.

35 Ibid., 14 December 1895, p. 20, as "A. Chee". Henry Luttman Ellis (b. 1866) also wrote as "A. C." Walter Woods, writing as "John Drayman", attacked Paterson in the same issue of the paper. His verse "Where Silence Reigns" describes "the great grey Western plains / (Those 'sunlit plains' of Clancy's), where it hardly ever rains" (p. 19).
The story itself (a part of which had been published earlier by the *Bulletin*) is a simple and humorous sketch about the author's frustrating experiences with roving cattle. Ellis, however, was not willing to let his readers work out their own conclusions about the "truth" of the bush. The moral, as he saw it, was that "when something does occur which momentarily lifts a man from the black gulf of despondency into which he has sunk, it is morally certain that something else occurs which has the effect of making him much the same as ever—only more so."

"R.A.F.", on the other hand, was troubled by those "Australian poets despairing" who never utter "a note that is glad". By failing to idealise the heroic virtues of the new Australian world, these realistic authors were undoubtedly undermining Australia. In precisely the sort of mood that drove Lawson to despair, "R.A.F." asked:

See you not a great nation Australian  
Girt by summer-lit seas free from wars  
Free from priestcraft and statecraft and alien,  
And content 'neath her bright Southern skies?  

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37 "To Our Bards", *ibid.*, 7 December 1895, p. 3.  
Author unidentified.
E.J. Dempsey's verse "A Vision of the Gruesome", however, restored the question to its literary basis. The poet has a conversation with the "'bushy' type" of the conventionalised Bulletin short story and verse, who laments:

"I'm the chap the poets talk of: I'm a stockman, I'm a shearer; I appear in many stories of the wild and woolly West; And the more they write about me I feel queerer still and queerer, For I feel in solid earnest what they talk about in jest.

"For, you know, I've no existence save in dark imaginations Of the poets and the proseists [sic] in their stories and their rhymes."

Complaining that "in order to get pathos they must kill me in the end", the unfortunate ghost concludes "that the thing's become a bore", and disappears as another writer calls him up.38

"J.P.", perhaps, was becoming bored by the controversy, for his verse "The Unknown Land" satirised both the realism championed by Lawson and the romanticism of Paterson and the balladists. Realistic stories, he

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38 Ibid., 25 July 1896, p. 3, as "ZEF". Dempsey also wrote as "Zep", "Zeph", "Alphaeus", "Bindyi", "D.M.C.", and "Diomus".
claimed, have themselves become conventionalised, with their descriptions of a land of men

Who eternally sit
Round a fire and spit
And their narrative force never fails.

The story-tellers of this "terrible bush" have "carefully noted down" that "the land into two is divided, /
And everything's 'bush' but 'the town'". In their bush:

the scene always matches the story,
For Art unto Nature has neared;
"Lurid lights to the south" for the gory,
And "gums grey and gaunt" for the weird.
And the children of toil
Fairly reek of the soil,
And their faces by summer are seared.

His impatience extends to colonial romanticism, but with an interesting variation. In the idealised bush "heroes dream of some sweet English lady" while they compensate by sniffing "the red native rose". The merits of patriotism and literary nationalism, it would seem, were gradually becoming dissociated from the romantic bush balladists. Another versifier, "Jim's Uncle",

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Ibid., 14 September 1895, p. 22. Author unidentified.
was bored by both the controversy and the whole question of literary nationalism as it was reflected in the *Bulletin*. Satirising the paper's 1895 Christmas number, he saw New South Wales as a "land of bards, forever pitching / Simple songs of 'Jim' unshaven, / Seldom washed, and freely itching":

Land of mock-eccentric stories
Told of hopeless fortune-questing
(Tales wherein the hero's gore is
Shed to make him interesting),
Owing all their mystic worth
To the country of their birth. 40

"Jim's Uncle" notwithstanding, A.G. Stephens began his review of Lawson's first volume of verse by claiming that in the work of Lawson and Paterson, "Australia has found audible voice and characteristic expression." Echoing Marcus Clarke's preface to Gordon's verse, Stephens joined a long list of critics who insisted on discovering "something like the beginnings of a national school of poetry". 41 John Le Gay Brereton found something else in Lawson's verse: "drivel".


41 Unsigned review, *ibid.*, 15 February 1896, "'The Bulletin' Book Exchange".
Brereton's "A Reflection on Lawson's Poems", printed in the Bulletin on 18 January, 1896, was the first published reaction to Lawson's collection. In it Brereton properly pointed out that Lawson's verse, unlike his prose, idealised Australia's past as romantically as Paterson's verse idealised its present. Rather than objecting that Lawson was denying his own realistic manifesto, however, Brereton attacked him for failing to write as optimistically about contemporary Australia:

Must we hide our eyes and falter: "O, the days of long ago!"
Never stop to look behind you, if the blaze of glory there
Blinds you to the splendour stretching round about and everywhere.

Sing the present; drop the drivel of the "days evanished," please!
Though you pray until your pants are burst or baggy at the knees,
You can't bid the sun go backward -- no, not even ten degrees.42

42 This verse is presumably Roderick's evidence for suggesting that early in 1896 Brereton and Lawson attempted "to engineer a verse controversy in the Bulletin to boost interest in Lawson's forthcoming book of verse" (op. cit., I, xxv).
Four weeks later A.G. Stephens also took up the problem of Lawson's pessimism. "It is when he is most Australian that he is most happy. This amounts to saying -- what is perfectly true -- that his earlier poems are among his best. It is curious to note the contrast between Lawson's optimism of seven years ago and his pessimism of to-day." Pessimism, that is, was un-Australian, while "impersonal" Hope produced "better" verse than "personal" Discontent. But then, of course, Lawson's "mental scope is narrow; he is comparatively uncultured". "What could a University have done for Lawson?... A University could have shown Lawson where the pearls lie." "

Having disposed of Lawson's version of literary nationalism at its theoretical level -- verse is best as well as most Australian when it is "happy" -- Stephens turned to Lawson's prose. Unlike his verse, it was among "the best produced in Australia": specifically, "brimming with humour and pathos". As for Lawson's manifesto for realism, Stephens could only refer to his "quaint simple style". The real

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43 TB, 15 February 1896, "The Bulletin' Book Exchange".
44 Ibid., 13 June 1896, "Literary Notes".
45 15 February 1896, "The Bulletin' Book Exchange".
"charm of Lawson's prose is essentially that of his poetry. Art he has none; his artifices are of the feeblest." And Art, as Stephens said, involved "power", a "unity of idea or treatment". Lawson's volume of prose was "like a bad cook's ragout". A half-dozen of his sketches were indeed "something like literature. The rest are frequently good journal-work, good material for literature -- nothing more." 46

Lawson's defenders, unfortunately, confused the rhetorical content of his verse with the accomplishment of his prose no less thoroughly than A.G. Stephens. Henry Cargill's "Reflection on Brereton's 'Reflection on Lawson's Poems'", for instance, stoutly insisted that since man could never reach his past ambitions in the present, poets "can only 'sing the past'." 47 And Joseph Furphy's first poem in the Bulletin suggested that in any case, civilisation had destroyed the true outback:

46 Ibid., 29 August 1896, "Red Page".

47 Ibid., 15 February 1896, p. 3. Signed "The Dipsomaniac". Cargill also wrote as "The Dipso" and "The Dypso".
Better we were cold and still, with our famous Jim and Bill, Beneath the interdicted wattle-bough, For the angels made our date five-and-twenty years too late, And there is no Up the Country for us now. 48

Furphy's doggerel underlines the extent to which Lawson's original literary argument had gradually developed into an ethical issue. For Furphy was actually challenging Lawson's major premise, not defending it. Lawson's was an argument against the unthinking use of inappropriate literary conventions; Furphy's verse represents a resigned acceptance of them. Furphy's prose fiction, ironically, was as different in mood from his verse as Lawson's prose was from his own doggerel. The difference, in fact, was almost as great as that between what Lawson called the "Real" and the "Ideal", a difference which extended to Lawson's defence of his two published collections. In "The Uncultured Rhymer to His Cultured Critics", Lawson

48 "The Gum-Sucker's Dirge", ibid., p. 3. Signed "Tom Collins". See also R. Stewart's "You Are No Poet -- You're Not Dead", ibid., 13 June 1896, p. 3, a defence of poets who answer the question "What was the 'Bush', at any rate?" even though "all the bush is 'civilised'".
violently attacked his principal critics in verse. 49
That same month, February 1897, he issued his second
prose manifesto for realism.

Ibid., 25 December 1897, p. 3. This verse
was actually written in February 1897, and contro-
versy surrounding it is a revealing example of
literary conflict in a small colonial society. Lawson
had three targets: John Le Gay Brereton (for writing
"A Reflection on Lawson's Poems"); A.G. Stephens
(for slighting Lawson's lack of "culture"); and
Professor Edwin Morris (for writing what Lawson con-
sidered to be a "paltry-spirited and altogether
unfair review of In the Days for the Review of Reviews"
of 20 April 1986). Stephens attacked Morris merci-
lessly for his review (TB, 23 May 1896, "Red Page"),
but later claimed that Lawson's sole target was
Brereton; Lawson himself told Brereton that his
targets were Stephens and Morris; and Brereton
later acknowledged that he was the target! Roderick
has brought together most of the relevant documents
iii. "But What's the Use"

A few days after his volume of verse was published in Sydney, the Bulletin printed Lawson's poem "But What's the Use". In it Lawson asked himself bitterly why he ever bothered "writing 'Bush!'" for "city folk, an' farmin' folk" who couldn't understand the bush. "They're blind to what the bushman sees", he claimed, adding characteristically that they saw their actual environment "the best with eyes shut tightest".\(^{50}\) One year later, in an untitled column on the Bulletin's "Red Page" of 27 February 1897, he answered himself. Not reprinted until 1964, this column is a direct expansion of "Some Popular Australian Mistakes", a summary of the central issues in the confused debate, and a second major statement of his literary aims.

"British ignorance of Australia", Lawson claimed,

is certainly no greater than the coastal Australian's ignorance of the Australian back-country. The people of our cities look at the bush proper through the green

\(^{50}\)Ibid., 25 January 1896, p. 22.
spectacles of bush bards and new-chum prose writers, and are content - wisely, if they knew it - to sit down all their lives on the rim of Australia.

Australian writers had simply failed to grasp that "heart of Australia", as A.G. Stephens once called it:

One might imagine a tropical jungle, a "glittering" icefield, a "rolling" prairie, a "Northern" forest, an "African" desert; but not a mighty stretch of country which is neither desert, nor fertile land, nor anything else you can think of -- except thousands of miles of patchy scrub.... If the back country were a desert we might love it, as the Arabs are alleged to love their desert, for the sake of the oases; if it were a region of noble ranges, mighty forests, shining rivers, broad lakes, and grassy plains, we would love it for these things; as it is, we don't know how to take it, and prefer not to take it at all.

Referring to Paterson's attacks of four and one-half years earlier, Lawson went on to note that he had "been accused of painting the bush in the darkest colours from some equally-dark personal motives":

I might be biased -- having been there; but it is time the general public knew the back country as it is, if only for the sake of the bush outcasts who have to tramp for ever through broiling mulga scrub and baking lignum, or across blazing plains by endless tracks of red dust and grey, through a land of living death.

In his review of Lawson's Short Stories in Prose and Verse, ibid., 5 January 1895, p. 15.
Finally his main point emerged, that the "bush bard...

is temporarily blinded to the Real by the intensity

of his vision of the Ideal", and that Australian litera-

ture must recognise the "Real" if the country is ever
to be understood:

After reading bush literature in prose and

verse, and after trying the bush for myself,

I feel inclined to doubt all scenery that is

boomed. But Bill and Jim do not see the bush

as it is; and if they write verses about it

-- as they frequently do in camp -- they put

in shining rivers and grassy plains, and western

hills, and dawn and morn and eve and gloaming,

and forest boles of gigantic size -- everything,
in fact, which is not and never was in bush

scenery and language; and the more the drought

bakes them the more inspired they seem to be-
come. Perhaps they unconsciously see the bush

as it should be, and their literature is the

result of a craving for the ideal.... Ideal

bush literature is an interesting subject,

anyway, and it is written and accepted as real-

istic by the bushmen themselves. Its popularity

is wonderful, and most pathetic.

The result of this article - the first in

which Lawson unhesitatingly referred to realism - was

overwhelming. A.G. Stephens devoted three-quarters

of the "Red Page" a month later to his own reflections

on the "perpetual warfare" between "isolated Man and

Nature in the bush", and on the countryside's barbare-

ising effects on men. The "bush-environment" not only
failed "to stimulate the complex tastes which we associate with civilised life, but gives no opportunity for indulging such tastes when formed."

For the "cocky" farmers, most tragically, their's was "the normal state": they knew no other. "The Bush has strangled their souls." Stephens carefully avoided referring to Lawson, suggesting only that "the men and women who are fighting the Bush need all the help and sympathy that the less plucky or more fortunate inhabitants of the town can give them." By failing to connect the content of literature with its mode of presentation, his criticism suggests that he was unaware that the question was a literary one at all.

"J. Jingle"'s reply to Lawson's article similarly missed the point. Seeing Lawson's work as a "tirade against the backblocks", he made an unusual point:

That the bush-bard (of late much-maligned) should prefer to write of the dawn when it is flushing a shining river, rather than to picture the plain scorched and withered and dry, only shows the bush-bard's appreciation of the beautiful, which is the first quality required to entitle him to the name of bard at all.

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52 Ibid., 27 March 1897.
This staunch defence of colonial romanticism also included the suggestion that Lawson's realism might be positively harmful:

That the bush is often ugly enough to breed pessimism is the worst of reasons for deriding unpessimistic bush-poetry, and so robbing the real, genuine bush-dwellers (not the rim-dwellers like Lawson, who make one hard trip and vow it will last them a life-time) of the pleasure of welcoming in the words of others an interpretation of the (possibly rare) beauties which they see and feel yet cannot themselves interpret.\(^53\)

Richard Holt was less willing to see escapist romance as the only path for Australian writers. Instead he suggested that there were two kinds of bushmen, the "real" and the "mongrel". The "real bushmen" are the average bush natives, quiet workers who love their land and whose highest ambition is to win the Mulga Hack-Race: "The real bushman is full of poetical feelings, and loves poetry of the Gordon, 'Banjo', 'Glenrowan', and 'Breaker' type, but seldom if ever writes verses." The "mongrel bushman", on the other hand, is the city-dweller who has come out-back to get away from himself or others, and to make enough money there to get back to town as quickly as

\(^{53}\)Ibid., 3 April 1897, "Red Page". Author unidentified.
possible. The mongrel bushmen are really the men who hate the bush, and who "write doggerel about 'shining rivers' and 'rippling streams'":

To get an insight into Australian bush life one must read "The Banjo" and similar Bulletin writers, as well as Lawson. "The Banjo" and others give us the real bushman and his sentiments as truly as Lawson shows the pseudo or mongrel bushman. The two characters make up the back-country population, and both are well worth writing up and reading about.  

Holt's logic might well have prompted Lawson to wonder "what's the use".

Lawson's continuing preoccupation with the moral aspects of his literary propositions had in the meantime led him into verse of rhetorical social protest. The maudlin disillusionment of verses such as "The Men We Might Have Been" were by their simple lack of merit undermining his realistic manifesto. Daniel Healy advised Lawson, among other "tuneful brethren who evolve the people's song", to "give your vision clearer scope." Whether Lawson would have been willing to pitch his "song of ardent pleading in the ecstasy of Hope" rather than despair is unlikely;

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54 Ibid. Holt wrote as "6 x 8". "Glenrowan" was Will Ogilvie and the "Breaker" was Harry Morant.

55 Ibid., p. 3.
Healey nevertheless voiced general criticism when he told Lawson:

If you note the Misanthrope, and boom disciple of the Sad,
You will have the sorry prospect of a nation morbid mad,
Crooning ghastly, maudlin dirges of the "people they should be"

Therefore give the cue of what may be a Nation great and free.

Lawson, that is, was betraying the cause of literary nationalism itself.

The debate's new direction understandably worried James Brunton Stephens, long considered by the Bulletin's editors to be — with Kendall and Gordon — one of Australia's finest poets. In 1897, at the age of 62, Brunton Stephens wrote a long review of an edition of Barcroft Boake's verse collected by A.G. Stephens; the review, which A.G. Stephens published on

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56 "The Biljim Craze", ibid., 28 August 1897, p. 23. The same issue contained "The Old M undooran Road" by "Nil", "After, and with apologies to, Patterdylaw and Son": the only use of this catch-phrase (a combination of Paterson, Dyson, and Lawson) which I have discovered in the Bulletin of the 'nineties. "Nil" was Charles Henry Souter (1864-1944), although F.A. Brown also used the pseudonym.
the "Red Page" of the Bulletin, was less a favourable appreciation of Boake than another attempt to return the terms of the debate to their original literary beginnings. "Too many of our young poets", Brunton Stephens claimed,

sit down with the intention of telling what they fondly call "the brutal truth", and they tell it, and they make us very wretched in consequence, and, if you remonstrate with them, they inform you that they are not of those who write with lavender kid gloves on, and who put rose-water in their ink. It is all very well to tell "the brutal truth", but if your faculties stop short at that, you had better try some other sphere of usefulness than poetry. It is only the man of true poetic genius who knows how to strengthen and intensify the presentation of truth in the very act of debratalising it.

Brunton Stephens' objection was to Lawson's imitators, rather than to Lawson himself: to those versifiers who declaimed the wrongs of man in doggerel and in the name of realism. "Nine-tenths of this Marseillaise business is mere Marseillaziness." Poetry itself

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57 Ibid., 2 October 1897. To prevent confusion between the two Stephens, J.B. Stephens is invariably called Brunton Stephens in this essay. Later references simply to "Stephens" are to Alfred George Stephens.

58 The sort of verse Brunton Stephens had in mind was satirised by Lawson in "Rise Ye! Rise Ye!" (TB, 9 July 1892, p. 19), subtitled "a brutal parody on 18 well-meaning but ungrammatical bards and 11 rampant Tory screed-mongers whose contributions have reached us
was at stake, Brunton Stephens suggested; while there was a large amount of "really excellent verse" being written in Australia at the time, too much verse was also being written to a formula which had nothing to do with poetry. And so he attacked what he reluctantly called the "anti-lay", the products of poets dissatisfied with "the existing state and system of Society":

Now there is no doubt that Society wants saving very badly. But, in the first place, it is not the business of a poet, quoad poet, to save Society. It is the poet's mission to make Society more worth saving. It is his mission to make the individual a more valuable article, by enriching his intellect, by stimulating, enlarging, intensifying and exalting his sympathies. Anti won't do this.

Brunton Stephens added, significantly, that the poets of the "Anti-school" are those men "for the most part, who go in for the 'brutal truth!'". The message, in other words, had gradually come to supplant the mode as a means of communication. Realistic literature as such was ignored as a method of showing man's condition, in favour of simple normative statements about it. The "Anti's" (who also claim to be

this week" ("Rise and crush the selfish tyrants! Ke-r-rush them with your hob-nailed boots!...Erwake! Erise!") But throughout the 'nineties the Bulletin continued to publish verse of social protest little different from the "Erwake!" and "Marseillaise" variety.
realists), he objected,

fail in the very point on which they pride themselves. They don't keep their two eyes fixed on the life in front of them. They always keep one eye looking nor'-nor'-west -- towards Europe, that is to say. At the very time they are hurling defiance at Europe, they are almost wholly dominated by Europe. In these inspired moments they cease to be Australians -- they are merely antipodeans.

For the first time in the Bulletin's pages the literary debate begun by Lawson was entered into on its literary terms.

Peter Airey sensibly commented four weeks later that realism and romanticism, much less a poet's "pessimistic or optimistic bias" had little to do with the merit of literature; he differed from Brunton Stephens, however, by suggesting that the "anti" tendency of social protest was "rather a healthy one". At the same time Francis Kenna disagreed violently with Brunton Stephens' whole review, stating flatly that "the dispute between Brunton Stephens and the young school of Australian poets is the dispute between the Romantic and the Realistic schools of Art". Kenna's article,

59 TB, 30 October 1897, "Red Page". Signed "P. Luftig".

60 Ibid. Signed "K".
surprisingly, marked the first time that one of the participants in the debate had suggested it to be anything other than a purely Australian argument.

Kenna seriously misquoted and misconstrued Brunton Stephens' argument, as the latter angrily pointed out two weeks later; the way in which he did so, however, revealed the literary preconceptions behind the dominants strains of verse in the Bulletin. Brunton Stephens, Kenna suggested, objected principally to "the modern socialistic idea" which Kenna felt "is pervading Australian poetry". The manifestations of this "socialistic" verse (which Kenna equated with the Realistic school) are "bugbears called 'brutal truth' and 'anti' and 'Marseillaise' -- none of which, according to Brunton Stephens, can ever be poetry."

Kenna's defence of realism was highly predictable: that the poet "should come down among his fellows, and be one of them", "that the function of the poet is not solely to please, not solely to dally with the pleasant side of things", and that the "brutal truth" school of

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61 Ibid., 13 November 1897, "Red Page". See also A.G. Stephens' article on Brunton Stephens on the "Red Page" (16 May 1903).
poets was helping to reform society, not to destroy it. Kenna's main point, moreover, was scarcely revolutionary: that there was room in Australia for both romanticism and realism. In making it, curiously, he mounted precisely the sort of attack on romanticism that Lawson began five years earlier. "A good many honest people", Kenna noted, "believe that the poet should be ornamental, not useful." As they see him, the poet "should have privileges, not duties":

he should hold himself aloof from the stress and strain of life, tuning his ears to catch its harmonies, not its discords; living for Art's sake solely, contemplating abstractions. He should deal only with the rosy-hued and aesthetic. He should sit at the feet of power, and chant its praise, and soothe his conscience, happy in his syncophancy.

Kenna admitted that the Romantic (that is, "aesthetic") poet might touch on the "brutal truth", but that if he did (throwing Brunton Stephens' phrase back at him), "it must be with lavender kid gloves on his fingers, using only the most delicate, distantly-suggestive language". In his blend of literature, morality, and politics, Kenna was actually attacking A.G. Stephens' literary preconceptions at the same time as he was supporting the Bulletin's political policies.
In his rebuttal, Brunton Stephens made it clear that Henry Lawson was one of many Australian poets who "are linked together by the common desire to give expression to the life of this strong young country". But Brunton Stephens also maintained that he opposed those literary nationalists who were linked together "by a bond of dismal wretchedness and apparently a common poverty of resources". His view of literary nationalism, like that of most of his contemporaries, demanded that Australian literature must emphatically be "positive" as well as "independent". The difference between poets such as Lawson, Paterson, Boake, and Farrell, and those poets whose work was not "positive" and "independent", was "the difference that exists between begetting and expectorating."\(^{62}\)

Lawson himself came increasingly to see the debate in personal terms, as indeed much of it was. Dogged by alcoholism, he sailed to New Zealand for the third time in March 1897. In September he wrote his heavily autobiographical "Writer's Dream", giving his

\(^{62}\) Ibid.
reasons for leaving Australia:

A writer wrote of the hearts of men, and he followed their tracks afar; For his was a spirit that forced his pen to write of the things that are. His heart grew tired of the truths he told, for his life was hard and grim; His land seemed barren, its people cold; -- yet the world was dear to him; -- So he sailed away from the Streets of Strife, he travelled by land and sea, In search of a people who lived a life as life in the world should be.

Here in New Zealand the "writer" resolves to put aside "the heart of the cynic", that epithet first used against Lawson by the *Bulletin* in 1893, and repeated four times in "The Writer's Dream". Even in New Zealand, however, Lawson found that "local 'Fashion!'" and a petty "local spirit" charge him with having an "axe to grind", and he realises that the promptings of his "cynical dream" are really those of "Truth". Lawson ends his dream remembering A.G. Stephens' reference to his lack of culture, and resolves to

write untroubled by cultured fools, or the dense that fume and fret -- For against the wisdom of all their schools I would stake mine instinct yet! For the cynical strain in the writer's song is the world, not he, to blame.63

63*Ibid.*, 21 May 1898, p. 32. Written in September 1897, Lawson's holograph MS arrived in the *Bulletin* 's office early in October. On 15 October
Lawson's self-pity in "The Writer's Dream" is not simply an index to the maudlin wanderings of a sensitive alcoholic, or to "a romanticism that attracted him briefly" in New Zealand. It is instead an index to the violence of the Australian debate between romanticism and realism. As the principal exponent of realism, Lawson had to bear the major attacks on realism, attacks characterised by misunderstanding, personal rancour, and perverted literary nationalism. That they have been ignored, as Lawson's biographer has been determined to ignore them, or covered over, as "Banjo" Paterson covered them over, has in no way diminished their importance as documents in the central event of Australian literary nationalism.

A.G. Stephens read and graded it for publication, and Lawson was paid on 3 November. On the verso of the last sheet of the MS, interestingly, Lawson started to write a letter dated 1 September, but only got as far as "Dear Paterson". Roderick has apparently not seen the MS, which is held by the Alexander Turnbull Library. Lawson's second trip to New Zealand (in 1896) was very brief: see Prout, op. cit., p. 139, confirmed by a note on the "Red Page" of 21 March 1896.

64 Roderick, op. cit., p. 467.
One attitude to Lawson's attempts at creating a new Australian realism was that of a "Hawker", a latter-day Sam Slick whose articles A.G. Stephens occasionally published on the "Red Page". The "Hawker" praised Lawson's "talent", while suggesting at the same time that he was misleading and dangerous:

Don't tell me the Bush is the abode of misery and desolation. I know better. These things are there; but they are not all the Bush. I know your Henry Lawson and admire his talent; but when he talks continually of the accursed country out-back -- Bah! A town-man who made one trip into the back-blocks five years ago, and has stuck to the cities ever since! I tell you the Bush is beautiful and terrible; but she is more beautiful than terrible.

The "Hawker" then related a yarn to demonstrate the beauty of "the Bush", and concluded by describing Sydney's harbour as "a big blue tear splashed from the eye of the goddess of beauty".\(^{65}\)

If Lawson despaired at the simple-mindedness of critics such as "Hawker", he was obviously stung by the venom of other attitudes like those of "J. Jingle". Instead of censuring Lawson's verse "The Dry Country" as essentially another exercise in resurrecting the

\(^{65}\) TB, 22 October 1898, "Red Page". Author unidentified.
dying bushman ("Beneath you, dark and lonely, / A wronged and broken man...") the author asked the Bulletin "how much more of this drivelling pessimism are we going to get?" "Jingle" then referred to Lawson's verses as, successively, "partly incomprehensible", "partly untrue", "gruesome incongruity", "nonsense", and "jangling misery". Whatever the truth of these strictures, the assumption behind them was that Lawson's realism was too realistic.

By 1899 Lawson faced opprobrium unprecedented in his career, despite the fact that with Paterson he was one of Australia's two best-selling authors. His Bulletin essay "Crime in the Bush" expanded the moral basis of his earlier manifestos, but it was virtually ignored. Similarly the significance of his


67 Ibid., 11 February 1899, p. 35. "There are hundreds of out-of-the-way places in the nearer bush of Australia...where families live for generations in mental darkness almost inconceivable in this enlightened age and country... We want light on these places." The only published response was two letters from correspondents, one agreeing with Lawson, the other disagreeing on a point of fact (ibid., 25 February 1899, p. 14). The opening paragraph of Lawson's article suggests that it was written in rebuttal to Richard Holt's attack on him - nearly two years earlier - for portraying "mongrel" bushmen.
call for realism in Australian art, "If I Could Paint", made no immediate impression; once again he restated his literary aims, although in terms of painting:

My ambition would be to paint Australia as it is, and as it changes; pictures that Australians could look through -- and through a mist of tears, perhaps -- back into their pasts; pictures that Australians could look through and onward to a bright and nobler future... Pictures showing the best and noblest sides of human nature, so that the world might keep its faith in it, and love it, or, failing that, be more charitable and tolerant towards it. Pictures showing the worst side of humanity, the poverty, misery, and squalid vice, that men might hate the greed and selfishness that cause it all.  

Lawson's language was more moderate now; as he had said of his story "An Oversight of Steelman's":

"Moral: Deep sorrow makes us gentle."  

But when Lawson wrote of his personal experiences while "pursuing literature in Australia", Australian reaction was vicious and immediate. His

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68 Ibid., 8 April 1899, "Red Page".

69 Ibid., 18 September 1897, p. 32.
Bulletin article was actually a detailed refutation of the misunderstandings which had grown up around the debate, particularly those reflected in A.G. Stephens' criticism. If Lawson thought that his autobiography might lead to a clearer understanding of the problems of writing in Australia, he was wrong. For he made the mistake of advising the aspiring young Australian author to "go steerage, stow away, swim, and seek London, Yankeeland, or Timbuctoo - rather than stay in Australia till his genius turned to gall, or beer". 70

70 Ibid., 21 January 1899, "Red Page". The holograph MS of this article is held by the Alexander Turnbull Library. Lawson's anger at the "fools" who talk about the "affected pessimism" of native-born Australian authors was a reference to the Bulletin's correspondence column of 2 December 1893 ("you take Henry Lawson's affected cynicism too seriously"); see above. Lawson also noted: "the only thing I have to complain about with regard to the Bulletin is that the paper is unable to publish the sketches and stories within reasonable time", actually a reference to A.G. Stephens' review of While the Billy Boils (TB, 29 August 1896, "Red Page"). Stephens devoted much of his review to complaining about the "disconnected" -- he used the word three times -- "fragmentary", and "haphazard" nature of the volume; he even felt that the name of the collection was "disconnected". And behind Lawson's innocuous remark that most of his stories in While the Billy Boils "(and some of what my reviewers considered the best)" were written for the Sydney Worker is Stephens' comment about Lawson's "good journal-work, good material for literature -- nothing more".
E.J. Brady led the attack by accusing Lawson of being "unhealthy". To "H,F.", Lawson was more or less a Judas Iscariot, while "7 x 7" suggested that he was cowardly in betraying the determination of "The Writer's Dream". Bernard Espinasse merely noted that Lawson was most likely unenterprising in not having made better financial returns from his writing, but Alexander Montgomery damned Lawson directly for "howling", and revealing "that dry-rot of the inner manhood -- self-pity". Steele Rudd mocked what he considered to be "poor Lawson, and that Hard-up Confession of his" and "M.O'K." revived Paterson's charge of 1892 that Lawson suffered from "want of patriotism". A.G. Stephens noted sarcastically

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71 Ibid., 11 February 1899, "Red Page".
72 Ibid. Author unidentified, but possibly Henry Fletcher.
73 Ibid. Author unidentified.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid., 27 May 1899, "Red Page".
77 Ibid., 11 March 1899, "Red Page".
on his "Red Page" that Lawson's "famous soul-unburdening
on this page has unlocked critic's hearts and publish-
er's purses. Which shows that fame is synonymous with
advertisement, since his recent work is no better
than that of five years ago: it is only better known."78

Only Harry Stockdale and Richard Holt defended Lawson's
"'Pursuing Literature' in Australia".79

Shortly before Lawson left Australia for
England in 1900, A.G. Stephens devoted his "Red Page"
to a long hortatory editorial, "For Australians".80

78 Ibid., 22 July 1899.
79 Ibid., 11 February 1899, "Red Page"; 11
March 1899, "Red Page", as "6 x 8".

80 Ibid., 9 December 1899. Lawson left Sydney
on 20 April 1900. In the Bulletin of 14 April 1900,
A.G. Stephens described the dinner held for him (p. 15).
But Roderick Quinn's verses in the paper, "To Henry
Lawson -- Farewell", revealed his uneasiness at Lawson's
reputation:

    to an artist who revealed our land,
    Making the sordid life therein aglow,
    But nowise hiding truth, we hold a hand.

(21 April 1900, p. 3). Lawson was able to leave because
he actively solicited money from Lord Beauchamp,
Governor of New South Wales, asking for either his fare
or enough money to maintain himself in Australia with-
out having to write inferior work (Mitchell Library,
Letters to Lord Beauchamp, 1899-1901, Lawson to Beauchamp,
19 January 1900). Lawson's wife was eight months preg-
nant at the time of his appeal.
Its ostensible purpose was to call for national "greatness" on the part of the colonies about to federate as the Commonwealth of Australia. Its assumptions were the familiar ones of literary nationalism:

If we are not History's legatees, it is because we have the chance to be History's founders and establishers.... It is the duty and it should be the pride of every father and mother and teacher of Australian children to intensify the national love of Australia, and to point out in how many ways Australia is eminently worthy to be loved -- both the actual land and the national ideal.

Stephen's last phrase, apparently a conciliatory gesture to both romantics and realists, was actually aimed directly at Lawson's manifestoes for realism. For as Stephens went on to say, "it is in the cities, not in the bush, that the national fibre is being in a hundred ways slackened and destroyed." This gratuitous reference to Lawson's "Crime in the Bush" might be seen as another product of Stephens' eccentric views on Australia's "national vitality", were it not for the comment which followed:

No one acquainted with the every-day heroism displayed by our agricultural and mining pioneers can have the least doubt of the stability of the nation if the Men On The Land are helped and encouraged as they deserve to be helped and encouraged -- as it is
imperatively necessary for the future of Australia that they should be helped and encouraged.

Lawson, clearly, was not one of those Australian writers whose realism allowed them simply to "encourage" the "national fibre" by resorting to Stephens' own facile praise of "the bush"; praise, moreover, which revealed the classic symptoms of the colonial complex: "in no land is there a greater wealth of aromatic perfume from tree and shrub and flower -- making the daisied meadows of England, as honest Englishman Charles Kingsley avers, tame and suburban by comparison."  

A.G. Stephens, obviously, was no William Dean Howells, nor was the Bulletin an Atlantic or Harper's of the 'nineties in Australia. Instead of demonstrating any awareness of the problems raised by realism -- much less veritism or naturalism -- Stephens was  

\[81\] Stephens corrected "Charles" to "Henry" on the "Red Page" one week later. As well as re-using some material from his earlier essay on the warfare between "isolated Man and Nature" (27 March 1897, "Red Page"), Stephens incorporated much of "For Australians" into his introduction to The Bulletin Story Book (Sydney, 1901).
content to dogmatise on Australia's "national ideal". The literary identification of the country's "actual land" he left, almost unwillingly, to Henry Lawson. Both facts, despite what has been written about literature and the *Bulletin* in the 'nineties, accurately reflected the ambiguities of literary nationalism at the time.

The debate which Lawson began in 1892 posed the same problem faced by literary nationalists in Australia since 1803: what was the function of literature in identifying and relating a new environment to its inhabitants? The idealisation of Australia's landscape, Lawson knew, had fulfilled its role in creating Australia's ideal man. By the 1890s the values of the man of the bush, the bushman, had supplanted those of the convict as a literary preoccupation. But how could he examine the bush and its inhabitants -- as most of his contemporaries charged -- without destroying both?

This Australian literary "debate", then, was an authentic one, with an unsettled resolution and two worthy opponents. Its ambiguity lay in the fact that both parties of opposition supported the only
possible judgment. Literature clearly had a role in identifying Australia's past and present, as well as in shaping its future. Lawson's task, as it emerged, was as much one of keeping the debate within its proper terms as it was one of supporting his own case. To attack idealisation, satirise its conventions, and describe its subjects, as he soon learned, meant defending his own literary integrity, abilities, and nationalism.

The weak point in Lawson's case, ironically, was his ability. For so long as the rhetoric of his execrable verse could be attacked, the accomplishment of his short prose sketches would be ignored. And until the merit of his prose was recognised, his whole case -- the essence of the debate itself -- was vulnerable to attacks on his rhetorical doggerel.

Irony, however, was a familiar mood for Lawson. Unlike literary nationalism's mood of romance, which prompted Australia's authors to recreate their environment by idealising it, Lawson's mood prompted him to particularise Australia through its own images. Literary nationalism's mood of irony, in fact, is the second of two "alternating currents" detected by Northrop Frye in Canadian writing: "one romantic,
traditional, and idealistic, the other shrewd, observant and humorous." \(^8^2\) Lawson needed a sense of irony if he was to be condemned as pessimistic and "anti"-Australian for attempting to redefine Australia, Australians, and their literature.

In New Zealand, as in Canada, a mood of romance continued to dominate literature well into the twentieth century because of the relative weakness of literary nationalism. In Australia, on the other hand, the very strength of a literary nationalism which demanded that literature be "positive" and optimistic ensured that same domination. Lawson's position as Australia's most accomplished literary realist of the nineteenth century is the acknowledgment of twentieth century Australians, not his contemporaries. Perhaps Lawson was drawn to New Zealand on his three visits, rather than driven there.

\(^8^2\)"Conclusion" to Klinck et al., eds., Literary History of Canada, p. 825.
THE NEW ZEALAND DIALOGUE

It is the peculiar talent of the typical New Zealander to preserve his moral superiority in the midst of shocks; he denounces while he embraces.¹

By the end of the 1890s, literary nationalists in New Zealand had reluctantly abandoned the ambition of their fathers: New Zealand apparently had neither a "national feeling" or a national literature. Nor could New Zealanders claim for themselves a Henry Lawson, or any author prepared to recognise that New Zealand's "national ideal" could be found through the identification of her "actual land".

The Imperial design, moreover, now began to raise more awkward questions than it once solved. New Zealand, clearly, was evolving in her own way, not that of the "Britain of the South". How was the New Zealand

author to reconcile politics and metaphysics, the idea of being a citizen of a nation, "model" or not, and the idea of being a subject of the British Empire? The writer unable to resolve the problem, such as David Burn, would go on well into the twentieth century speaking (as he did) about the objects of the three passions that ruled his life: "God, literature, and England".2

The 'nineties also saw political nationalists in New Zealand faced with the problem of denying the country's identity completely. After years of sporadic debate, the possibility of a confederation of the Australasian colonies became a reality. New Zealanders,

2"My Loves", Eggs and Olives, by Marsyas (Dunedin, [1930]), p. 144. This volume is substantially a collection of verse contributed by Burn to the Otago Daily Times in 1897 and 1898. David William Murray Burn (1862-1951), born in Geelong, Victoria, arrived in Dunedin with his Scottish mother when he was nine. He should not be confused with David Burns, whose Scottish Echoes from New Zealand was published in Edinburgh in 1883; nor, of course, with David Burn (?1800-1875), author of one of the two earliest surviving dramas to be printed and published in Australia (in Plays and Fugitive Pieces in Verse [Hobart, 1842]). In the late 1840s the "Australian" Burn migrated to New Zealand, where he died; he was associated at various times with the New-Zealander, Southern Cross, Maori Messenger, and New Zealand Herald, and his play Our First Lieutenant was presented by a company of "Gentlemen Amateurs" in Auckland in 1854. See also Miller, Pressmen and Governors, ch. 4.
if they wished, could become Australians. Some dis-
illusioned literary nationalists might claim that
they were already: the Sydney Bulletin, after all, was
by the end of the decade the leading literary journal
circulating in New Zealand.

Their disillusionment, their acceptance of
New Zealand as a limited society, and their attitudes
to Australian federation - in an almost characteris-
tically New Zealand fashion - did not result in a great
"determining debate". The problems of literary
nationalism, instead, took the form of a continuing
dialogue. Circuitous, ambiguous, and halting as it
was, however, this dialogue was as significant for
New Zealand's literature as the Australian debate was
for literature there. Australia, in fact, represented
the only distinct side to New Zealand's dialogue, and
New Zealanders had long ago realised that it was their
"Otherside".  

Of the Tasman Sea: a term in fairly general
use in New Zealand during the late nineteenth century.
See, for example, Henry Lawson's "An Oversight of
Steelman's" (first published in the Bulletin, 18
September 1897, p. 32), and below, ch. 10.
i. "The Far-suspended South"

In the absence of that indefinable sentiment, a national feeling, the British connection was a thoroughly ambiguous concept for New Zealanders. The older generation of immigrants could look back on an imperfect Britain and celebrate their idealized New Zealand of the future. That "rising generation" to whom Sir George Grey addressed his remarks had a choice only between an imperfect New Zealand or an idealized and unknown Britain.

And so New Zealanders like John Brown continued to hymn the empty virtues of the "Britain of the South"⁴, while others like Robert Jackson attacked "the British lion" for allowing New Zealanders to suffer during the depression of the 1880s.⁵ Few appreciated what Grey was saying: that New Zealand's destiny rested with New Zealand, and that incidentally the Empire would be a better place because of New Zealand's own accomplishments. Fewer still would recognise the

⁴*Hours of Leisure* (Dunedin, 1884), p. 10.

significance of James Adams' praise of William Wills, who was "helping to create" not only "a national feeling", but also "love for our dear mother land, and affection for all the Pacific Islands". The order in which James placed these objects was less important than their interdependence. Until citizen was reconciled with subject, New Zealanders could now be abused as "colonials". Eleanor Montgomery (the "singing shepherd" of Wanganui) suggested the new uncertainty of the 'eighties and 'nineties; it was only during an earthquake that

The English pheasant and shy native bird
Flutter alike in unity of fear,
And sweating shearer and run-holder stand
On the same level, while the quaking lasts.

The Boer War, for many New Zealanders, presented just such an earthquake. Richard Seddon's Government offered troops even before the start of the war in October 1899, and nearly 6500 volunteers were sent. Australia, New Zealanders noticed, with a population over four and one-half times larger than New Zealand's

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6 "Introduction" to A Bunch of Wild Pansies, p. 11.

7 "The Retrospect", Songs of the Singing Shepherd (Wanganui, 1885), p. 82.
mustered 16,000. O.T.J. Alpers described his feelings in a "Jubilee Ode" of 1900:

Yet though far from War's alarms --
Work our mission, Peace our lot --
When England called her sons to arms,
In England's cause we tarried not!

Her sons, O God, in war if England bleed,
To truer peace and broader freedom lead!
"Till each man sees his own in all men's good,
And all men live in noble brotherhood."

Charles Irons, however, was less certain about the patriotism of his fellow New Zealanders. Instead of Tennyson's "noble brotherhood", Irons claimed in his parody of Alpers' ode, "King Dick" Seddon's Government

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8 The Jubilee Ode (Christchurch, [1900]). Oscar Thorwald Johan Alpers (1867-1927), born in Denmark, arrived in Napier in 1875; he was fluent in English by the age of twelve, took a B.A. and M.A. in languages and literature (and later, an LL.B.) at Canterbury University College, and was appointed Judge of the Supreme Court two years before his death. The "Ode" celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Canterbury province; set to music by Maugham Barnett, an organist, it was sung by a 270-voice choir (and accompanied by a sixty-piece orchestra) during the opening of the Canterbury Jubilee Exhibition in the Hall of Industries by Lord Ranfurley. A delightful descriptive note on the music is supplied in Alper's anthology The Jubilee Book of Canterbury Rhymes (Christchurch, 1900), p. [158].
was creating a "state brother-hood":

Though the gospel sounds alarms --
No mission heed, sinful lot!
When justice calls police to arms
In duty's call they tarry not (?)

Our sons, O Dick, for work from England fled,
Till down at heel, they beg their brother's bread
When broken-hearted, weak and without food,
Appeal -- and then are nurtured by state brother-hood,
Warmly sheltered, guarded, exercised between Labour, picking roses for their Queen.9

The difference between the 1850s and the 1890s, it would seem, was as great as the difference between E.J. Wakefield's Imperial "design" and William Pember Reeves' Fabian socialism.10

Reeves himself was an enthusiastic versifier, one of those men described by William Alexander and Ernest Currie when they held out the "first fruits" of New Zealand verse to the London public in 1906:

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9 A Jubilee Ode, Specially Written to Commemorate the Canterbury Jubilee ([Christchurch, 1900]). This broadsheet also includes an advertisement for Mason's, a product for home-brewing.

10 See Keith Sinclair, William Pember Reeves: New Zealand Fabian (Oxford, 1965). Reeves named one of his sons "Fabian".
Even the hardest-headed race of farmers and shepherds and workers in wood and metal has its dreams and seers of visions (and even sends some of them into Parliament), and may be helped by the labour of such towards the deep-breasted fulness of mature nationality.  

Whatever he may have thought of Alexander and Currie's remarkable metaphor, Reeves managed to balance his role of poet and politician, to his own satisfaction, at least. As he wrote to Miss G. Colborne-Veel:

Perhaps a public man is rash to let his name be linked with verse in a country where provincial taste and middle-class feeling are as strong as they are here. Perhaps he ought to treat it as

"A thing to retain and say nothing about Lest if used it should draw degradation through doubt"  

However I have run the risk. On the whole I have done nothing to complain of though an M.H.R. did tell me in debate that I was "worse than Nero" for writing the "Toi-Toi In Church" whilst there were Unemployed in the country.  

11 "Introduction" to *New Zealand Verse* (London, 1906), p. xv. Archibald Ernest Currie was twenty-two (and a law clerk in Christchurch) at the time their anthology appeared; he took his B.A. and LL.B. in 1903 and finished his M.A. in the following year. William Frederick Alexander, three years older than Currie, joined the Christchurch Press in 1900 after leaving the Civil Service.

12 Alexander Turnbull Library, O.T.J. Alpers Papers; 25 April [?1925]. Miss Colborne-Veel was the sister of Mary Colborne-Veel (?1863-1923), whose verse is represented by "The Poet's Lament" in Douglas Sladen's three "Australian" anthologies of 1888. Mary
The "mature nationality" mentioned by Alexander and Currie was not that of Reeves' "A Colonist in His Garden" or "New Zealand"; these verses, nevertheless, are revealing symptoms of New Zealand's literary nationalism. As sheer rhetoric, both are noteworthy for their summaries of all the issues faced by literary nationalism in New Zealand since 1843: the appeal of England's "life and art", New Zealand's materialism, the associations of landscape in both countries, and the contrast of "the bold aggressive New" with "grey Time". More interestingly, both point to the decay of provincialism and the Imperial design, and the acceptance of aggressive colonialism.

"A Colonist in His Garden" marks the transition.

Colborne-Veeel published one collection of verse, The Fairest of Angels (London, 1894), and a small anthology of her work was edited by Jessie Mackay in 1924. Their father was editor of the Christchurch Press for nearly forty years; as editor he first met Samuel Butler -- with whom he occasionally corresponded later -- during Butler's four and one-half years in New Zealand.
To appeals from a friend that he return to "England, life and art", the colonist replies that he has re-created England in New Zealand, lived his life in New Zealand as a man "to the desert come", and "no art?":

Who serve an art more great
Than we, rough architects of State
With the old Earth at strife?\(^1\)

"New Zealand" demonstrated the new colonialism. New Zealand was not only better than Australia (no "drought of the desert may blight" her) but superior to England. To be a "rough architect of State" was better than "art" itself; the special virtue of New Zealand resulted from the creation of her government, not the powers of her authors to identify the nation. New Zealand may, in the end, be mediocre, but she had compensations, and Reeves was proud of them:

Though young they are heirs of the ages,
Though few they are freemen and peers,
Plain workers - yet sure of the wages
Slow Destiny pays with the years.
Though least they and latest their nation,
Yet this they have won without sword --
That Woman with Man shall have station,
And Labour be lord.

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\(^1\) First published in the Monthly Review in May 1904, the poem was reprinted in Alexander and Currie, op. cit., pp. 22-26.
Not wholly accidentally, the first verse in Alexander and Currie's anthology was Reeves' "New Zealand". 14

In the introduction to their collection, Alexander and Currie humorously regretted that their volume was not "completely typical" of New Zealand: it lacked verse, for instance, "exemplifying directly the results of Universal Franchise and Industrial Arbitration". But they were wholly in earnest when they noted that "it is hard to say whether there are as yet any signs of a distinctive school of New Zealand poetry.... Each writer is a law unto himself in the choice of models, and responds to influences flowing anywhere out of the whole corpus of Anglo-Saxon literature". New Zealand "landscape-writing", on the other hand, was "surely a class of poetry by itself, and if there is a 'school' of poetry here it is certainly a school of landscape." 15

14 Written in 1893, "New Zealand" appeared as the title poem of Reeves' *New Zealand* (London, 1898).

The decline of the Imperial design, however, had gradually eroded the need for New Zealand literary nationalists to insist on the similarities between their landscape and that of an idealized Britain. New Zealand, after she had left it, became for Dora Wilcox her "Paradise", where she could "find again lost ideals, dreams too fair / For lasting". This view depended on a simple contrast between "Nature" and "Life" (whether it was, as in her case, life in "London's teeming streets", or, for others, the mercenary existence of the Colonies). But her "At Onawe" hints at a peculiarly New Zealand view of that "Nature" of English Romanticism: its absolute silence.

"At Onawe" to be sure, is largely a ritual response to the ruined abbey/pa, but her exclamation "No sense, no sound!" became an increasingly familiar one in the verse following the 'nineties. Edward Tregear's strangled "But not, oh God, such peace, such

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16 "In London", ibid., p. 35. Dora Wilcox (b. 1873) published her first collection, Verses from Maoriland, in 1905, where "In London" also appeared.

ghastly peace as this" was another expression of the frozen image, the suspended landscape of New Zealand.18

At first glance this view of New Zealand's landscape is simply a variation of the "sleeping giant" myth: the new country which requires only the magic touch of Art, Culture, and foreign capital to cause it to spring to life. While this is partly accurate, for New Zealand's authors their image of the suspended landscape became something much more fundamental: the basis of a "national feeling" centered in denial.

Hubert Church gave Keatsian expression to the unknown land:

Thy sweet elusive spirit dwells
   Amid the far-suspended South,
And there thy lonely passion tells
   Its pain upon thy dreamy mouth:
For ever on the mountain side
   The snow imprisoned, and the tide
That is eternally denied
   The shore, aloof with thee abide.19

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19"Maoriland", The West Wind (Sydney, 1902), p. 36. Hubert Newman Wigmore Church (1857-1932), born in Hobart, lived in England (where he was deafened at the age of fourteen) from 1865 to 1873; on his arrival in New Zealand he took up law, but abandoned it to enter the Treasury Department, Wellington, in 1879.
New Zealand's "face", nevertheless, is "revealing"; the poet's task is to discover, first, why the country had failed to reveal "joy", and secondly, what it is that is somehow revealed. Significantly, Church suggests tentatively that "thy tender heart may lean / To those that bore the storm and stress".  

"There is a majesty of still endurance here". Just as man's greatest worth is not his virtue, but his struggle to transform his vice into virtue, so New Zealanders may come to understand the special virtues of New Zealand by enduring. As Captain Russell explained in Melbourne in 1890, one of the reasons why New Zealand would not join Australia in a scheme of federation was because of her "distinct" nationality, formed by that "self-denial" of which Australians knew nothing.  

New Zealand's politicians had been having second thoughts about the advantages of federation with

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20 Ibid.  
the Australian colonies. In 1883 at the Intercolonial Conference held in Sydney and Melbourne, Major Atkinson was an enthusiastic supporter of a "United Australasia"; James Service, the Premier of Victoria, reminded the delegates (amidst loud cheers) of the significance of the "menu card - perhaps you have not noticed it, gentlemen - there are represented upon it two hands clasped together with the superscription, 'Australasia from this time forward'." But Sir Robert Stout echoed a more common view in 1890, when he asked of politics as well as literature: "New Zealand being insular, far removed from the continent of Australia - about 1000 miles distant - having distinct natural features - will its literature be idiosyncratic?"

Three days before a Federation Conference opened in Melbourne on 6 February 1890, Mr. W. Curnow warned Sir Henry Parkes of New South Wales that "the prevailing sentiment in New Zealand is not at heart

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23 The Argus [Melbourne], 11 December 1883, quoted in Clark, op. cit., p. 455.

24 "The Rise and Progress of New Zealand" in Musings in Maoriland, p. 18.
Australian”.

Captain W.R. Russell explained rather impolitely to the delegates why New Zealanders would not join any Federation scheme:

Mr. Clark, the Attorney-General for Tasmania, remarked, when addressing the Conference to-day, that with every distinct physical environment there comes a distinct national type. With a population of 700,000 people in New Zealand, dwelling in an island where the climate is dissimilar to a very great extent from that of Australia, which has been colonized in an entirely different manner, and, speaking colloquially, having had a very much rougher time than the colonies of Australia, we are likely to develop a very complete individuality - a distinct national type. We have had to struggle against not only a more boisterous climate than Australia, but against a dense vegetation; and we have had to carve our homes out of the wilderness, which, though marvellously prolific and fertile, nevertheless marks a country in which self-denial has had to be practised by its settlers to an extent of which the people of the Australian continent have no conception.

It was with this sense of moral superiority that New Zealanders had turned away from Australia to find their special virtue as Englishmen. But the decay of provincialism did not necessarily mean that Australia’s

25 Mitchell Library, Parkes Correspondence, Curnow to Parkes, 3 February 1890. Curnow wrote from the offices of the Sydney Morning Herald.

26 Quoted in Clark, op. cit., p. 477.
position had changed. John Liddell Kelly, for instance, illustrated the ambiguities of multiple affection. A Scot, Kelly came to New Zealand in 1881 and soon developed a fierce attachment to the country as well as a passion for writing verse on every conceivable occasion.  

27 He was the kind of literary nationalist who could (and Kelly did) write a "New Zealand Prize Poem" on "Queen Victoria's Jubilee", while celebrating a New Zealand "free from the gyves of Caste and Class, ... a Greater and Brighter Britain".  

Although Kelly felt that New Zealand was better off "release[d] from English leading-strings", he was perfectly clear in his own mind that New Zealand's destiny did not lie with the Australian colonies.

27 Auckland Public Library, Grey Papers, Kelly to Sir George Grey, 20 November 1888. In a contribution to a series of autobiographies collected by A.G. Stephens, Kelly (1850-1925) attributed his "poetic gift" to his father, a rhyming blacksmith, rather than to his mother, an indirect descendant of Bonnie Prince Charles ("wrong side of the blanket, of course"). At various times he was associated - usually as editor - with the Auckland Star, Observer, Lyttleton Times, New Zealand Times, and New Zealand Mail (Alexander Turnbull Library, "Autobiographies, in holograph, of 168 Australasian Authors, Journalists, and Artists", f. 53r, 53v). Kelly fathered eleven children and five volumes of verse.

28 Zealandia's Jubilee (Auckland, 1890), pp. 22-23.
Looking forward in 1890 to his adopted country's spreading "her sway o'er an Island Nation", he lamented that this might be "an over-daring prophecy at a time when New Zealand appears likely to sink her individuality and independence to some extent, by joining an Australian Federation akin to that of the Dominion of Canada."\(^{29}\)

Despite their unconcealed contempt for the petty politicians who, they felt, were bringing about New Zealand's ruin, her authors revealed a genuine pride in New Zealand when speaking to Australians, albeit based on the topographical fallacy. Addressing the preface of his *Gleanings from Maoriland* specifically to Australians, Herbert Hawken simply noted that his verses "should convey some idea of the soul-inspiring grandeur of its scenery; they are but the natural offspring of a justifiable pride in my native land."\(^{30}\)

William Pember Reeves was less tactful when he voiced a common opinion about the Australian continent in


\(^{30}\) His verse was published in Sydney in 1891.
It was when in Australia making a stay
That I happened to hear an Australian say,
With a patriot's pride, that his country was one
Boasting all the advantages under the sun;
That it offered no drawbacks, at least very few,
And he swore that they only amounted to two,
And so small, by their absence that no one was vexed;
Want of water the first, good society next:
Then I ventured my friend most politely to tell
That the same disadvantages happen in h---l.31

Other New Zealanders, if they saw the country
as their "far-suspended South", were equally quick to
point out what they were suspended over. Forty years
after Robert Joplin's reference to New South Wales
as the "out-casts bier", Robert Jackson somewhat unkindly
celebrated the Sydney Exhibition by hoping that Sydney's
citizens would see "a second Carthage rise sublime".32

31"A Globe-trotter's Views on New Zealand" in W.P. Reeves and G.P. Williams, Colonial Couplets
(Christchurch, 1889), p. 20. Although none of the verses in this collection are signed, "Views" is
attributed to Reeves here primarily because it does not appear in Williams' A New Chum's Letter Home
(Wellington, 1904), where many of the contributions to Colonial Couplets were reprinted. George Phipps
Williams (1847-1909) also collaborated with Reeves in another verse collection, In Double Harness
(Christchurch, 1891).

32"Sydney Exhibition", Nospyr Poems, p. 11.
Even Jessie Mackay's laudatory verses to Sydney in 1891 included the sea's admonition to "Be glad; thy natal stain is wiped away / Of blood and tears", to which Sydney replies:

"I am the eldest and fairest one
Of all my sisters. What if they may grow
And pass me as a gourd in tropic sun?
   It may be so.
   But I am girt about with elfin bays
And fairy knolls ...."  

Irony, not one of Miss Mackay's usual modes, is here triumphant.

And so Thomas Bracken, writing to Sir George Grey before another National Australasian Convention began in March 1891, exclaimed with relief, "all lovers

33"Sydney", The Sitter on the Rail (Christchurch, 1891), p. 45. Commenting on "Sydney" in 1900, and referring to a notorious incident, Oscar Alpers said that he "knows of no poem which catches so perfectly and expresses so truly the peculiar charm of Sydney":

It is fervently to be hoped that no future Governor of New South Wales will imitate the example set by Lord Beauchamp with his famous faux pas about Sydney's "birth stain" by sending, as an advance "Message to the People of New Wales" the third verse of Miss Mackay's poem. (Jubilee Book of Canterbury Rhymes, p. 151).
of New Zealand will be glad that you are able to represent the colony at the Conference. You will never give your consent to have New Zealand made a mere dependency of Australia." Bracken would probably have cheered Hubert Church's good wishes for Australia on her Federation Day:

Now let a sweet, unsullied light
Fall on her, that she be too bright
For the abhorred stain
Of evil to remain.

Wherever New Zealand's destiny lay, it was apparently not with the descendants of convicts.

ii. Maoriland and the Australian

"More and more New Zealanders", A.G. Stephens suggested in 1910, "are getting out of tune with their country". State socialism, an unknown but romantic landscape, and an ambiguous complex of loyalties were not enough to sustain New Zealand's literary nationalists.

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34 Auckland Public Library, Grey Papers, Bracken to Grey, 13 February 1891.
35 "Australia -- 1st January, 1901", Poems, p. [43].
New Zealand was limited indeed; too limited for Arthur Adams:

The Shakespeare of Australia will come slouching down to the feverish life of Sydney from some drear, sun-baked, God-forgotten backblocks township, made superbly articulate by the endless and enigmatic silence of the bush. The New Zealand race, meantime, at ease in a paradise of majestic scenery, will rest content with that.  

Adams himself was not content with majestic scenery, and in 1898 became one of those "out of tune" New Zealanders who turned "longing eyes to Australia, and are never happy till they get there". As Stephens described them:

Once there, and after they have passed a few months of adjustment, they cannot be driven home with dynamite. They remain vocal in praise of "Ward's own country" (which deserves praise); they will prove to you that as a place of residence, it is infinitely superior to Australia, and, in some circumstances and regards, it is superior; only, they won't go back. The young New Zealander is an interesting problem. At present, it seems that New Zealand is dominated by the old men of the second generation -- the sons of the pioneers. In the course of the next ten years, the third generation will come into power, and there are signs that the Puritan New Zealand

of the early settlers may soon be a thing of the past. The first New Zealand generation grew up practically without money, the second was taught to save money; the third has learned to spend money in buying intenser life.  

Perhaps Stephens had read Constance McAdam's _A Pagan's Love_, in which she told how "all New Zealanders disapprove of Sydney, and all flock there on every possible occasion." In 1911 there were approximately 32,000 native-born New Zealanders in Australia: almost five per cent of the total native-born European population of New Zealand. Stephens went on:

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38"The Bookfellow", _op. cit_. The phrase "Ward's own country" is a half-satirical reference to Richard Seddon's constant apostrophizing of New Zealand as "God's Own Country". After thirteen years as Premier, Seddon died in 1906 on his way back from Australia where he was negotiating for commercial reciprocity. Shortly thereafter Sir Joseph Ward, Seddon's lieutenant, assumed office as Prime Minister of New Zealand. Ward -- who was born in Australia -- resigned the year after Stephens wrote this column.

39_(London, 1905), p. 85_. Miss McAdam, born in Scotland in 1872, grew up on a station in southern Canterbury. As "Constance Clyde" and "C.C.", she was the _Bulletin_ 's most prolific contributor of New Zealand verse. See ch. 8 below.

40_R.D. Arnold, in Table V at p. 28 of "New Zealand in Australasia" gives 31,868; in a bar-graph "Percentage of oversea-born in non-Maori population" T.V.T. B[aker] shows approximately 30% for 1911 ("Population", _Encyclopaedia of New Zealand_, II, 823). Thus approximately 70% of the total non-Maori population in 1911 (1,005,585) was native-born._
At present, Sydney is the New Zealand safety-valve; Sydney is regarded by the typical New Zealander as the vestibule to a very warm place indeed; he is shocked at Sydney, but he is a brave man, and he has the courage to be shocked. Besides, he likes being shocked. Besides, it is the peculiar talent of the typical New Zealander to preserve his moral superiority in the midst of shocks; he denounces while he embraces. 41

Stephens might well have been writing the story of Arthur Adams' first years in Australia, a story which in several ways illustrated the ambiguities of the New Zealand "dialogue". For Adams it was personal, but his first verse, and reactions to it, summarized a decade of literary nationalism.

Adams was 22 when he graduated from the University of Otago in 1894; after brief studies in law he took up journalism, and in 1898 arrived in Sydney as secretary to the theatre entrepreneur, J.C. Williamson. Except for brief periods -- including a visit to China as correspondent of the Christchurch Press during the Boxer Rebellion -- he remained in Australia until his death in 1936. During this time he was a poet, playwright, novelist, journalist, literary sub-editor of

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Adams' first bitter verses on Australia were published in the Bulletin shortly after he arrived in Sydney. "The Australian" is a remarkable tour-de-force: aphoristic, stilted, yet virtually the only nineteenth-century attempt in verse to measure Australia objectively. Had it been written fifty years earlier it would have been entitled, as one of many, "The Australiad"; as it stands, Adams' effort is an unusual link between Pope and A.D. Hope's "Australia". The conventional opening references to the "Past" and "Future" are muted by Adams' unconventional allusion to Autumn, rather than Spring:

Once more this Autumn-earth is ripe,  
Parturient of another type.

While with the Past old nations merge  
His foot is on the Future's verge;

They watch him, as they huddle pent,  
Striding a spacious continent,

Above the level desert's marge  
Looming in his aloofness large.

Then follows his personification of the land itself,

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42 Adams took over the "Red Page" for three years after A.G. Stephens left the paper in 1906, and then edited the Lone Hand from 1909 to 1911.
the essential Australian, in phraseology which left
Richard Jebb with his clearest impressions of
Australian literature in the Bulletin:

No flower with fragile sweetness graced -
A lank weed wrestling with the waste.

Pallid of face and gaunt of limb,
The sweetness withered out of him.

Sombre, indominaible, wan,
The juices dried, the glad youth gone.

A little weary from his birth;
His laugh the spectre of a mirth.

Bitter beneath a bitter sky,
To Nature he has no reply.

Wanton, perhaps, and cruel. Yes,
Is not his sun more merciless?

Joy has such a niggard dole to give,
He laughs, a child, just glad to live.

So drab and neutral is his day
He gleans a splendour in the grey,

And from his life's monotony
He lifts a subtle melody.

When earth so poor a banquet makes
His pleasures at a gulp he takes.

The feast is his to the last crumb;
Drink while he can ... the drought will come.

His heart a sudden tropic flower,
He loves and loathes within an hour.

43 "The native bards seem...powerless to dispel the impression of a weary continent, and of a people 'just glad to live'" (Studies in Colonial Nationalism [London, 1905], p. 194).
Adams next addresses those "why by the pools abide", cautioning them not to judge "the man who swerves aside"; for it is that man who has built "where even God has banned". Significantly, all the accomplishments of "the Australian" which Adams lists are purely material, a point emphasized by his ringingly ironic conclusion:

But if there be no goal to reach?
The way lies open, dawns beseech!

Enough that he lay down his load
A little further on the road.

So, toward undreamt-of destinies,
He slouches down the centuries.44

Adams' gift for the metaphor of invective was not directed at Australia alone. As a colonial in London, he felt that he was in the midst of a "vast grey cobweb":

Ah, far from England float those filaments;
Weaving old wizardry they touch and claim
Tribute of souls from unseen continents!

But as a New Zealander, he felt like a prisoner, not a pilgrim on *hadj* to Mecca:

There, drawn by the great lure of that great name, My alien heart, shrivelled and long sucked dry.  

The boredom of London's "languid women", the "glittering emptiness" of Bond Street, even the "bloated pugs, those epicures / Of darkened boudoirs - and of sewers" appalled him, not as the innocent abroad, but as a seasoned war-correspondent and playwright.  

Disillusionment with the heart of the Empire, however, was secondary to his view of Australia, which he always saw as a New Zealander. Britain was for him a mumbling "grey old crone", but Sydney was a ravished, piteous queen, "a festering sore", oozing "warm blood" and blanching the "drowned faces" of King Street. Nor for Adams were Australian cities

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46"Bond Street", ibid., p. 20.  
47"The Brave Days to Be", *Maoriland*, p. 23.  
48"Sydney", ibid., p. 83.  
49"In Hyde Park", ibid., p. 102.  
50"King Street", ibid.
dehumanizing simply because they were cities; it was because they were Australian. Rejecting the simplistic arcadian quest of so many *Bulletin* romantic versifiers, Adams explicitly compared Australia to his own country in "Written in Australia". Predictably, his "home-gazing" glance took in mantled forests, the soothing "dark bush", as "robust and fragrant" as the sinuous woman who personifies New Zealand. But speaking from his "banished" heart, he irritated more than one critic with his stanzas. The land, he suggests nearly as directly as in "The Australian", is its people:

The wide sun stare without a cloud:  
Whipped by his glances truculent  
The earth lies quivering and cowed!  
My heart is hot with discontent—  
I hate this haggard continent.

The old grey city is dumb with heat;  
No breeze comes leaping, naked, rude,  
Adown the narrow, high-walled street;  
Upon the night thick perfumes brood:  
The evening ooze lassitude.

The land lies desolate and stripped;  
Across its waste has thinly strayed  
A tattered host of eucalypt,  
From whose gaunt uniform is made  
A ragged penury of shade.
...[in New Zealand] the placid great lakes are,
And brimming rivers proudly force
Their ice-cold tides. Here, like a scar,
Dry-lipped, a withered watercourse
Crawls from a long-forgotten source. 51

Despite the bitterness of Adams' sentiments for Australia, A.G. Stephens arranged the publication of his first collection of verse by the Bulletin in 1899. 52 Along with the work of Will Ogilvie, E.J. Brady, Albert Dorrington, and Roderick Quinn, Adams' Maoriland and Other Verses joined "The Bulletin Library". Adams, the Bulletin announced, was "the best writer of verse whom Maoriland has yet produced", a verdict totally repudiated by New Zealand literary critics of the twentieth century. 53 For E.H. McCormick, Adams was


52 Adams' first separate publication was Hinemoa (Wellington, 1896), set to music by Alfred Hill. Hill (1870-1960), born in Australia, was taken to New Zealand with his family; he studied in Leipzig, returned to New Zealand as conductor of the Wellington Orchestral Society, earned a reputation for his "Maori" compositions -- Hinemoa was first performed in 1902 -- and later helped found the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

53 As an example of A.G. Stephens' acting as a professional editor of the Bulletin's publications, his handling of Maoriland is representative. Adams' verse first appeared in the Bulletin on 23 February 1895 ("The
"once the hope and later the disappointment of New Zealand letters"\textsuperscript{54}, while Allen Curnow has charged that "much of his writing exhibits that degeneration of verse into the cant of a cult, to which the mingling of sophistication with vulgarization in Australian literary journalism was so favourable a circumstance."\textsuperscript{55}

The seeds of this discontent were not sown by Adams' contributions to the \textit{Bulletin} itself, but by the appearance of \textit{Maoriland}. Of its sixty-seven poems, only twenty-eight had appeared in the \textit{Bulletin}; most were his effusions praising New Zealand and its landscape, Anarchist\textsuperscript{3}), and a dozen more were published by the end of 1898. The paper's praise was included in the same notice announcing his forthcoming \textit{Bulletin Library} volume, on the "Red Page" of the special Christmas issue, 10 December 1898. Adams' dedicatory verses in \textit{Maoriland} ("My Mother") are dated 1 September 1899; on 16 September Stephens noted on the "Red Page" that the book would appear on 28 September. A list of "Publications and Announcements" at the end of the volume is dated 30 September, \textit{Maoriland} was advertised as available for sale in the \textit{Bulletin} on 7 October (with a picture of Adams in the same issue), and it was reviewed in the following issue of the paper.

\textsuperscript{54}\textit{New Zealand Literature} (London, 1959), p. 80.

\textsuperscript{55}\textit{The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse} (Harmondsworth, 1960), p. 311. Curnow erroneously notes that Adams wrote five novels; in fact he wrote ten, as well as a volume of short stories.
his verses on Australia, and conventional pieces on "Love and Life" and "To One Slain in Absence". Over half the book, however, consisted of new work, mostly what Adams delicately termed "Love Motives".

These "love motives", on subjects like "The New Woman" ("in her beauty flaunting nude...a woman, rounded, ripe") began Adams' reputation for "degenerate" writing and a career as a novelist which saw him issue, under pseudonyms, such titles as *Double Bed Dialogues* (1915), *Lola of the Chocolates* (1920) and *The Brute* (1922). In the *Bulletin*’s main review of *Maoriland*, George Barton noted that Adams was...

56 Op. cit., p. 69 (from TB, 3 September 1898, p. 3); and p. 85 (from TB, 15 April 1899, p. 11, as "A.H.A.").

57 Thirty-four were new; as well as his contributions to the *Bulletin*, three had appeared in Tom Bracken’s *Annual* (Wellington, 1896), and two in the *Australian Magazine*.


59 The first two were written as "Henry James James", and the last as "James James". *Double Bed Dialogues* was reprinted in England in 1916 as *Honeymoon Dialogues*, and serialised in the *Bulletin* in 1925 as *Twin-Bed Dialogues*. 
"patriotic, as a poet should be"; significantly, however, he also claimed that "Maoriland landscapes will probably have less charm for the general reader than poems inspired by 'Love Motives'". 60

Even before Maoriland appeared, "Thorold Dalrymple" considered Adams the best "Australian" sonneteer 61; afterwards, praise flowed steadily. The London Athenaeum gently commended Maoriland "rather for its promise than its performance" 62. Henry Turner, writing in The Book-Lover of Melbourne, felt that Adams "touches the high-water mark of the Australian [sic] poetry of the decade". 63 A.G. Stephens' criticism is suspect, for his editorial judgement was at stake. His comments in The Review of Reviews are

60 TB, 14 October 1899, "Red Page".

61 TB, 14 January 1899, "Red Page". "Thorold Dalrymple" was the pseudonym of Thorold D. Waters (b. 1876).


63 Ibid., pp. 1-2.
nevertheless noteworthy for his use of the ugly term "modern English culture-verse", to which he compared Adams' work. In a conclusion which could only have been written by Stephens, he added that at its best, Adams' verse "has a sympathy and force which lifts him above the ordinary rank of cultured verse-makers."\textsuperscript{64}

\textit{New Zealand} opinion was more mixed. The \textit{Press} of Christchurch devoted a long leading article to Adams' \textit{Maoriland}, hailing him as "a New Zealand Kendall". New Zealand, their reviewer claimed, "at last finds poetic voice in the utterance of a native-born New Zealander." The terms in which he made his claim, however, were far from Stephens' reference to "culture-verse" or Barton's to "Love Motives": "It would have been indeed strange if while what Mr. Adams calls 'the haggard continent' ... had become of recent years a very 'nest of singing birds', New Zealand with its virgin horde of beauty had remained altogether voiceless. Australia's older poets, her Gordons and Kendalls, have found successors in Lawson, Ogilvie, Paterson, Daley, and half a dozen others. And New

\textsuperscript{64}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 1.
Zealand? Was the youngest and the fairest child of England's brood to grow up dumb?"

Answering his own question, the Press reviewer called Adams "a true poet", and then began his barrage:

Mr. Adams calls his volume "Maoriland and Other Verses." We own to having little sympathy with the "Bulletin" affectation, by which New Zealand is made to change its accepted name in favour of its disappearing race of Polynesians. If New Zealand is to be altered, there is, perhaps, something to be said in favour of Englishing the Dutch word, and, dropping the "New" (as the Laureate sang "New, new, new, new; is it then so new"), to call it "Sealand" a pretty and unused name. But we see no advantage which "Maoriland" possesses over the accepted name to compensate for its affectation, and its yearly diminishing truth.65

The Bulletin's presumption was a minor matter in comparison to a "more serious impress that the 'Bulletin' has left on Mr Adams":

the atrophy of that feeling of affection to the Mother-country that is the birthright of all New Zealanders. Our poet has no word of enthusiasm for, no word of gratitude to, the land to which he owes all.... We search in vain these pages, as we search very much in vain the pages of the parent "Bulletin", for any traces of the Imperial sentiment.

65 The Bulletin was proud of the word "Maoriland", referring to "The Bulletin-invented term, "Maorilanders!" on 27 February 1892 (p. 15); four months later it said that it had "abolished the name 'New Zealand'. There is
Despite this failing, the Press reviewer could claim, in an even "more important matter", that Adams "is essentially a New Zealander." Barely disguising his glee as he referred to "The Australian", he pointed out that

the note of gaunt misery, of dare-dash devilry and flippant cynicism which vitiates much of modern Australian utterance, finds no echo in the voice of the cooler, richer, happier land. In the "Garden of the Sea" a chord of religious fancy is sounded, untouched as yet in Australasian poetry. Though in Australia, Mr. Adams is no Australian... Australia, indeed, and the Australians, he admires, though in a frank outspoken way which we fear they will be the last to relish.66

A.G. Stephens was indignant; anticipating his attack on another review of Maoriland by the editor of the Triad, he immediately replied in the "Red Page". Referring to the Press' regretting what he called "the absence of Jingo sentiment", he noted that

no longer any such place" (25 June 1892, p. 7). See also TB, 27 July 1895, p. 7 and 27 August 1898, p. 18. Although "Maoriland" or "M.L." was not used exclusively by the paper until the early 'nineties, a New Zealand contributor called New Zealand "Maoriland" in his verses published on 7 September 1889 (p. 21).

66 28 October 1899, pp. 6-7.
it is not enough for a Maorilander to love Maoriland; he must love Britain too. Children, honour your father and your mother, and remember your great-grandmother in the days of your poetical youth, that your bays may be strong in the Maoriland which buyeth you.67

Adams, the New Zealander in Australia, had already replied to both the Press of Christchurch and the Bulletin of Sydney:

Here, aloof, I take my stand --  
Alien, iconoclast --  
Poet of a newer land,  
Confident, aggressive, lonely.68

Despite his protestations, Adams was regarded by New Zealanders as having sold out to the "Otherside". Worse still, he had sold out to the Bulletin. High

67 TB, 18 November 1899. Stephens noticed the Triad's review on the "Red Page", 10 February 1900. A reply by C.N. Baeyertz, editor of the Triad, was published on the "Red Page" on 24 March 1900. Charles Nalder Baeyertz (1865-1943), an Australian, founded this lively "monthly magazine of music, science, and art" in April 1893, shortly after his arrival in New Zealand. From 1915 to approximately 1928 the Triad was published in Australia; Baeyertz left the Triad in 1925, but it lasted until 1937. H.M. Green incorrectly states that it was founded in 1915 (A History of Australian Literature [Sydney, 1962] I, 731).

68 "Myself--My Song", Maoriland, p. 89.
seriousness may have led literary nationalists to what A.G. Stephens found in William Pember Reeves' verse: "a doubt whether, after all, her national ideals are the highest conceivable". And New Zealanders might indeed have embraced Australia while they denounced her. But they had never embraced the Bulletin: the embodiment of all the subverted political and literary standards implied in the paper's slogan "Australia for the Australians".

iii. A Pioneer of Indecency

Four years before his death in 1933, A.G. Stephens admitted that "the characteristic spirit of New Zealand communities was in several ways antipathetic" to the Bulletin. "A member of the Christchurch Club told me in 1909 that 'We do not care much for "The

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Bulletin" in New Zealand". Jessie Mackay, among other New Zealand poets, has suggested why, in an obvious reference to the Bulletin's fostering of a popular stream of Australian verse.

"New Zealand verse", she wrote in 1908, "differs from the semi-tropical and wholly Antipodean flower of Australian poesy. The former grafted itself on the good old Saxon stem; the latter 'just growed' like Topsy." Then, in a revealing aphorism: "The New Zealand pioneer poet beached his boats; the Australian burnt his boats." She added, "which did more wisely, time alone can show", but little doubt exists about what New Zealand poets believed. As Miss. Mackay said of "Nature and the trend of historical happenings", the New Zealander "was the darling of the gods, and he soon found it out."  


71 "A Foreword" to New Zealand Rhymes (Wellington, [1907]), p. 4.
As for the agent of the devil, the Bulletin, Ernest Currie was blunt to an extreme. A.G. Stephens had sent Currie a copy of his own verse, Oblation, in 1902; Currie unburdened himself not only about Stephens' collection ("Morbidity. It lurks all through the book"), but about the Bulletin's literary policy in general:

The future Australian raised on your teaching would be a cynical wreck, taught to sneer at other nations and by force of habit at his own also; lacking the valuable self hypnotism that Paul calls Faith; with no sense of duty to keep him working; reduced thereby several steps back to the brute; casual (you idealise casualness) as a Bohemian, without necessarily generosity; with none of the reverence for women which made Teutons nations; vicious and low-minded to a degree; and with a very fine sense of humour, albeit sometimes grim - and this quality isn't much use until you reach an advanced civilisation.\(^{72}\)

Australia, Currie clearly believed, was scarcely in such a position, and cited Meredith's "Essay on Comedy" to bolster his attack. Then, turning to that complex problem of loyalty which tormented so many New Zealanders, he observed of Australians:

\(^{72}\) Mitchell Library, A.G. Stephens Papers, Currie to Stephens, 2 June 1902.
if you give them the Spirit of Empire to worship & a sudden change comes, their instinct of loyalty will fix itself all firmly on to some other ideal: as did the American Colonists. But not if you carefully stamp out the instinct to be loyal altogether - for the loyalty to Australia that you are trying to foster, if it takes root at all, is only very low and mercenary. "Nevertheless", A.G. Stephens wrote later, "The Bulletin has been widely read in New Zealand; and it encouraged as contributors many New Zealand writers of literature who have won a deserved reputation." The concept of New Zealand's "moral superiority" to Australia, obviously, must be endowed with a remarkable flexibility if the Bulletin was in fact the leading literary periodical for New Zealanders in the 'nineties.

In more strictly literary terms, Alfred Grace -- himself an occasional contributor to the Bulletin -- clearly had the paper in mind when he introduced a posthumous collection of William Hodgson's verse. Hodgson, who died in 1894, was "distinctly a writer of the old school", Grace remarked wryly:

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\(^7\)Ibid. Currie was, of course, referring to The Idea of Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit (1877).

\(^7\)Ibid., "Australian Journalism".
His style was not that of those late Victorian poets who rejoice in reproductions of the Australian shearer's "lingo", or the slang of privates of the Line. The poetry of the engine-room and fo'c'sle had no charm for William Hodgson; with him the classical models sufficed. Though hardly in the literary fashion of to-day, his influence upon Colonial taste will probably be felt in days to come.\textsuperscript{75}

Johannes C. Andersen was blunter, if more scholarly; the \textit{Bulletin}'s influence, he implied in 1903, had banished "all beauty of poetry". His article, "A Phase of Australian Poetry", appeared in the first and only issue of the \textit{Huia}; the name of the magazine, ironically, was taken from an indigenous New Zealand bird recently described as "extremely sensitive to changes" in its environment, "about as big as Australian magpies", and now believed to have been extinct since the decade in which Andersen was writing. "Their calls have been described as a soft whistle, a low chirping, and a loud shrill whistle of alarm".\textsuperscript{76} Suggesting that "technically, all English

\textsuperscript{75}Poems (Nelson, 1896), p. iii. A note by Grace tipped into a copy in the National Library, Canberra, suggests that the volume did not appear until March 1897.

verse is divided into two metres, disyllabic and tri-syllabic", Andersen turned to the "quadrisyllabic", a measure "in high favour with the present generation of Australians, especially with the bush bards and their master lyrists". He found the "germ" of this metre in Gordon, a versifier who "has been called the father of Australian poetry; all that his godhead as poet has fathered has been a Marsyas, not an Apollo. He is the exponent of the racing-school, or rather has become, through the disdirected [sic] influence of his admirers." "The gallop", Andersen suggested, "is his perpetual measure":

Here is the difference between the father of English poetry and the putative father of Australian poetry. Chaucer ambled to Canterbury with his pilgrims; Gordon gallops to Flemington with daredevils. Of Gordon, Marcus Clarke has epigrammatically said, "he has ridden what he has written"; so has Chaucer, but he rode more soberly.

And sobriety, as New Zealanders knew, was the chief of literary virtues ("the New Zealand pioneer poet beached his boats...").

Andersen concluded with the observation that while the quadrisyllabic measure was absent from the best Australian poetry -- particularly that of Victor Daley, "accounted the poets' poet in his own land" --
this measure "forms almost the mainstay of the versifiers": and it is the versifiers who have the widest public. This is the public that delights to hear of Saltbush Bill, of Jim the Splitter, of The Man from Snowy River, of The Man from Ironbark, and other adventurers from the Never Never. The stories and the characters must have humour and hilarity; the measure must have pace and recklessness; the old swing of the ballad measure is too slow for the Australian, as the old subjects are too tame; and in his lips the tripping di and trisyllables become rollicking quadrisyllabics, all beauty of poetry being banished. 77

Oscar Alpers had already denied "true" poetry to Australia in 1900. A tone of sadness will be heard in New Zealand verse, he admitted, "as in all true poetry; but no numbing pessimism, no morbid melancholy. In much Australian poetry 'There sounds I know not what ground tone / Of human agony.' But the poetry of New Zealand should be joyous, virile, essentially sane." 78

Other New Zealanders objected as much to what they felt was the Bulletin's patronizing attitude towards New Zealand as to its debasing the language and spirit of poetry. The editor of the first Southland

77 I, 1 (December 1903), 17-19.
78 "Introduction" to Jubilee Book of Canterbury Rhymes, p. xvii. Pagination in the introduction to the popular edition differs from that of the subscription edition (used here) by a constant six pages.
Miscellany of Prose and Verse, for instance, referred to "a certain Australian journal", which "has been engaged for many years in endeavouring to force the name Maoriland down our throats". (Objecting to "New Zealand" because it was not "English", the editor's own choice was "Sealand.") The Maoris were "fast dying away", and he felt that "Maoriland" was merely a "melancholy cenotaph . . . possibly, in the eyes of foreigners, conveying a perpetual reproach to ourselves". 79

The attractions of that specific "foreigner", nevertheless, were overwhelming for Charles Rodgers. His fortnightly Stockwhip, published in New Plymouth for four months in 1899, was wholly modelled on the Sydney Bulletin: from layout, cartoons, and features to the title itself, taken from a regular Bulletin column. In phraseology strangely reminiscent of the Bulletin's leaders, Rodgers' opening editorial welcomed

79"Thoughts about Space", note to p. 9. Although the title-page of this fourteen-page miscellany notes that it is "No. 1", no other issue has been discovered. It was published in Riverton, ca. 1899, a date assigned because of a verse on the "Commonwealth of Australia" (to be sung to the tune of "God Save the Queen").
"the exposure of private iniquities, interested trusts, unrighteous jobs, promoters companies started to bleed the community and foreign investors." \(^{80}\) Literature was not forgotten, although the paper's favourite causes appeared to be opposing the Temperance movement and, appropriately, championing the policies of Richard Seddon, the "Hierophant of Liberalism in New Zealand." \(^{81}\) A "thrilling" story set in Taranaki was offered serially, together with original verse and a column "Books and Other Things". It was this column that Rodgers devoted to an attack on the "indecency" of literature in the *Bulletin*, comparing it to that of the *Yellow Book*:

No two productions can be imagined more antithetical than the *Bulletin* and the *Yellow Book*, the ultra-realistic and the ultra-artistic. The first, from its inception, has borne the

\(^{80}\) I, 1 (10 June 1899). The most complete file of the *Stockwhip* which I have been able to locate is held by the Library of the Auckland Institute and Museum (I, 1-4, 6-9, 11). I am indebted to Professor J.C. Reid, University of Auckland, for making it possible for me to gain access to this Library during an early stage of my reading.

\(^{81}\) Ibid.
motto "Truth at any price", the latter, "Form above all". And yet, in their poetry, the Bedfordians and latter Swinburnians have many parallels. In seeking after absolute realism and absolute art, each have found a common attribute. And as explorers in Artic and Antartic regions both discover one thing in common in those far apart realms - to wit, ice - so these pioneers of literature meet on the common ground of indecency. 82

Attacks on Aestheticism, of course, were not uncommon in either New Zealand or Australia; the Bulletin itself frequently satirized the movement before the paper's editors realised that it was more than a momentary literary fad. 83 And as early as 1882

82 Ibid., I, 7 (2 September 1899), 4. Rodgers' grammar and spelling have been reproduced exactly.

83 "The popular taste is gradually becoming vitiated, and the healthful vigour of the young generation sapped by this emasculatory insipidity" ("Excwoociating!", TB, 28 May 1881, p. 2). Further indications of the Bulletin's hostility (in the early 'eighties, for example) can be seen in editorials (23 July 1881, p. 1 and 30 July 1881, p. 1); reviews (17 December 1881, p. 14); verse contributions ("The Lay of the Poor Aesthete", 28 January 1882, p. 9 and "Hollow! Hollow! Hollow!", 7 January 1883, p. 3); cartoons (4 February 1882, p. 8); correspondence columns (15 December 1883, p. 15); miscellaneous paragraphs (3 September 1881, p. 13); and social notes ("A grand aesthetic ball.... The belle was a hogskin-coloured half-caste girl, dressed in a diggers hat": 21 January 1882, p. 10).
C.D. Wright in New Zealand, under the pseudonym of "Fabricius", had claimed that his verse collection The Maid of Avon was intended "to give the coup de grace to the sensualism of modern literature." Rodgers was highly unusual, however, in suggesting that the Bulletin's "absolute realism" was in any way "indecent". "The Bulletin school", he claimed as he continued his comparison, portrays life in the sanguinary ghastliness of the deeds of "Clontarf Bill", and the Yellow Book artistically descants on the Unmentionable Woman, under the poetic incognito of "Stella Maris". The one school portrays the hidden brutalities of our civilisation, and ruthlessly tears away the veil before the eyes of Mrs. Grundy; the other impassionately dissects and analyses the hearts and motives of men, and portrays thoughts rather than deeds, splendid imaginations rather than realisms.

Despite Rodgers' hazy notions of Bulletin fiction, his objections are particularly revealing; for Rodgers was denouncing a literary mode as such. Moreover, his choice of comparison, the Yellow Book, is itself significant, for the Bulletin at the time of his writing was very much under the spell of the

84 (Auckland, 1882), p. 5.
Aesthetic movement. From its cartoonists - Gavin Souter was a virtual disciple of Aubrey Beardsley - to its fictional discussions of the "sex question", the Bulletin was thoroughly immersed in the fin de siècle. Perhaps Rodger's unfavorable experiences with the temperance movement (one might conjecture) had led him to a mistrust of the ethos of the mauve decade, while his happier experiences under Richard John Seddon's policies led him to an equally strong mistrust of realism. Whatever his reasons, Rodgers was determined to uphold the characteristic New Zealand standards of high seriousness and moral earnestness, which only nasty minds could dispute. And as he distastefully concluded his article, both the Bulletin school and that of the Yellow Book "laugh at the prurient delicacy of Mrs. Grundy, and agree with Dean Swift, that 'a nice man is a man with a nasty mind.'" 86

New Zealand's literary dialogue, then, did not have as its principal topic the "Real" and the "Ideal",

86 Ibid.
or the "actual land" and a "national ideal". Like the Australian debate, its goal was the identification of a nation, but as Arthur Adams' career in the 'nineties demonstrated, perhaps New Zealand simply did not want to be identified. He celebrated New Zealand's romantic landscape, and abandoned it for Australia; he attacked Australians, and was praised as an Australian; he proclaimed his aloofness and iconoclasm, and was damned as an imitative member of a school; hailed as a "New Zealand Kendall", he was slighted for failing to reveal any "Imperial sentiment". Nevertheless Adams' career, and all the topics of the dialogue it exemplifies, had in the end one common ground: the Sydney Bulletin.

The Bulletin, as much as any other single influence of the 'nineties, was responsible for the crystallization of New Zealand's vague sense of moral superiority. This sentiment is closely related to that which grew up in Canada after the American revolution; the United States bore to many Canadians the same relationship as hell has to fundamentalist Christianity. Without it, heaven has little meaning. So too Australia for many New Zealanders. To New Zealanders and their concept of the Imperial design,
the *Bulletin* offered violent anti-Imperialism; to the self-denial of a limited society, aggressive and expansive chauvinism; to the romantic and suspended landscape, realism; and to high seriousness, indecency. It even had the impudence to rename New Zealand "Maoriland". Yet the *Bulletin* published more verse and short fiction from New Zealand during the 'nineties than any journal in New Zealand itself.

That the Australian debate took place in the pages of the *Bulletin*, moreover, is testimony to the paper's central role in fostering literary nationalism in late nineteenth-century Australia. The *Bulletin's* contributors included virtually every author of the time who broached the subject. What eventually became known as its "Red Page" was the principal critical forum of the 'nineties.\(^8^7\) The taste of its literary

\(^{87}\)So called because it appeared on the verso of the paper's red-tinted front cover (adopted on 19 May 1883), the "Red Page" actually had thirteen different titles between 1 September 1894 and the end of the century. It first appeared as "Books of the Day", and two weeks later became "'The Bulletin' Book Exchange", a title it retained until 22 February 1896. In 1896 it was variously titled - occasionally for only one week - "Literary Notes", "Battle Pictures", "Items", "A Page of Letters", "For the Red Page", \ldots
sub-editors influenced literally thousands of poems and short stories accepted by a paper of extraordinarily wide distribution, both in Australia and New Zealand. And despite predictable reference in twentieth-century criticism to the "Bulletin school" or the "Chiefly About Books", and finally, "The Red Page". 

In 1897 it was generally called "The Red Page", although it also appeared as "The Red Page of Notes and Queries", "The Red Page of Villon", and "The Red Page of Australasian Notes and Queries". It remained "The Red Page" until the middle of 1899, when that name began alternating with "Under the Gujntree". "The Red Page" was finally adopted as its permanent name on 4 November 1899. A.G. Stephens' own bound file of the "Red Page" from 1 September 1894 to 12 April 1902 (noted in George Mackaness and Walter W. Stone, The Books of "The Bulletin": 1880-1952 (Sydney, 1955), p. 51) was offered by Stephens to Alexander Turnbull on 16 November 1912; on 17 May 1913 he asked £21 for the file; obviously unsuccessfully, for it is now held by the Mitchell Library (Alexander Turnbull Library, A.H. Turnbull Papers). One suspects that many of the twentieth-century critical generalisations about the Bulletin of the 'nineties come from reading this file alone, rather than the Bulletin itself.
"Bulletin tradition", few observers appear to have read its files. What was it about the Bulletin that led an Australian to call it "the chief instrument for expressing and defining the national being"? while a New Zealander found in it only "hermaphroditic, transcendental, weak, literary hogwash"?  

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89 Joseph Spence Evison, "Notices to Correspondents", the Critic, 5 August 1899, p. 22. See ch. 8 below.
THE PIKK INFIDEL

We must work out our own salvation. In art, as in commerce, we must encourage a United Australia with protection against the world.¹

III

THE PINK INFIDEL

The use of a mirror, we submit, is not to be painted upon.

-- Thomas Macaulay, April 1830


²Ibid., 20 November 1866, p. 1.
THE NATIONAL AUSTRALIAN NEWSPAPER

We must work out our own salvation. In art, as in commerce, we must encourage a United Australia with protection against the world.¹

Nearly seven years after the Sydney Bulletin's first weekly issue appeared on 31 January 1880, the editors told a correspondent that the paper was founded as "Diogenes looking for an honest man, and we put him there because we thought Australia was a real good place for him to hunt around."² In the early days of the Bulletin, one of its co-founders wrote later, Sydney was "a Cant-ridden community. Cant -- the offensive, horrible cant of the badly-reformed sinner -- reigned everywhere. Socially,

¹"Art in Australia", Bulletin, 26 May 1888, p. 5. The Bulletin is cited hereafter as TB.

²Ibid., 20 November 1886, p. 5.
politically, all was a mean subservience to a spirit
of snobbery and dependency."^3

John Feltham Archibald and John Haynes hoped

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^3 J. F. Archibald, "The Genesis of 'The Bulletin'", Lone Hand, I, 4 (August 1907), 432. This article is one of a series published in the first eight issues of the Lone Hand: the first five by Archibald (May-September), two by W.H. Traill (October-November), and the last by Bertram Stevens (December). Traill became editor of the Bulletin in 1881 (see TB, 4 June 1881, p. 1), and sold his interest in the paper in 1886. Haynes having left the paper in 1884, Archibald took over as editor. Later in 1886 he persuaded William Macleod (1850-1929) to join the Bulletin as business manager (Archibald to Macleod, 18 July 1886, reproduced in Macleod of the Bulletin...by His Wife [Sydney, 1931], following p. 16. Mrs Macleod was Agnes Conor O'Brien). In 1894 J. Tighe Ryan noted that "there are only four salaried writers on the paper, including Sappho Smith [Alexina Maude Wildman] and the representative in Melbourne"; the other two were Archibald himself and James Edmond ("The Humorous Press of Australasia", Review of Reviews, IV [February 1894], 51). Archibald hired A.G. Stephens as a sub-editor in 1894. In this essay any material -- such as unsigned leaders -- not definitely attributable to any member of the Bulletin's editorial staff is considered to be the work of "the editors".
that the Bulletin would change all that. It was bad enough that "Sydney, socially, limped in apish imitation after London ideas, habits, and manners", and that "politically and industrially it was the same."

More discouraging was the heritage of convictism:

over all brooded in law courts, press, and Parliament, the desolating cruelty inherited from "The System". Sydney invited revolt from existing conditions, and The Bulletin was the organ of that revolt. It was to stand for more humanity in the laws, more freedom in the Parliaments, more healthy independence in the press.4

And so with £140 capital5, the inadvertent blessings of a Roman Catholic Archbishop6, and a title and layout copied from two San Francisco papers7, Haynes and Archibald printed the first 3000 copies of what came to be called "the National Australian Newspaper".8

4Ibid. Cyril Pearl has caught some of this atmosphere in Wild Men of Sydney (Melbourne, 1965), ch. 1.

5Ibid., 433, J.F. Archibald's MS annotations to a copy held by the Mitchell Library.

6John Haynes, "Early 'Bulletin' Memories", Newsletter, 22 April 1905. Haynes wrote at least 34 instalments of his memoirs in the Newsletter - which he edited - between April and December 1905.


8TB, 10 April 1880, p. 4. The Bulletin began
What Haynes and Archibald found in Australia soon prompted them to transform their lantern of Diogenes into an irritating spotlight. The result, the Brisbane Herald claimed in 1903, was that the paper's "influence is generally towards irreverence, to create atheists rather than evangelists, republicans rather than royalists, to provincialism rather than the wider outlook."\(^9\) Literature in the Bulletin, Richard Jebb observed two years later, was little better:

For the most part the inevitable "Short Story" only exaggerates the seamy side of the "real" Australian life, with a monotony as dreary to outsiders as that of the bush itself; while the native bards seem equally powerless to dispel the impression of a weary continent, and of a people "just glad to live."\(^10\)


\(^{10}\)Studies in Colonial Nationalism, p. 194.
Jebb may have been simply one of those globe-trotters identified by W.F. Alexander and Archibald Currie: "the Hun by whom, for its sins, every young country is scourged."¹¹ And yet it is a measure of the Bulletin's influence that Jebb devoted a whole chapter to the paper in his Studies in Colonial Nationalism. Nor was Jebb's willingness to echo Arthur Adams' verse on "The Australian" as noteworthy as the fact that he was also echoing a large body of contemporary opinion in Australia itself. Although the Bulletin "educated bush Australia up to Federation", as Arthur Jose wrote in The Times in 1903, many Australians felt that by 1901 and Federation the Bulletin had outlived its usefulness.¹²

¹¹ New Zealand Verse, p. xviii.

¹² 31 August 1903. The Bulletin reprinted this unsigned article as a pamphlet, A Word about The Bulletin from the "London Times" (Sydney, 1904). Extracts are reprinted in Clark, Select Documents 1851-1900, pp. 804-809; although Clarke does not attribute it to Jose, see Jose's Romantic Nineties, p. 91. John Norton's newspaper Truth attributed the Bulletin's pride in The Times' comments "to the fact that the 'Bulletin's' anti-English hatred is due to consciousness of inferiority." The article, Truth felt, "is nothing more than a covert, merciless sneer. It's the 'Times' laughing in its sleeve, while the 'Bulletin' kisses the toe" (Mitchell Library, Bulletin Scrap Book I, clipping dated 28 February 1904, f. 43).
It had, a few suggested, only its reputation to trade on, and that was swiftly being taken over by John Norton's *Truth*. The most contentious point for literary nationalists, however, was whether or not the *Bulletin*'s literary contributions were both "sound" and "healthy". The paper, it was claimed, "has done more than any other journal to encourage and degrade native-born literature in Australia." Men could write later of their experiences during the "romantic nineties", but in the earlier years of the twentieth century opinion was more harsh:

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13 Founded in 1890, *Truth* was first edited by George Augustine ("Doll") Taylor, "the Mudgee camel"; see his reminiscences *Those Were the Days* (Sydney, 1918) and *Pearl*, op. cit., pp. 40-43. W.H. Traill edited *Truth* briefly in 1893, and John Norton became editor in 1896. By 1905 it had a circulation of 125,000 and was printed in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, and Perth (*Pearl*, op. cit., pp. 110-111, 200). Lawson occasionally contributed verse and short stories to *Truth*, including "The Union Buries its Dead".

14 Mitchell Library, *Bulletin Scrap Book II*, newspaper clipping "The Bulletin v The Bible", f. 29: "What have we to state against the *Bulletin*? The answer is that we believe its influence lessens respect in the individual reader for those in authority over us, both in the name of God and the King.... As a young nation we need sound healthy literature."

15 Ibid., I, unidentified newspaper clipping reviewing William Sylvester Walker's *Virgin Gold* (London, 1901), f. 104.
Nobody takes the Pink Infidel seriously nowadays. It is essentially a paper that failed.... It was bumptious enough to believe it could run the Australian nation. It has signally failed in all its aims. Our literature owes nothing to it, but rather has to curse it for persuading a lot of young men that they were geniuses, and encouraging them to loaf about bars with long locks and dirty linen, when they were more adapted for a potato patch than a study.16

The Catholic Press may have had special motives for mounting this attack on the Bulletin, but the evidence of one "Dogger Joe" so single-mindedly amplifies the Press's objections that it deserves quoting at length.

"She uster be racy of the sile", the old bushman complains, "but now, strike me up a wattle, if she's racy 'bout anythin 'cept lop eared torfs an thaire flash wimmen." Whoever created "Dogger Joe" momentarily forgot his character's slang as he angrily castigated the Bulletin's "poet blokes and poetesses":

Let em stop writin bout ther past and ther lustful trollops as they've got inter holts with, an when they do, let em sound the earnest note of reason an write stuff fit for earnest men, stuff as will lead men to realise that the future is within their own keeping, and they can make it or mar it as they please. Women - not trollops - are wanted to build up an Australian nation, but they must have for

16 Ibid., newspaper clipping from the Catholic Press, dated 28 September 1901.
mates men - not skunks. The stories of the "Bully" are also worry rorty, and do not help Stralians of either sex to emulate Josey, the bloke as left the tail of his shirt rather an his virtoo behind. The blokes as write these stories are degenerates who orter be compelled by law ter peddle fish and bananas to the ladies of Port Said. Thaire tales might take orlright among a lot of wasters or sapless roues, but among a lot of pure strong blooded 'Stralians thaire names spell Dirt.17

The Bulletin must have been an unusually influential paper to have raised such strong emotions. And indeed, its role as a publisher of literature, its special understanding of literary nationalism, and the authority of its literary sub-editors were all significant factors in the development of Australian writing during the 'eighties and 'nineties. But from Diogenes to "Dirt": what happened to the Bulletin during those two decades?

i. Sixpence a Copy, Sixpence a Line

The Bulletin's ability to influence public opinion, not unnaturally, was closely related to its circulation and distribution. While it is certainly

17 Ibid., II, f. 65, newspaper clipping from the Barrier Truth, dated 12 January 1906. "Josey", of course, is Joseph: a reference to his temptation by Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39:12).
true that a newspaper's influence cannot be calculated directly from the number of its subscribers, it is equally dangerous to suggest, for instance, that "many Australians have had their values shaped and their ways of thought coloured by writers they have never read" without offering compelling data. Evidence is sketchy.

Eight months after its first issue the paper claimed a circulation of 16,000 weekly, and two years later estimated that it printed about 22,000 copies. Circulation of the special Christmas issue of 1883 was guaranteed to be 40,000 copies, and that for 1886 sold 82,560. In fact expansion was neither so rapid nor so orderly as these figures suggest. Early in 1882 the Bulletin's circulation was only between 12,000 and 13,000; not 20,000 as it claimed. Notoriety gained after the successful prosecution of the editors for

18 Palmer, Legend of the Nineties, p. 171.
19 TB, 2 October 1880, p. 1; 10 November 1883, p. 5.
20 Ibid., 1 December 1883, p. 4; 1 January 1887, p. 4.
libel in 1882 did raise its sales to 22,000 by the next year, but they plummeted to 14,500 when the price per copy was raised from threepence to sixpence in May 1883. As late as July 1886 the Bulletin was printing only 16,600 copies. Sales of the special Christmas numbers, such as 82,560 for 1886, clearly do not reflect average weekly sales.

Arrangements for distribution of the Bulletin are more revealing than these figures, for they suggest that the editors were genuinely concerned with establishing a national weekly newspaper. They conscientiously set out from the beginning to engage agents.

23 Traill, loc. cit. Traill had visited the United States to get ideas for a more saleable paper; the main result of his trip -- aside from a "new series" and typeface for the Bulletin beginning 19 May 1883 -- was his hiring Livingston Hopkins away from the New York Daily Graphic as a cartoonist. The libel suit arose when the proprietors of Clontarf park objected to a Bulletin editorial on "The Larrikin Residuum" (8 January 1881, p. 1). Haynes and Archibald, imprisoned when they refused to pay costs and damages, continued to write from jail. The first of their columns "In the Jug" appeared in the Bulletin on 11 March 1882, followed the next week by another "In Quod". A public subscription raised part of their costs and damages, and they were released after six well-publicised weeks "in quod".

24 Archibald to Macleod, 18 July 1886, loc. cit.
not only throughout New South Wales (which would provide the bulk of their sales) but also in Victoria and Queensland.\textsuperscript{25} Within six months of its founding the paper claimed that one agent of its five in Melbourne received 350 copies weekly, that it was distributed to Brisbane and Rockhampton in Queensland, to Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin in New Zealand, to "fifty booked subscribers" in San Francisco, and that it was sent "in bundles" to New Caledonia.\textsuperscript{26} By 1886, 1200 of its 16,600 subscribers lived in Melbourne\textsuperscript{27}; while its report of 10,000 copies sold in Victoria is thus grossly exaggerated, the fact that a Sydney paper sold any copies at all in Victoria was, for the time, exceptional\textsuperscript{28}. Weekly sales of four to five hundred in Townsville at the same time were phenomenal.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{25}TB, 1 May 1880, p. 7; the paper claimed to have 22 agents in Sydney, 35 agents in 32 New South Wales country towns, two in Melbourne, and one each in Brisbane and Stanthorpe, Queensland.

\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., 26 June 1880, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{27}Archibald to Macleod, 18 July 1886, \textit{op. cit.}

\textsuperscript{28}TB, 6 November 1886, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{29}Archibald to Macleod, \textit{loc. cit.}
The simple fact that the Bulletin was established as a national weekly newspaper - and as early as August 1883 it claimed a circulation "the second greatest among the weeklies of Australasia" - yielded disadvantages as well as advantages. Because it was a weekly, it acquired more permanence than a daily newspaper for its readers, who would keep it and pass it to friends. The fact would not escape advertisers, the principal source of the Bulletin's income. Because it was national, on the other hand, it could not hope to compete for readers with daily newspapers in the reporting of local affairs: the influential Melbourne Age, for instance, was reported by the Bulletin to have a daily circulation of 50,000 in 1883.

In those days of inter-colonial tariff barriers, moreover, advertisers knew that their trade depended on a direct appeal to a local market. Since only those firms selling products distributed in more than one colony would benefit from advertising in a paper like the Bulletin, it is scarcely surprising to find the

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31 Ibid., 23 May 1883, p. 7.
columns of the paper filled with advertisements for household soap, quack doctors promising to remedy (by mail) dissipation brought on by unnamed "excesses", and for "galvanic belts" guaranteeing to restore both masculine and feminine "vigour" so explicitly that they might well figure in the calculations of a twentieth-century demographic statistician. In the face of these obstacles to the establishment of a national weekly paper, the Bulletin's accomplishment is all the more remarkable for late nineteenth-century Australia.

The Bulletin's relative distribution outside New South Wales is suggested by sales figures for the special Christmas issue of 1887. Victorian agents, according to the paper, ordered 13,000 copies in addition to those required for their regular customers; in Queensland a total of 9,350 papers were sold, 5800 in New Zealand, 2400 in Tasmania, 1100 in Western Australia, 200 in South Africa (for Australian miners on the goldfields), and 180 by one London agent. This relative distribution is roughly borne out in the

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32 Ibid., 31 December 1887, p. 4.
geographic distribution of correspondents noted in the "Answers to Correspondents" column, a lively and regular feature of the paper from its first year.33

The Bulletin was, in fact, very largely written by its contributors scattered throughout the six Australian colonies, and later, New Zealand. In 1890 a correspondent was told that the Bulletin received an average of 800 letters weekly, an estimate increased to "about 1000" in 1898.34 Since the correspondence column was answering up to ninety letters a week by the end of the century, and considering the number of paragraphs submitted to which no answer would be necessary, it would appear that these estimates are not exaggerated.35 A side-light on the Bulletin's circulation is also reflected by a "missing words" competition which it started in 1893. Entrants submitted a coupon printed in the paper, supplied the missing word in a paragraph of political commentary, together with one shilling, and the winner received the amount contributed by all contestants. The first competition brought in 1614 entries; by

33 The column began under the title "To Correspondents" on 25 September 1880, p. 2. In his article on the Bulletin in the Melbourne Review of Reviews (1894) cited above at n. 4, J.T. Ryan mentioned that the column was conducted by Archibald and Edmond.

34 TO, 2 August 1890, p. 9; 30 April 1898, p. 15.

35 See, for example, ibid., 3 July 1897, p. 11.
March 1894 the eleventh contest had 9,868 entrants. More impressionistic data tends to confirm both the wide currency and the notoriety of the paper by the end of the century. The decision of the New York and Brooklyn Tobacco Company (of Sydney) to begin marketing "Bully" brand smoking tobacco in 1894 is one indication. Weightier evidence is provided by the legislative assemblies of Queensland and New Zealand, which both banned the paper at different times from their libraries. Several imitators of the Bulletin sprang up by 1900, both in title (the West Australian Bulletin, successor to the improbably-named Possum, in 1888) and in layout. Three examples

Ibid., 4 March 1893, p. 9; 3 March 1894, p. 8. Contest no. 14, for example, brought two winning entries of 6,138 for supplying the word "riven" to describe the condition of the New South Wales "Labour" Party. This condition was due (the paragraph said) to many "jealous, aggressive and ambitious members of the Labour Electoral League Council" (5 May 1894, inside back wrapper; 9 June 1894, p. 9). Both winners received £153 9s.

Ibid., 31 March 1894, inside front wrapper.

Ibid., 7 December 1895, p. 7; 18 August 1900, p. 20.

of the latter, curiously, all came from New Zealand: the Auckland **Observer** in 1880 (according to the **Bulletin**'s editors\(^{40}\)); Charles Rodgers' New Plymouth **Stockwhip** in 1899; and Joseph Spence Evison's **Critic**, founded in Wellington in 1899.\(^{41}\)

The **Bulletin**'s willingness to accept contributions from throughout the colonies aided both its distribution and circulation. The first issue of the paper included a notice that the proprietors intended "giving provincial matters the greatest attention; hence communications from country readers will be always acceptable."\(^{42}\) This standing notice, A.G. Stephens mentioned later, was "presumably voicing Archibald's idea of catering for the solid support of the back-blocks", something Stephens himself accepted as "always

\(^{40}\) **TB**, 2 October 1880, p. 1.

\(^{41}\) See above, ch. 4 and below, ch. 8 for discussions of the **Stockwhip** and **Critic**.

kept in view to date". Country readership was easily solicited by the Bulletin in New South Wales, for as a newspaper it enjoyed free postal privileges within the colony. And the country newsstand price of the paper was identical to that in the cities: until 1883, only threepence per copy, or four shillings a quarter. A mail subscription, three shillings per quarter (paid in advance), lowered the price for country subscribers even further.

The Bulletin even aided its circulation by taking advantage of the fact that it depended heavily on contributed work. In order to be paid, a contributor was usually required to send a clipping of his paragraph, article, poem or short story to the accountant, and it may be safely assumed that each contributor bought at least two copies of the issue in which his work appeared. It

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43 Mitchell Library, Bulletin Scrap Book, I, MS note to f. 5.

44 See TB, 29 July 1893, p. 13. The Bulletin attacked this postal concession to newspapers, not, as the editors said on 30 April 1898, because the public at large was thus supporting religious "newspapers" like one entitled All Israel Redeemed by the Lamb, but because business firms were circulating house advertising organs free of postage, instead of buying advertising space in papers like the Bulletin.
was payment itself, however, which provided the stimulus for country readers to write—and not just read—about experiences around them. More than one may have felt like Susannah Moodie, farming in the Ontario backwoods earlier in the century, who "actually shed tears of joy" when she received her first $20 bill from the Montreal Literary Garland.\(^{45}\)

But newspaper accountants are not literary critics, and the Bulletin paid space rates for its literary contributions. Archibald gave Barcroft Boake one guinea per column for his narrative verse "On the Range" in 1891\(^{46}\), and A.G. Stephens paid Henry Lawson one guinea per column for his article "If I Could Paint" in 1899.\(^{47}\) No attempt was made to distinguish


\(^{46}\)Mitchell Library, Bulletin MSS, vol. 4, Boake to B.C. Boake [his father], 19 October 1891. The four volumes in this series were collected by A.G. Stephens.

\(^{47}\)Alexander Turnbull Library, Sydney Bulletin Writers Manuscripts and Portraits, vol. 3, holograph MS with accountant's markings. The three volumes in this series, together with four more also held by the Alexander Turnbull Library ("Australian Manuscripts") were mostly collected by A.G. Stephens from contributions sent to the Bulletin, and later sold by Stephens to Mr. Turnbull.
literary merit as a criterion for payment. Christopher Brennan received the same amount for his poetry as did any contributor whose latest ditty on Sydney's sewers might be published. The accepted rate for verse was approximately sixpence per line. If Brennan wrote a sonnet a day and had them all published in the Bulletin in 1899, his weekly earnings would have been approximately equal to the daily wages of a Melbourne stonemason fifty years earlier. 48

At sixpence per line, contributors might reasonably be expected to inundate the paper with rambling (forty-line) ballads rather than exquisitely-wrought (fourteen-line) sonnets. They did so, moreover, with the active encouragement of the Bulletin's editors, for whom ballads were almost any verse which "told a story". "Archibald's idea of catering for the solid support of the backblocks", after all, meant that the paper's literary contributions would have to be

appreciated by "the not too critical bushman", the reader who wanted "the maximum of solid fact with the minimum of poetic fancy." 49

The Bulletin was slower in encouraging short stories, but when a policy for publishing them regularly was announced in 1889, the editors were quite clear about the sort of material they required. And again, "solid fact" was closely related to readable journalism. "'Every man!'", they noted in the Christmas issue, "'I can write at least one book', therefore every man with brains can write at least one good story in prose or verse":

Short stories, or ballads, especially on bush, mining, sporting, or dramatic themes, are preferred by The Bulletin; 1360 words go to a column, if you can possibly keep your story within a column all the better. Don't write a column on any subject if a mere paragraph will convey the information. 50

"Information": the reason for the paper's constant insistence on brevity became plain. The Bulletin "doesn't say two-columns or less is best short-story

49 Tommy the Rambler, "Bush Songs", TB, 4 August 1888, p. 8. Author unidentified.
50 Ibid., 21 December 1889, p. 28.
space: it says that length is best for its space, and is quite enough to get good results in - given the artist."\(^{51}\)

Whatever the quality of the "results", the Bulletin never lacked short fiction after 1889. Arthur Jose described how it was "simple to deal" with young men of the outback who "brought me manuscripts or sketched for me their notions of a pan-Australian romance": he merely referred them to "the omnivorous Bulletin".\(^{52}\) During the 'eighties, approximately thirty Australian authors had published as many volumes of short stories; in the 'nineties twice as many authors published three times as many volumes. But between 1890 and 1900 the Bulletin printed over 1450 short stories in its columns: more than the total

\(^{51}\)Ibid., 5 February 1898, p. 15. The editors frequently reminded correspondents that the paper would not, for instance, "print a 12-column story for Charles Dickens. Not that 12-column stories may not be good. Only they don't suit this paper, which lays strictly to its book" (13 August 1898, p. 18).

\(^{52}\)Romantic Nineties, p. 32.
number published separately during the same period.53

Australia's three most prolific short-story writers of the 'nineties - Louis Becke, "Price Warung", and Henry Lawson - were all regular contributors to the Bulletin. All three had their first stories published in the paper, which continued to print the majority of the fiction written by Lawson and Warung during the 'nineties. And the Bulletin's most frequent short-story contributors - Warung, Edward Dyson, Ernest Favenc, Alexander Montgomery, Lawson, "Steele Rudd", Becke, and Albert Dorrington - saw twenty collections of their short stories issued during the 'nineties, nearly a quarter of the total

53 The paper printed 174 short stories during the 'eighties, as follows: 1880 (5); 1881 (3); 1882 (4); 1883 (11); 1884 (24); 1885 (28); 1886 (18); 1887 (11); 1888 (18); and 1889 (52). The following number appeared during the 'nineties, taken here to include 1900: 1890 (117); 1891 (79); 1892 (130); 1893 (171); 1894 (99); 1895 (118); 1896 (158); 1897 (147); 1898 (154); 1899 (146); 1900 (135): a total of 1454, and 1628 for both decades. Figures given by K. Levis in "The Role of the Bulletin in Indigenous Short-Story Writing During the Eighties and Nineties", Southerly, XI, 4 (1950) are incorrect.
published. Four of the eight (Warung, Favenc, Rudd and Dorrington) had their first books published by the Bulletin itself.

In one of those rare coincidences of literary history, moreover, quantitative statistics match qualitative judgement. The Bulletin was the fostering agency of Henry Lawson, Australia's finest nineteenth-century short story writer, and Steele Rudd, her most popular one. Rudd's On Our Selection, printed in the

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54 In order of frequency of contributions, together with pseudonyms used: Warung (88: "W", "P.W."); Dyson (76: "E.D.", "Silas Snell", "S. Snell", "S.S."); Favenc (63: "Binghi", "Dramingo", "Delcomyn", "D"); Montgomery (57: "Sardonyx", "Heretic", "Alex M.", "Montalex"); Lawson (46); Rudd (35); Becke (32: "Faifeau", "Louis B.", "L.B.", "Malie"); and Dorrington (27: "Alba Dorion", "Alba D.", "A.D."). These figures may vary slightly if more detailed knowledge of the pseudonymous writing habits of these authors becomes available. "Price Warung", "Steele Rudd", and "Louis Becke" are themselves pseudonyms for William Astley, Arthur Hoey Davis, and George Lewis Becke. For other pseudonyms under which these authors wrote, see a forthcoming Index of Australian Literary Pseudonyms being prepared by Miss Susan Hadfield, Australian National University, with my collaboration.
paper from 1895 to 1898 and as a separate volume in 1899, sold one-quarter of a million copies by 1940, and has been reprinted at least four times since.\textsuperscript{55} The only important writer of Australian fiction who never had a short story published by the \textit{Bulletin} during the 'nineties was "Henry Handel Richardson"; she had left Australia in 1887 at the age of seventeen, and did not publish her first collection of stories until 1931.\textsuperscript{56} The history of short prose fiction in late nineteenth-century Australia is virtually the history of the \textit{Bulletin}'s literary policy.

Verse, too, was regularly published in the \textit{Bulletin}, although at sixpence per line (and with the paper's request in 1889 phrased as an appeal for "short stories" in verse) the results were more disappointing. During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, only a half-dozen of the \textit{Bulletin}'s thousand weekly issues failed to contain at least one poem. The number of singing birds and croaking

\textsuperscript{55}W.E. FitzHenry, "Foreword" to \textit{On Our Selection [together with] Our New Selection} (Sydney, 1961), unpaged.

\textsuperscript{56}[Ethel Florence Lindesay Robertson (née Richardson)], \textit{Two Studies} (London, 1931).
magpies lurking behind every wattle-bush staggered even the editors. As early as November 1880 they complained that they received several miles of "delicious verse" every morning, "and we employ something under half a century of sub-editors to wade through it". From "the fiends who persist in shattering our finely-attuned nervous organizations with their excruciating balderdash" to "Mountain Mac." (who has, "it would seem, written his copy in kerosene and smeared three words out of five with his little finger"), contributors inundated J.F. Archibald — and later, A.G. Stephens — with their "lucubrations".

The Bulletin's first issue appeared with a column of "Original Poetry" (which the editors somewhat despairingly changed two months later to "Original Verse"), while original verse contributions began to be marked "For The Bulletin" in the "Intaglios" column in December 1880. A "Various Verses" column appeared

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57 TB, 6 November 1880, p. 13.

58 Ibid., 28 May 1881, p. 9; 14 May 1881, p. 9.

59 Ibid., 31 January 1880, p. 3; 27 March 1880, p. 3; 11 December 1880, p. 5. Original verse was previously noted as "Written expressly for The Bulletin".
briefly in 1883, a title revived by A.G. Stephens in 1895 and regularly used by him as one of three headings for the publication of original verse. Another column, "Bards of the Backblocks", was also begun in 1895, while Stephens' "Red Page" occasionally included original verse after 1896. Most of the verse dignified with its own heading or appearing in one of the regular columns of verse was intended to be taken more seriously than that printed in other regular columns: topical doggerel written by staff members and innumerable correspondents. As a result of the Bulletin's willingness to publish topical doggerel, the largest body of verse printed in its pages was witty rhyme on murders, bad streets, dishonest politicians, and social scandals. The execrable humour of this mass of doggerel, for twentieth-century readers, is a useful corrective to the solemn view of Australia's colonial society necessarily put forward by political and economic historians. More importantly, it demonstrates that

60 *Ibid.*, 24 November 1883, p. 15; 13 July 1895, p. 3.

61 Among other places in the paper, topical doggerel was frequently printed in the "Pepper and Salt" and "Brief Mention" columns of the 'eighties and the
verse was an integral part of the *Bulletin*’s journalism, from its financial and gossip columns to its advertisements, and that the paper’s readers came to expect it to be so.

The editors of the *Bulletin* were highly conscious of the distinction between topical and serious verse, or, as A.G. Stephens preferred to distinguish them, between "verse" and "poetry". The distinction, however, was not of merit but of mood. The paper’s first issue revealed a curious balance in publishing a "serious" poem ("The Heartless Bride"), and a humorous piece ("The Joy Belle(s) of the Period"), a balance which would be rigorously maintained throughout the century. The *Bulletin*’s 1889 appeal for fiction, in fact, asked for only two varieties of verse: "humorous poems (from eight to forty-eight lines preferred)", and "serious poems, of similar or greater length, "Political Points" and "Personal Items" columns of the 'nineties.

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62 *TB*, 4 July 1896, "Literary Notes". 
especially those suitable for pictorial illustration".\(^6^3\)

The suitability of a poem for illustration, needless to say, was usually in direct ratio to its pathos. For the central quality of poetry published in the *Bulletin* for those two formative decades was simple Victorian sentimentality. Australian authors might well have wondered about the paper's literary motives. Was the *Bulletin*, as its editors once said, hoping to foster "high Art" in Australia\(^6^4\), or by appealing to popular taste was it attempting to sell more papers?

i.ii. *Australia for Australians*

When the editors of the *Bulletin* hoped that an Australian "national literature" could grow from an appreciation of "high Art", they were voicing the same assumption that lay behind their call for federation of the Australian colonies. As early as December 1880, in anticipation of an Intercolonial Conference on

\(^6^3\)Ibid., 14 December 1889, p. 7.

\(^6^4\)Ibid., 19 February 1881, p. 2.
federation to be held in Sydney in January, an editorial advocated "the merging of petty local spirit in a national sentiment". All the Australian colonies, that is, must reject "old-world abuses", a vague concept swiftly sharpened into the metaphorical opposition of "Young Australia" and "the imported article". At the end of 1882 the editors codified their political views as "'The Bulletin' Programme", demanding as their first point "Australia for the Australians - not for Gall-soaked Bigots - not for the Bloody Quarrels of Old-World Superstition". Readers

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65 Ibid., 11 December 1880, p. 1.
67 Ibid., 2 December 1882, p. 1. This programme was written in opposition to Henry Parkes during the New South Wales election campaign. The paper had a habit of issuing political programmes, from "'The Bulletin's Manifesto to the Electors of New South Wales" (2 February 1889, p. 6) to James Edmond's "A Policy for the Commonwealth" in 1900. The paper's most famous programme, however, was first published on 19 March 1887, p. 9, appeared frequently in its columns, and extracts were even included in the end-papers of A Golden Shanty (Sydney, 1890), a collection of verse and short stories published in the Bulletin during the 'eighties.
were asked to vote "for vigorous Australians as against imported deadbeats". Australians, in other words, had somehow acquired virtues inaccessible to immigrants with "ten centuries of brogue or ten centuries of twang". Australians, moreover, ought to "make a stand for an Australian National Sentiment", which the Bulletin felt was inextricably linked with voting for "White Men - not for yellow, or for green, or for chameleon".

This disingenuously eclectic chauvinism, as Bismarck found at the same time in Germany, could involve superhuman attempts at balancing condemnation with approbation. The Bulletin believed that the point of creative stasis was reached with the rhetorical slogan, "Australia for the Australians", which was added to its masthead on 14 April 1888. Subsumed in the slogan was a blunt definition of "nationalism" as the "self-supporting" and complete political severance of Australia from the Empire.  

Choosing to reject the example of Canada, with her forms of constitutional
evolution embodied in the British North America Act of 1867, the Bulletin turned instead to the forms of constitutional revolution, and the republicanism of the United States. In 1887 the editors defined the inheritors of the new Australian republic, a definition which brought together virtually all the theoretical premises of their editorial columns:

By the term Australian we mean not those who have been merely born in Australia. All white men who come to these shores - with a clean record - and who leave behind them the memory of the class distinctions and the religious differences of the old world; all men who place the happiness, the prosperity, the advancement of their adopted country before the interests of Imperialism, are Australians. Australian and Republican are synonymous. The cause of Democracy in Australia is gaining daily strength. Republicanism in the colonies is as sure, though possibly slower in its consummation, as are intercolonial Freetrade and Protection against the world.

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69 See, for example, the leader "England, Canada, and the United States", ibid., 6 October 1888, p. 4: "were we Canadians, we would strive for a free and federated America, just as, being Australians, we strive for a free and federated Australia. Everything that now or at any future time can be said in favour of Australia's disentangling herself from a European connection can be said with much greater force regarding the Dominion [of Canada]." Had the editors been reading Goldwin Smith's well-known (or notorious, to Canadians of the time) essay on "The Schism in the Anglo-Saxon Race" (1887)? See also "The Awful Canadian Constitution", 10 June 1899, p. 7.

70 "Australia for the Australians!", ibid., 2 July 1887, p. 4.
The principal instrument of "self-support" was to be the political unification of the Australian colonies, but as the editors pointed out on the eve of Federation, "there is no salvation in the abstract idea of Australian union: its chief value is as a stimulus to effort, and the effort must always be the concrete effort of the men who compose the nation." Thoroughly consistent with twenty years of *Bulletin* leaders, the editors went on to remind the Commonwealth of Australia to keep before it three principles: the development of natural resources, the "preservation of the race" (which they quaintly described as "the purification of the national blood": "preserving Australia for white Australians") and the equalisation of fortunes. There was apparently little room for literature in this scheme, but as the *Bulletin* knew, while "Patriotism Pays", literature rarely does.  

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71"For Australia", ibid., 8 December 1900, p. 1.
Nevertheless the literary equivalent of the Bulletin's political chauvinism -- the demand for "originality" -- was not long in appearing. The paper's opening editorial had promised literary contributions of unsurpassable "vigor, freshness, and geniality" a promise unfulfilled in the first column of "Original Poetry". More auspicious were the intentions of the "Dramatic and Musical Review" columnist, who was eager to encourage "native talent" by stimulating praise, or gentle admonition where required, instead of crushing out its aspirations by withering and malevolent abuse because it does not at once blossom into the perfect flower of genius.... But where pretence and assumption, allied to ignorance or vulgarity, attempt to sway or coerce the public taste, and to force on it the meretricious for pure art, then must the sharp knife of pruning be whetted for operation.72

Here, at least, was no doubt: "pure art" would be the criterion for reviewing the performing arts. But within a year, in the earliest leading article to be devoted

72 Ibid., 31 January 1880, p. 2.
exclusively to literature, Henry Kendall was extolled as "the uncrowned laureate of Australia": not because of his "pure art", but because of his "originality". The Bulletin felt that there were only "two native-born poets of Australia", and Kendall, as one of them, was superior to the other, Charles Harpur, "who wrote too much that was merely imitative to justify an impartial judge in awarding him the praise of a distinct originality. Not so with his successor." The editors added, significantly, that "the best writings of both are national - are instinct with a peculiar aroma of the Australian mountain, bush, dell, or seashore."

Even so, the Bulletin was slightly nervous about proclaiming Kendall as Australia's "national poet". Included in the editorial was a comment which revealed in one sentence the editors' acceptance of the familiar argument about "justification by age", their assumption about the function of descriptive poetry, and their unexceptional ignorance of North American poetry:

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73 Ibid., 22 January 1881, p. 1.
More than two centuries of active endeavour passed away amongst the English-speaking communities of North America before an interpreter appeared who could explain the mysterious connexion between external nature and the mind of man, and raise the latter from earth to heaven; and it is not even now certain that Cullen Bryant deserves the designation "national poet" in the same sense in which it is given to Robert Burns and Pierre Béranger respectively. 74

Nevertheless the anonymous reviewer of Kendall's *Songs of the Mountains* in the same issue of the *Bulletin* deserved sympathy when he lamented the amount of "unmitigated rubbish with which the literary market of the Antipodes is inundated." The mere thought of another volume of "Australian poetry" caused him (he said) to shudder; his unexpected delight with *Songs of the Mountains* -- in terms that might have caused less pretentious New Zealanders to shudder -- led him to the resounding claim that Kendall "in whatever part of the world he might choose to reside, would be a poet du premier rang." 75

74 Ibid. Five editions of *Leaves of Grass*, for example, had been published before 1881.

75 Ibid., p. 5.
The possibility that literature could illustrate the "difference between the national character, so to speak, of the colonies and of other commonwealths" appears to have struck the Bulletin's editors rather suddenly.\(^7^6\) Two weeks after the excitement of reading Kendall they published a long article relating literature to national life, and aesthetics to that "higher civilisation" which they hoped Australia would some day embody for the world. A disarming combination of na"ive"t\(é\), earnest clear-headedness, and Ruskin, this article attempted to set out the Bulletin's role in fostering a new literary nationalism for Australia. Although echoes of Arnold and Pater occasionally found their way into the paper's pages in the late 1890s, the editors' literary intentions in 1881 could well have been formulated by that admirer who sent to Ruskin's funeral a wreath inscribed "There was a man sent from God whose name was John".

\(^7^6\)Ibid., 29 January 1881, p. 13. This was the first of an intended series of "Marginal Notes", of which the following article was the second and last.
The article's main premise was scarcely new, referring to "the peculiar adjuncts of abstract and apparent beauty incident to our antipodean Australian shores, as compared to those of older lands":

It is noticeable that the genius of the people of any country is deeply tinged with characteristics correspondent to its peculiarities of physical conformation.... Our colonies here, with their "images of a virgin found in sky and landscape, and in the flora and fauna of Australia," must eventually bring forth a class of people with mental and intellectual characteristics of their own, in accord with the natural features of varied loveliness and beauty, proper to the sunny land in which their lot is cast. Again, we find the character of a people mirrored in its literature: each national literature has a spirit of its own.

Australia may not have produced a national literature, but she was, after all, still a materialistic colony, and still young. "Much time must elapse" before Australia's "widely various units" could "coalesce sufficiently to form a distinctive national character."

But time was not enough, even though Henry Kendall ("the foremost living Australian bard") had uttered "the advance notes of a national love of beauty", because a national taste is the result of the fostering care of individuals, and the prophetic pre-intimations of the national bard are less the outcome of existing fact than hints of still distant possibilities. And while...an endeavour to place the enjoyments of higher Art within the appreciation and reach of all, is a first duty of the State in this regard, it remains to the social...
institutions - the family, the school-room, and so forth - to fill in and colour the picture of which the former presents but the vaguest outline. Though "high Art", properly so called, be the perfection of artistic excellence, it need not necessarily follow that the enjoyment of its less ambitious forms is lost to all who have not a cultured appreciation for the same, and opportunities for its exercise. An appreciation of Art in itself is promoted indeed by the contemplation of works of high Art, but it is formed in the first instance, and afterwards gradually developed, by comparatively unimportant and small objects. The judicious choice and arrangement of these is within the province of all to exercise, and in this way do their part in the formation of a correct taste, and consequent development of that love of the beautiful which humanizes and idealizes life, and refines the manners, while diverting the thoughts from low and vulgar things. Everyone has therefore a part in the working out of the civilization of the future, for it must be obvious that in proportion as the aesthetic sense is cultivated and enlarged, the refining and humanizing effects of a higher civilization will be apparent.77

The Bulletin's role was clear: to cultivate and enlarge Australia's "aesthetic sense" through "high Art", and thereby to create Australia's "higher civilization".

The Bulletin's editors had long memories, and for the next decade Kendall, Adam Lindsay Gordon, Marcus Clarke, and Brunton Stephens were ranked as

77Ibid., 19 February 1881, pp. 1-2.
Australia's finest authors in terms of the paper's call for "high Art". But Brunton Stephens' admission to the canon revealed how uneasily nationalism and "high Art" sat together. Instead of praising him for his popular and occasional ballads (which the paper assumed were known by everyone, and which were unlikely forerunners of a higher civilisation), the Bulletin singled out the poem "least known by local readers -- 'Convict Once'". The reason for the paper's praise, however, was not Brunton Stephens' "high Art", but his Australianness. "Bathed in an atmosphere of Australian existence", "Convict Once" was unabashedly a pastoral romance which, supposing there was no Australia and no Australians, could never have been conceived. It is not alone that the mere setting - the scenery - belongs distinctively to the bush; the people, the movements of their souls, their modes of thought, as wrought out in this exquisite poem are Australian only. Wipe out Australians and the poem is resolved into a paradox.78

"Romance", apparently, had a somewhat ambiguous meaning for the Bulletin in 1881. It was certainly not "unrealism", which was an epithet used in the

78 Ibid., 26 March 1881, p. 1.
paper's frequent attacks on Aesthetics in the early 1880s. Nor was it "the conventional", used to attack imitative artists. Rather it was associated with "the natural", with something "distinctively and peculiarly Australian", even if that was "a 'Neapolitan' sky or 'Italian' sunset". On the other hand, perhaps "romance" was in the vanguard of "high Art" itself:

The prize-pig era is slowly passing away. The pioneers of civilization in these colonies were just the sort of men required for the time and the work before them... There was no romance about these pioneers. It was not required. They were not intended to think, but to "bullock". And they bullocked, and their children bullocked, and they were all bullocks together.... But this order of things is passing away - very slowly but very surely.... It has taken a long time to come about, but at last we have discovered that there are such things as sunset and sunrise.

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79 "The age is afflicted with unreality.... Posterity will treat of our own age as the electroplate age" (ibid., 30 July 1881, p. 1). See above, n. 83 to ch. 4.

80 See, for example, ibid., 26 November 1881, pp. 1-2.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid., 29 October 1881, pp. 1-2.

83 Ibid., 31 March 1883, p. 11.
If so, then Australian painters would have to capture "what may be termed the spirit, as well as the more general features of Australian scenery", just as Australia's "national bards" had done. But literary nationalism and the Bulletin's editorial policy were inexorably linked when the paper pointed out to Australian artists that "genius is original and creative;... in this new country, with its freedom from indigenous conventionalities and hard-and-fast model... let our painters learn a lesson from our poets."  

The Bulletin had established itself, it reminded readers in 1889, as "the foster-mother of Protection and Nationalism in Australia." It also reminded them that "no one is prepared to raise the standard of Nationalism higher or to shout louder for the Young Kangaroo than the Bulletin, but that... it is essential that Protection should precede Nationalism in the Nationalist programme." Given, then (as they

84 Ibid., 29 October 1881, pp. 1-2. The "national bards" listed are Kendall, Brunton Stephens, and Gordon.

85 Ibid., first and sixth points of "'The Bulletin's' Manifesto to the Electors of New South Wales", 2 February 1889, p. 6.
had said earlier) that the cultivation of the aesthetic sense will refine Australian civilisation, and that art embodying the spirit of Australia is desirable, in 1888 one of the editors suggested that the time had come when only literature and art embodying that spirit would be desirable:

If we are to be a great people, we must develop a national sentiment. We must embody that sentiment in literature and art. In some things — and we say this with no narrowness — we have nothing to learn from England, from Europe, from America. All our vigour must be our own. We must work out our own salvation. In art, as in commerce, we must encourage a United Australia with protection against the world.86

It was Brunton Stephens, ironically, who indicated the dangers of this literary chauvinism in 1897. Artists who hurl defiance at Europe, he wrote in the Bulletin, merely demonstrate that they are "almost wholly dominated by Europe. In these inspired moments they cease to be Australians -- they are merely antipodeans."87

At the level of literary criticism, however, Brunton Stephens' logic was too subtle for the Bulletin.

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86 Ibid., 26 May 1888, p. 5.
87 Ibid., 2 October 1897, "Red Page".
The paper's fascination with Australia's national character and environment continued as enthusiastically in the 'nineties as it had in the 'eighties. And the editors' first principle, as in political commentary, was that attempts by non-Australians to portray Australia were generally false. Referring in 1894 to Hume Nisbet's "latest insult to this country" — *A Bush Girl's Romance* (1894) — the paper suggested that "the coming Australian novelist will have, when he arrives, a rather hard job cut out for him":

> He will have to get the English reader to unlearn almost everything that former novelists have taught him about the conditions of life on our continent. To judge from the class of books accepted as typical of Australia the average reader must suppose life in the bush to be a long series of hand to hand conflicts with remarkably ferocious bushrangers, combined with much drinking, shooting of aboriginals, and shouting of coo-ee.

On the other hand, the *Bulletin* noted, "we have partly ourselves to blame for it. Our own writers of fiction have a sneaking affection for the convict and the bush-ranger". 88 It was the duty of Australian critics, 88 *Ibid.*., 7 July 1894, p. 7.
A.G. Stephens suggested a year later, to purge Australian writing of its romantic stereotypes, and to encourage knowledgeable probing of those "conditions of life on our continent".

Stephens himself was quick to reprint any view of Australia which he believed might contribute to that probing. Mannington Caffyn's Miss Milne and I for instance, was received rather coolly in Stephens' "Book Exchange" of 1894; nevertheless Caffyn was commended for the "interest" of his passage describing how the author was "at the back of God's speed":

at the tail-end of his earth, amid a strange people who are Americans without the American's "go", and English without the ballast of the Englishman's conservatism; in a land to which have flocked the venturesome and the visionary, the restless and the discontented, the utopian dreamer and the truant son, all mixed up in one discordant mass and given the franchise. 89

89 Ibid., 22 December 1894, "'The Bulletin' Book Exchange". Stephens once wrote that of all Bulletin contributors -- twelve of Caffyn's stories were published in the paper between 1890 and 1893 -- Caffyn was "perhaps the one who rose highest as an artistic story-teller" (ibid., 13 February 1897, "Red Page"). Miss Milne and I was first published in 1889, and enjoyed reasonable success in the 'nineties. In the same year as A.G. Stephens' "Book Exchange" notice, Caffyn's wife "Iota" published A Yellow Aster, the first of her seventeen novels.
As for the characteristics of Australia — and particularly her literature — from an Australian viewpoint, Stephens took more delight in his own generalisations. Australians, he thought, ran "too much to the easy, detached, realistic sketch", and asked if there was "in our febrile national temperament, with its quick alternations of exultation and depression, a something antagonistic to sustained effort on any line?" In literary criticism, however, Stephens believed that the simple fact of being in Australia conferred a clarity of judgement which was not available to English critics. "The Australian mind", he suggested in 1895, "is so peculiarly situated that its judgments in such a matter are much more likely to be sound than those penned in the heated literary atmosphere of London":

For its attitude is impersonal, almost incurious; it has the same high standards to refer to; and the dividing sea has almost the force of dividing time, and helps to lift its dicta above the mists of contemporary prejudice, into the clear upper-air which strengthens and refines the verdict of posterity.91

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90 Ibid., 13 February 1897, "Red Page"; 1 August 1896, "Literary Notes".

91 Ibid., 27 July 1895, "'The Bulletin' Book Exchange".
"Australia for the Australians", it would seem, was not limited to the Bulletin's masthead.

The final decline of the Bulletin's ambitions for a higher Australian civilisation came with the paper's demand for originality. Instead of the "freshness" the editors mentioned in the Bulletin's first issue, much less the cultivation of an "aesthetic sense" and "national taste", literature in the Bulletin was intended to yield an Australian "national character" simply by being set in Australia. When "Jenny Wren" tried her hand at short story writing, her work was rejected because of "a rule in this office never to publish stories of Italian counts wandering with ambrosial locks beside the Mediterranean while Bianca glares among the orange-groves. You see, we try not only to be original, but to appear original."  

This "rule" of the Bulletin, curiously, was a by-product of its political chauvinism. Referring to

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92 Ibid., 16 July 1892, p. 15. "Jenny Wren" is Nellie Cruttenden, author of two volumes of verse: one published in 1890 and the other, unfortunately titled Gurglings of an Australian Magpie, in 1926.
"the God-forgotten realm of letters on this continent" in a sub-leader, the editors recalled that the Bulletin "was founded when the great inroad of cheap, imported, British, slop-made alleged literature was still hardly beginning". 93 They were careful not to attack "literature of a purely English character"; their object of scorn was melodramatic periodical material for reprinting in newspapers, which a lazy and parsimonious editor might almost expect to arrive already set up in stereograph plates. 95 Because of the editors' scathing attacks on other papers for reprinting "slop-made alleged literature", however, the Bulletin's political nationalism was vulnerable to attacks on its literary policies. If it published literature of a high standard, but not set in Australia or written by Australians, it could be attacked for betraying its own cry of "Australia for the Australians". And so the "appearance" of nationalism overrode the "high Art" of literature, as the paper's contributors

93_93Ibid._, 30 April 1892, p. 6.
94_94Ibid._
95See, for example, _ibid._, 1 October 1892, p. 6.
soon learned, "Zeta"'s work was returned because "its strangely English flavour alone makes it unacceptable." 96

Despite their policy of literary chauvinism, however, the Bulletin made little impression on Australia's "national taste" by the early 'nineties. The editors complained in 1892 that

the tendency of the Australian is to buy the cheap and nasty British publication, and the foolhardy person who endeavours to create a distinctively Australian literature gets "left" ... Because the public have a fondness for literature at Chinese or Kanaka prices these dreary consignments have so far served to practically extinguish any attempts at founding a distinctively Australian literature. 97

"Bookworm" took up this aspect of literary nationalism two years later. In his letter to the editor, he found an "anti-patriotic bias" in the preference of the "average Australian" for "the poorest imported literature to the brightest productions of his own country." 98

"Bookworm", unfortunately, was wholly correct, if

96 Ibid., 23 September 1893, p. 5. My italics.
97 Ibid., 30 April 1892, p. 6.
98 Ibid., 28 April 1894, p. 21.
patriotism involved buying Australian productions.

By the end of January 1896, a few months after "Banjo" Paterson's *Man From Snowy River* appeared, it was a best-seller in Sydney. But a "leading firm of Sydney booksellers" (Angus and Robertson) revealed the next most popular books, according to retail sales in January:

2. Ian Maclaren's "Days of Auld Lang Syne"

3. Kipling's "Second Jungle Book"

4. Corelli's "Sorrows of Satan"

5. Crockett's "Men of Mosshags"

6. Hardy's "Jude the Obscure"

7. Weyman's "Red Cockade"

8. Haggard's "Joan Haste"

9. Hope's "Chronicles of Count Antonio"

10. Crockett's "Sweetheart Travellers". 99

Wholesale demand figures for the next week—presumably anticipating retail demand—show Paterson's book

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99 *Ibid.*, 8 February 1896, "'The Bulletin' Book Exchange". This list and those below are reproduced as they appeared in the *Bulletin*, except that prices have been omitted.
second in popularity to Marie Corelli's, while Ethel Turner's *Seven Little Australians* (London, 1894) and *Family at Misrule* (London, 1895) were added together as eighth in popularity. But the preference of Sydney readers for sensational novels and Kailyarders continued. Angus and Robertson's figures for overall retail demand during February indicate the basic tastes of the reading public. Again the momentary popularity of an Australian book - in this case Lawson's *In the Days When the World Was Wide* - sent it to the top of the bestseller lists. But Paterson's volume had declined just as rapidly. Lawson's verse, in

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Ibid., 15 February 1896, "'The Bulletin' Book Exchange". The complete list was given as follows:

1. Corelli's "Sorrows of Satan"
2. Paterson's "Man from Snowy River"
3. Crawford's "Casa Braccio"
4. Haggard's "Joan Haste"
5. Gould's "On and Off the Turf"
6. Du Maurier's "Trilby"
7. Kipling's "Second Jungle Book"
8. Turner's "Seven Little Australians" and "Family at Misrule"
9. Maclaren's "Days of Auld Lang Syne"
10. Crockett's "Sweetheart Travellers"
Angus and Robertson's list, was followed by:

2. Wells' "Wonderful Visit"
3. Crawford's "Casa Braccio"
4. Corelli's "Sorrows of Satan"
5. Kipling's "Second Jungle Book"
6. Paterson's "Man From Snowy River"
7. Purcell's Life of Card. Manning
8. Maclaren's "Days of Auld Lang Syne"
9. Meredith's "Amazing Marriage"
10. Dawson's London Idylls.¹⁰¹

These lists suggest, among other things, that New South Wales might indeed have been simply another English county.

In 1897 A.G. Stephens pleaded for more knowledge in Australia of non-British authors, something that might come from the establishment of a "cosmopolitan" bookshop, but he knew that he was speaking to a very small audience: "there is much more profit in selling Anthony Hope and Marie Corelli to the

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 14 March 1896, untitled page subheaded "Battle Pictures", front wrapper verso.
undiscriminating female."

As for the Bulletin, the editors wrote, "unless from people with a dash of genius we don't want matter which might as easily have been written in England or Nova Zembla or Timbuctoo as in Australasia. If we did want that sort of thing we could scissor it from a million sources." But scissor they did, revealing as much about their tastes as the 1896 book lists suggest about that of their readers. Having abandoned "high Art" for literary chauvinism, the Bulletin had only the tastes of their editors to "cultivate and enlarge" Australia's "national taste", her "aesthetic sense". And that, the Bulletin said in 1881, meant nothing less than "the working out of the civilization of the future".

iii. The Critic Set on High

Before 1894, when A.G. Stephens joined the Bulletin's staff as a literary sub-editor, the paper

102 Ibid., 23 January 1897, "Red Page".
103 Ibid., 9 February 1895, p. 15.
had reprinted only one short story as a "model" for their readers. "The Spectre in the Wardrobe" ("his breath was coming in quick, short gasps...") was undoubtedly chosen as "a model short story" because it was French; after all, "the French writers are the only ones who perfectly know how to tell a story". But it was not the only short story reprinted before 1894, nor were the others all French.

Jessie Sale Lloyd's "Strangely Caught" may not have been a "model", but the fact that it was one of the only two attributable short stories reprinted in the Bulletin before 1888 suggests that her sentimental love mysteries were nearly as popular in Australia as they were in England. In 1888, however, J.F. Archibald's

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104 Ibid., 18 January 1890, p. 9; 25 January 1890, p. 7.

105 Ibid., "Bulletin Supplement" for 21 January 1882, p. 7. This eight-page supplement to the regular issue of the paper, like many others issued by the Bulletin, is a feature long familiar to newspaper advertising managers: a series of pictures and laudatory articles on a business firm or industry (both occasionally supplied by the firm itself) which draw advertisements paid for by the firm and related companies. Jessie Sale Lloyd's eight double- and triple-decker novels written during the 'seventies and 'eighties ranged from The Hazelhurst Mystery (2 vols.; 1877-1879) to Ragamuffins; or, the Arabs of Love Lane (1879). The other definitely attributable short story reprinted
affection for France -- an affection bordering on affectation, for he preferred to be known as "Jules Francois" rather than John Feltham -- first made itself felt: the same year in which the Bulletin proclaimed that Australians "have nothing to learn from England, from Europe".

Whatever it may also suggest about his biases, Archibald's decision to reprint two tales of murder and suspense by Octave Mirbeau and Jean Richepin demonstrates the uncertain hold of "high Art" on his publishing practice. After 1888, only two of Maupassant's stories redeem a dreary procession of domestic intrigue and violent death described by Julien "Mauvrae", Francois Coppée, Armand Dubois and several "Special Bulletin Translations From the French". Perhaps Victor Daley's translation of one of Jean de


107 Maupassant's stories were reprinted as "His
Rêve's parables appealed to the Bulletin's editors, as they said, for its combination of "the grasp and analysis of Balzac with the romanticism of Hugo, and the realism of Flaubert and De Maupassant".  

Editorial policy, at least, was definitely in mind when the paper reprinted two British short stories illustrating the oppression of the working man. One of the two, "The Workman's Alternative: a Story of the Great Dock Strike", points out that it is the unions who are doing the oppressing.  

Quiller-Couch's "The Waiting Juliet", however, appears to have been reprinted simply because it was competently crafted. Less can be said for three pieces reprinted from American magazines, all dealing with disappointed love. 

Wife's Jewels" (22 November 1890, p. 8) and "Mad" (19 September 1891, p. 21). The various other translations appeared in the paper's issues for 22 February 1890, 15 November 1890, 22 November 1890, 6 June 1891, 7 November 1891, 9 January 1892, 14 May 1892, and 14 October 1893.  

108 Ibid., 14 October 1893, p. 9.  
109 Ibid., 7 March 1891, p. 19, by E. Nesbit. The second was "Two Days' Wages", 26 July 1890, p. 19.  
110 Ibid., 28 November 1891, p. 20.  
111 W.C. Morrow, "An Unusual Conclusion" from the American, ibid., 27 September 1890, pp. 18-19; Geraldine Bonner, "Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Pense: the Tale of a
With the appointment of A.G. Stephens as a literary subeditor in 1894, the need for reprinted "models" of short story art vanished. Stephens simply extracted long passages from various books and magazines under his notice and incorporated them in his reviews. That his tastes were as eclectic as those of his predecessors is suggested by three stories he considered significant enough to reprint in full. In 1895, during a review of the Yellow Book's first five numbers, Stephens revealed that some of its prose,

such as that by "C.S.", sets a style which corresponds very closely to that sought by The Bulletin. The ordinary English tale has a small, weak point at the end of a long, weak introduction. Occasionally the point is strong, but the introduction is almost invariably weak. The Bulletin asks from its contributors brevity, and interest which races from strong beginning to strong climax. This is what "C.S." achieves in several Yellow Book sketches, of which "For Ever and Ever" (in vol. 5) may stand as model.

Garter" from Harper's, 8 November 1890, pp. 21-22; unattributed, "Her Honour and His: a Tale of a Wife, a Husband, and a Friend" from the American, 18 March 1893, p. 21.

Ibid., 6 July 1895, "'The Bulletin' Book Exchange".
The week following his review he reprinted "For Ever and Ever": the banal interior monologue of a husband who can see only the features of a former lover in those of his wife, to whom The Other Woman has appeared in a dream. 113 And when Stephens reprinted Henry Wallace Phillips' "The Disappearance of Car 8809" from the New York Criterion in 1900 - a trivial and humorous sketch of the theft of a tram - more than one reader might have suspected that he was merely filling out his celebrated literary page. 114 Nor was literary merit his standard of selection when he reprinted "In the Death Agony" later that year. The sketch, which had appeared in the Brisbane Worker, is an undistinguished piece of political protest intended to champion the Boer cause in the Transvaal war. 115 Although Stephens is undoubtedly entitled to an occasional aberration in the name of frivolity or editorial policy, his

113 Ibid., 13 July 1895, p. 24. A search of the Yellow Book has failed to reveal the identity of "C.S."

114 Ibid., 31 March 1900, "Red Page". Stephens also borrowed Layton Brewer's "A Tea Party" from the Criterion on 18 November 1899.

115 Ibid., 7 July 1900, "Red Page".
conception of the "model" short story was obviously
guided by a taste as unreliable as that of Archibald,
his editor.

Stephens, moreover, completely agreed with
Archibald about the elements of a good short story.
When he mentioned in his review of the Yellow Book
that the paper "asks from its contributors brevity,
and interest which races from strong beginning to
strong climax", Stephens was acknowledging a well-
established policy to which he would faithfully adhere.
Brevity, as in the 1880s, was the principal demand
of the 'nineties.

In May 1894, before Stephens began his regular
literary page on 1 September, the Bulletin advised a
correspondent "and many others" how to please the
editors:

be simple; be natural. Be brief; prefer a sent-
ence to a paragraph, a phrase to a sentence, a
word to a phrase. Don't beat your grain of gold
over a column: nothing pleases the average writer
more than to spoil a good par. in a bad story.
Shun superflous adjectives; stick to sturdy nouns.
Don't over-elaborate; say what you have to say
as tersely and originally as possible, and quit
saying. Come to the point at once, and stay
there till you go. The best ideas pack in the
least space.116

116 Ibid., 5 May 1894, p. 5.
This demand for information, the bare bones of a simple story, was echoed by Stephens' belief that "the story is the thing to consider". Background and characterisation, he noted in 1896, should always be subordinate to plot, and as for long introductions, the Bulletin needed them no more than a statue in a gallery needs as tall a pedestal as one in the open air. Contributors were keenly aware of the Bulletin's fondness for brevity; one anonymous writer in 1893 had a thirty-six word story published as "The Shortest Love-story of the Century", only to be topped by Dowell O'Reilly two weeks later. With tongue in cheek he contributed "Jack's Gin", seven words long.

Archibald knew as well as Stephens that a "strong climax" was an essential part of the stories he was seeking. In his advice to a contributor he was prepared to mock his preconception, but it still remained unshakeable: "suffers from a want of climax",

117 Ibid., 11 April 1896, "Literary Notes".
118 Ibid.
119 Ibid., 9 September 1893, p. 20.
120 Ibid., 23 September 1893, p. 13.
he told a contributor. "The narrator should have
given a great shriek and fallen down dead just as he
finished his story, or something like that." 121
Stephens was less dogmatic in 1900 when he discussed
the need for "some good Australian examples of anti-
climax", in Australian speech and life as well as in
literature. But he unhesitatingly agreed with "R.A.F.'s
feeling that a simple and violent climax ought to be an
essential attribute of bush stories:

The bushman is in direct and naked conflict
with nature, and the revenge she takes upon
him by flood or drought, caving drive or falling
tree, are his subjects. Art or no art, here
is the dominating point of view for him. When
the bushman becomes "introspective", he lands
in the lunatic asylum.... He is no nearer a problem-
play or sex-novel than were the early Welsh bards.
His compass is short, but if he reaches beyond
it he strikes a false note. Still, perhaps, a
savage in literature, would he look any better
in a trade shirt? 122

In this unusual attempt to explain how the
facts of Australian outback life could determine
literary structure, "R.A.F." was joining A.G. Stephens
in rebuttal to a long attack on the Bulletin's literary

121 Ibid., 30 July 1892, p. 7.
122 Ibid., 4 April 1896, "Literary Notes".
Author unidentified. See n. 37 to ch. 3 above.
policy. J.H. Greene had begun his attack by denouncing the short story as "the reduction of literature to the paragraph"; "one of The Bulletin's most brilliant contributors", he claimed, "confessed to me that he could not read anything beyond a column. Years ago, when I was at school with him, he could read one book a day. At this rate he will be unable to fix his attention on anything over a paragraph. And this I think is the state of mind of the journalist and the raison d'être of the short story." The faults of short stories published in the Bulletin, he continued, resulted from the paper's excessive condensation. In the stories of Alexander Montgomery and Louis Becke, for instance, he felt that the background was so cursorily sketched that the reader was not able to tell from the stories themselves where they took place:

The same applies to Bulletin bush stories — one has to be something of a bushman to appreciate them. Some day a man with ideas
will arise who'll absorb all The Bulletin's bush work and turn it into literature that the world -- not bushmen only -- will read. 123

Six months later Henry Lawson's While the Billy Boils was published.

Green's most damaging charge concerned the Bulletin's demands for originality:

123 "Over the Coals", ibid., 29 February 1896, "Literary Notes". Signed "J.H.G." In his essay "Australian Fiction to 1920" in Geoffrey Dutton, ed., The Literature of Australia (Ringwood, Victoria, 1964), John Barnes has erroneously transposed this signature to "J.G.H." (n. 14 to p. 161 at p. 180). Although the identity of "J.H.G." has long been puzzling, it seems quite clear that he was J.H. Greene. In 1891 and 1892 the Bulletin published three stories by "J.H.G." (20 June 1891, p. 16; 30 April 1892, p. 18; and 17 December 1892, p. 21). Then on 16 March 1895 the paper published a story by J.H. Greene, written in a style similar to that of the earlier three, entitled "In My Theatre" (p. 24). Abagail Marshall, Greene's wife, was a fairly well-known actress; two years before her death in 1935 she published Plays for Australian Children. Greene's next story in the Bulletin, based on yarning diggers, was markedly different in style from "In My Theatre" ("His 'Perish'", 27 April 1895, p. 23), but was very similar in approach to "A Coolgardie Wedding" by "J.H.G." (8 August 1896, p. 28). It may merely be a coincidence that two weeks before "Over the Coals" was published on the "Red Page", the Bulletin rejected a story contributed by "J.H.G." from New Zealand (15 February 1896, p. 18).
There is nothing more pitiful than the desire of half-read, small-brained creatures of originality. They seek some sensational effect in some accident; they get a small smattering of cheap science and work it in, and call that original. The result is melodrama -- without the good there is in stage-melodrama. The Bulletin short story works up to "He is dead" or "He is dead-drunk" -- this being a generalisation of the two favorite climaxes -- one some novel accident, the other a "sell". By "accident" I mean some external cause acting on the characters, who are at the mercy of it, and this is characteristic of melodrama. Incidents -- the more sensational and "original" the better -- fall upon the characters; while all true literature works the other way -- the characters command the circumstances.  

A.G. Stephens took Greene's charges seriously, but limited himself to a simple defence of the short story as a legitimate form of art. Whether he understood the implications of Greene's other points is doubtful.

Defending the short story, Stephens brought forth Bret Harte and Edgar Allan Poe as two particular masters. He had not joined the Bulletin's staff when they voted "unanimously" in 1891 that Dickens was the best English novelist. Had he been present in

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124 Ibid.
125 Ibid., 21 March 1896, "Literary Notes".
126 Ibid., 31 October 1891, p. 20.
April 1893, when an aspiring author was advised to read Goldsmith, Thackeray, Lamb and Macaulay as models of good English composition, Stephens probably would have agreed to their fifth "good author": Ambrose Bierce. 127

That Archibald and Stephens held similar views on the short story, both in their preconceptions about structure and their mutually eclectic tastes, is further reinforced by their confusion over romanticism and realism. In 1891 a correspondent was counseled by Archibald, "You are too idealistic, what we want is pure realism." 128 In 1894, however, another writer was told "You are too Zola-esque. A horrible tendency to go into particulars will be your ruin." 129 A.G. Stephens was more moderate; in the same issue in which he attacked romantic melodrama, he cautioned:

Fancy is a very good thing, but it cannot take the place of knowledge gained by close observation. To be strong you must be natural; to be natural you must study from nature - paint your landscapes on the spot, daisy by daisy, as Scott did; watch your characters for a week to get the characteristic trait, as Maupassant did.

127 Ibid., 1 April 1893, p. 5.
128 Ibid., 7 February 1891, p. 9.
129 Ibid., 28 April 1894, p. 10.
His meaning was clouded later on this page of "Literary Notes" when he complained that Australians "are all induction and no deduction; our details bear no reference to principles."\(^{130}\) Was he speaking of literature at all in asking Australians to "generalise more" at the same time as he asked them to number the streaks of the stringy-bark?

The problem was scarcely resolved in 1897 when Stephens suggested that "Australian writers run too much to the easy, detached, realistic sketch". For he opposed this tendency to the major prerequisite of "enduring" literature: "to be enduring, literary work must be brought into contact with some primal fact of humanity: there must be a universal 'moral' in it."\(^{131}\)

Readers of the *Bulletin* had long known that its editors were hostile to the doctrine of art for art's sake. They were prepared to overlook the confusions inherent in Archibald's attempts to foster a policy

\(^{130}\) Ibid., 1 August 1896, "Literary Notes".

\(^{131}\) Ibid., 13 February 1897, "Red Page".
of art for nationalism's sake. Archibald never claimed to be anything other than a journalist, and it was as a journalist that he had made the Bulletin Australia's leading literary periodical by the early 1890s. They might have been more suspicious of A.G. Stephens, both a journalist and literary critic, when as a critic he implied that a mode of literary presentation - realism - had anything to do with a "universal 'moral'", much less with "enduring".

In his criticism of verse, however, Stephens found the ideas of romanticism and realism relevant to his otherwise confused aesthetic. He managed to combine a hazily Coleridgean concept of "fancy" and "imagination" with his own eccentric views of "emotion" and "intellectual emotion"; the result, when applied to romanticism and realism (or, as he preferred to call them, subjectivism and objectivism) as a standard of judgement, was a table of "arbitrary measurement of the poetic characteristics of some Australian poets". Daley's work embodied "intellectual emotion plus fancy", that of Quinn "emotion plus imagination", Lawson's simply "emotion", and so forth.\footnote{Ibid., 3 December 1898, "Red Page".}
The most interesting feature of this scheme was Stephens' assumption that "the more objective is merged in subjective, reality in dream, the loftier and intrinsically better the Poetry." Victor Daley, he felt, stood at the "head of the subjective" stream, while Ogilvie was at the head "of our objective verse-writers." But Ogilvie, whose collection *Fair Girls and Gray Horses* Stephens had just edited for publication by the *Bulletin*, "is sliding into the subjective and higher rank". With this assumption, Stephens claimed that Ogilvie's verse "The Bush, My Lover" was "the finest poetic utterance which the spirit of Australia has inspired."

Stephens now had a theoretical justification for dividing the *Bulletin*’s verse contributions into "Various Verses" and "Bards of the Backblocks". This uneasy classification clearly rested on his half-formed belief that the bush balladists were obviously inferior poets.

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Ibid. "The Bush, My Lover" -- written, Stephens said, too late for inclusion in *Fair Girls and Gray Horses* -- was published the following week in the special Christmas number of the paper. Of the 74 poems in Ogilvie's collection, 52 had been published in the *Bulletin*. 
The reason, by implication, was that they were "objective". Objective poets like Ogilvie, Lawson, Paterson, Gordon, and the rest, Stephens wrote, "deal with outsides, externals, realities, and the sensations they awake"; subjective poets, on the other hand, men like Daley, Quinn, Brunton Stephens, and Kendall, "if they take an external peg for thought, speedily merge it in their dream and the sensations of their dream".

The worth of a poem, of course, depended on the poet's abilities, just as a poem, "while gaining the charm of dream", should retain "the force of reality". But the debate of the 'nineties clarified Stephens' opinion that verse like Ogilvie's "The City of Grey Griefs", in which "the reality is unabsorbed", where "there is a constant reference to the streets, corners, domes, and minarets of an actual city ..." would be likely on the whole to take lower rank than a series of purely subjective poems, other things being
J.F. Archibald was troubled by no such problems, if the few examples of verse he reprinted in the 'eighties and early 'nineties are a guide. Eclectic as his choices were, they nevertheless yield a distinct impression of his late-Victorian taste: translations of Delavigne's "Love's Foolish Dream", Fenélon's "Little Abbey of Carennac", and "Rest Evermore" from Mignon; Longfellow's "Sea Music"; Jean Ingelow's "The Story of Life"; Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar"; Kipling's "Danny Deever" and "The Imperial Rescript"; Lorence Earle Coates' "Memoria"; and James Whitcomb Riley's "Bereaved".135

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134 Ibid., Ogilvie's "The City of Grey Griefs", first published on the same page as Stephens' comments, owes only its title to James Thomson's The City of Dreadful Night. In one form or another numerous imitations of Thomson's poem appeared in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada during the late nineteenth century (even in such slight shape, for example, as John Collins' "The City of Rest", TB, 25 August 1888, p. 16), and The City of Dreadful Night deserves mention as an influential prototype in any future history of literary imitation in the Empire (The Stuffed Cuckoo?). Cf. "The City of the End of Things" by Canada's finest nineteenth-century poet, Archibald Lampman. A.G. Stephens published a long extract from Thomson's work, together with many laudatory comments, on the "Red Page" for 6 May 1899.

135 Ibid., 27 March 1880, p. 3; 14 August 1880, p. 9; 1 January 1881, p. 3; 26 February 1881, p. 9;
Archibald also began two short-lived columns of reprints from contemporary magazines: "The Discriminating Scissors" in 1889, and "Verses We Have Read" in 1890-91. With the exception of a few examples of social protest, all of this verse appears to have been selected for its delicate pathos.

A.G. Stephens left a more revealing index to his taste: his own verse. Stephens' first poem to be published by the *Bulletin* was written in 1890, when at the age of 25 he was editing the *Gympie Miner* in Queensland. "Please, God, Untie My Bonnet-Strings!", as its title suggests, is fraught with youth's weariness among "life's wanderings".  


Ibid., 6 September 1890, p. 10. He was proud of his verse, and collected it in two volumes: *Oblation* (Sydney, 1902), published at his own expense, and *The Pearl and the Octopus, and Other Exercises in Prose and Verse* (Melbourne, 1911), published by George Robertson. Stephens also had several small pamphlets and folders of verse printed. When John Philip Sousa visited Australia, Stephens apparently approached him to see if he could arrange an American edition of *The Pearl and the Octopus*. Sousa, presumably used to importuners, agreed to speak to his publishers. (Alexander Turnbull Library, Sydney Bulletin Writers Manuscripts and Portraits, vol. 3).
published just before Stephens joined the *Bulletin*'s staff in 1894, found "Earth nestled close to the breast of her mother, / The infinite Night"; Stephens did, however, make a concession to literary nationalism by including some "sweet wattles" on his nestling earth. 137

Once Stephens took over most of the purely literary work on the *Bulletin*, reprinted verse became a regular feature. Aside from his sporadic "Scrapbook" column, the "Red Page" was particularly receptive to any and all verse that took his fancy. From Bret Harte to Baudelaire, Stephens combed English and American literary reviews for material enough to create a Left Bank on Tank Stream. Frequently the "Red Page" appeared with nothing but reprinted verse, interviews, and essays, a useful guide to those country readers who did not subscribe to the same half-dozen periodicals that Stephens received.

One advantage of A.G. Stephens' energetic borrowing was a developing sense among minor Australian poets that they were indeed part of world-wide literary movements. After verse modelled on Swinburne, Poe, and Taylor during the 'eighties, the 'nineties brought verse modelled on Swinburne, Wilde, and Verlaine. Aestheticism and Symbolism became familiar words on the "Red Page", even though Stephens felt it necessary to tell his poet-readers what a simile was when he ran a small competition asking for an example in verse.  

Less happy results of Stephens' taste stem from what might be termed the deistic fallacy of literary subeditors. Stephens' position as literary subeditor of Australia's most influential literary journal gave him a frequently unjustified authority as a literary critic, obscuring his more important role in Australian literature as a literary entrepreneur. "All Australians owe you a great deal", John Le Gay Brereton wrote Stephens in 1925, "if they happen to be writers and to be sufficiently sane to take notice when you slang them

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138 Ibid., 15 July 1899, "Under the Gumtree". Edward Tregear won the contest.
... I mean that though you couldn't perform the creative act of a god, you did help me to improve my technique."¹³⁹ For an inexperienced author like Will Ogilvie, whose first book-length manuscript was in Stephens' hands, Stephens could do no wrong in his suggestions for change: "You are quite right; I have begun to learn that in these matters you invariably are right".¹⁴⁰ Others could scarcely protest; eighteen years after Henry Kendall's death, Stephens altered Kendall's sonnet "Rest", substituting "Yon hill" for Kendall's "That hill".¹⁴¹ Only one or two, like Christopher Brennan, knew that Stephens did not dare revise their work.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Mitchell Library, Papers of A.G. Stephens, vol. 1, Brereton to Stephens, 4 September 1925.

¹⁴⁰ Alexander Turnbull Library, Miscellaneous MS 156, Ogilvie to Stephens, 15 April 1898.

¹⁴¹ TB, 17 March 1900, "Red Page". "Judgment", Stephens also noted on the same page, "depends on personal taste".

¹⁴² In subediting the MS of Brennan's first poem to be published in the paper ("Night-piece", 11 July 1896, p. 3), Stephens added one set of parentheses and corrected for spacing only (Mitchell Library, Bulletin MSS, vol. 4). "Night-piece" was retitled "Cities" in Brennan's XXI Poems (1893 - 1897): Towards the Source (Sydney, 1897). After the publication of XXI Poems, Brennan issued a MS "Prospectus" for an unrealised
Despite the literary horrors it may have prevented, however, Stephens' incessant subediting was not always appreciated. In 1900 he had sent a proof copy of Bernard O'Dowd's "Mars" to J.F. Archibald, with the terse comment that "this is such good stuff that it is pity to let it go forth in this halting-bumping form, with accents and caesuras in the wrong places. It should be re-written in regular metre." Archibald promptly forwarded the copy to O'Dowd, together with the "insulting remarks by A G. Stephens". O'Dowd retaliated 11 months later...

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144 Ibid., undated minute by Archibald to Mr. "Fenton", one of O'Dowd's many pseudonyms.
when he pointed out to Stephens that "you ... must consider your poetic soul duly indicted for the wilful murder" of two of O'Dowd's lines, and added, "self-surgery has charms when one has a callously artistic mood, but I winced when that bit's turn came". 145

Other authors, like Margaret Sinclair, feigned puzzlement at Stephens' recasting of their work. With two volumes of her verse already published in London, she wrote Stephens from New Zealand asking for the return of her verse submission, mentioning that "a phrase of your appearing some time since in the Red Page - haunts me. "Mercy breeds weaklings". granted - but - as you are strong - be merciful." 146 Stephens' "strong" position on the Bulletin not unnaturally disturbed Rosamond Benham, as she noted dryly that "it is very kind of you to trouble to polish my lines, & I hope you won't think me ungracious that I won't fall in with all your corrections. I'd rather acquiesce in

145 Ibid., vol. 3, O'Dowd to Stephens, 14 May 1901.
146 Ibid., Sinclair to Stephens, 29 May 1905.
changes you prefer than lose publication, but my "Evensong" I do like better as I wrote it." 147 Few could afford to be as blunt as Julian Ashton, replying to Stephens' suggestions for "improvement": "I shall not be able to do what you want...because I will write for no-body who will not only print what I write, but further print it as I write it." 148

The Bulletin's contributors may well have wondered how Stephens chose certain items over others for publication. A clue was supplied on the "Red Page" in 1895, when Stephens graded Stanley Weyman's stories into three classes: "Good", "Fair", and "Tolerable". 149 In his private annotation of manuscripts he was more lenient, allowing five grades, but his method was precisely the same. 150 Contributions which received


148 Ibid., Ashton to Stephens, 21 December 1902.

149 TB, 7 September 1895, "'The Bulletin' Book Exchange".

150 That is: Good, Good to Fair, Fair, Fair to Tolerable, Tolerable. Stephens' abbreviations for his grading code appear to have changed occasionally, but it generally followed the pattern of "G", "G to F" (or "G-F"), "F", and so on.
his highest marks were then sorted into two piles, one pile to be published in the Bulletin as "Bards of the Backblocks", and the other as "Various Verses". Into the first went those literary bush ballads which made the Bulletin a primary source for later students of Australian literary nationalism and compilers of secondary-school texts; the second was reserved for that major stream of romantic lyricism which dominated Australian verse-writing since the Sydney Gazette began publishing verse in 1803.

Victor Daley has left a sympathetically satirical picture of A.G. Stephens in his tiny Bulletin office, sorting out contributions and preparing the "Red Page":

Proof-sheets of new Australian poems on his desk. Coils of more new Australian poems (in manuscript) hanging over back of his chair. He reads one of the latter, and mutters, shaking his head: "Won't do. Lacks the indefinable something which is the soul of Poetry. Must define that one of these days."
Takes up another poem. Strikes out six verses and leaves two. Murmurs "Pith in these -- all

151 Under these circumstances, it is scarcely surprising that the distinction between the two columns was not always clear. On 28 August 1897, for instance, John Liddell Kelly's "A Surmise" appeared in the "Bards of the Backblocks" column, verse describing how Nature "sends the boon / Of blest nepenthe..." (p. 3).
the rest is padding", and sweeps the refuse
into the W.P. Basket....

(Muses a few moments, then lilts loudly)
I am the Blender of the pure
Australian Brand of Literature.
No verse, however fine, can be
The radiant thing called Poetry
Unless it is approved by me.
I am the Critic set on high,
The Red Page Rhadamanthus I.

I make or mar. My daring hand
Explores the entrails of the land,
And finds, beneath a greasy hat,
An Austral Homer at Cow Flat. 152

As shrewd (and accurate) a caricature of Stephens as
this was, Daley's "Narcissus and Some Tadpoles" was
at the same time a reflection of the role of journalism
in Australian literary nationalism. For the object of
The Bulletin Newspaper Company was to make money, and
A.G. Stephens was its employee.

Page", satirising Stephens as "the Critic who acts as
Fate with an aspect keen and sage, / And raises cash
at a lordly rate by running 'The Purple Page'" (TB, 28 January 1899, "Red Page", signed "J. le G. B.").
The Bulletin's revenue came from two main sources: sales of individual copies, and sale of advertising space. After seven years of publication, the paper's weekly circulation was barely 17,000. Yet its special Christmas issue for 1886 sold over 80,000 copies, filling a demand for family holiday reading. Mother would appreciate pathetic sentiment; Father, politics and Adult Humour; and the children, cartoons and a story. Not surprisingly, the Bulletin's 1886 Christmas issue was the paper's first which attempted to satisfy all three. It did so by devoting virtually the whole issue to short stories and verse: literature, that is, which was selected specifically to appeal to public taste, and which in turn conveyed an unrepresentative example of the Bulletin's literature to the paper's irregular readers.

The Bulletin's wide distribution, reinforced by the circulation of its Christmas issues and its promise to pay contributors, all resulted in a remarkable number of literary contributions throughout the year. Advertisers -- particularly mail-order houses -- gained from the paper's Australia-wide distribution, subscribers appreciated the Bulletin's variety of
coverage, and authors benefited from both a widespread audience and the Bulletin's encouragement. Some authors regretted that the paper paid on a length basis, rather than for merit; a newspaper, however, was primarily a commercial business, not a latter-day patron of the arts. And so when Daley satirised Stephens for subediting the "padding" out of literature, he was in fact acknowledging that variety and readability were the soul of brevity in a newspaper, and that subscribers and advertisers were its moving spirit.

Not all the Bulletin's literature was brief, as readers of the Christmas issues realised. Here the criteria were humour and late-Victorian sentimentality, as the paper's request for only two kinds of verse ("serious" and "humorous") suggested. But most importantly, verse ought to tell a "story", just as plot was the primary ingredient for short stories, which ought to have a rousing climax or ingenious anti-climax. Readability brought both subscribers and advertisers, and the Bulletin knew its readers' tastes. If Henry Lawson had not published his verse in 1896, H.G. Wells' The Wonderful Visit would have been Sydney's
best-seller for February, followed by Crawford's Casa Braccio and Marie Corelli's Sorrows of Satan.

The Bulletin's insistence on originality gave its readers novelty and variety in literature, as well as the sense that they were reading a paper which was truly Australia's own. In any case, the Bulletin could not have reprinted more than the occasional short story or verse (unless topical or popular) without exposing its political policies to attack. But reprinted literature did not have to be paid for; A.G. Stephens solved the problem by founding the "Red Page". No advertiser of the 'nineties ever complained of being unable to get space in the Bulletin, but portions of the "Red Page" were frequently usurped for advertising space.

The Bulletin's circulation and nationalism created special pressures on Stephens as the paper's literary subeditor. First, he was responsible for encouraging and publishing an "Australian Brand of Literature"; and second, as the Bulletin's literary arbiter, he gained a position of influence despite his personal qualifications. The "Red Page Rhadamanthus", unfortunately, did not know enough about literature.
Newspapers and literary criticism rest ill together. As a literary critic on a newspaper, Stephens exercised a power his abilities did not match. As a journalist turned literary critic, he was forced (however willingly) to let journalism dictate to "high Art".

When "Dogger Joe" spoke of the Bulletin's "werry rorty" stories ("Dirt"), he inadvertently summarised the ambiguities of literary nationalism in the Bulletin of the 'nineties. For those stories were merely innocuous and fictional discussions of the "sex question", stories of domestic intrigue, and love stories familiar to thousands of readers of the Yellow Book, the Strand, and Harper's: stories, in a word, calculated to appeal to typical popular taste, and stories which filled the Bulletin's columns. Despite the paper's claim to be the "National Australian Newspaper", popular taste overrode the Bulletin's concern for both "high Art" and literary nationalism.

And as for verse, it was all very well for Daley to satirise Stephens' finding "an Austral Homer at Cow Flat". Dogger Joe saw only "lustful trollops" in the paper, and he was disappointed. Perhaps he was
remembering the Bulletin of 1881, proclaiming to Australians that everyone "has a part in the working out of the civilization of the future". But had he ever found in the Bulletin "stuff as will lead men to realise that the future is within their own keeping"?

1 "Jenny: an Australian Story", Bulletin, 14 October 1882; see below, n. 15. The Bulletin is hereafter cited as B.

2 The Australian Legend (Melbourne, 1939), p. 205.
THE BULLETIN BARDS

Australian hills o'erlooked Australian valleys,
And all the scenery was quite Australian.¹

"As closely as the appearance of Lyrical Ballads in 1798 marked the beginning of the Romantic movement in England", Russel Ward has suggested, the publication of "A Ballad of Queensland" by "Ironbark" in the Bulletin on 26 March 1881 "marks the beginning of the conquest of formal literature in Australia by the indigenous and 'nationalist' approach."² Dr. Ward's use of a military metaphor is revealing, for Australian literary historians have indeed seen the last two

¹"Jenny: an Australian Story", Bulletin, 14 October 1882; see below, n. 18. The Bulletin is hereafter cited as TB.

decades of the nineteenth century as the time of a literary conflict and have unhesitatingly identified the pages of the Bulletin as both the battlefield and major supply line for the home forces. H.M. Green could scarcely restrain his enthusiasm "within a historian's proper bounds" when reporting the results: Australian literature emerged "from leading-strings into a vigorous independence and a marked individuality".  

When the author of "A Ballad of Queensland" is identified, however, Ward's assumption that "indigenous" and "nationalist" writing are related becomes even more revealing. For "Ironbark" was George Gibson, an English solicitor who first emigrated to New Zealand in 1869 before he landed in New South Wales. Gibson's decision to submit his parody of "Ben Bolt" to the Bulletin is scarcely remarkable if that paper (as Vance Palmer has suggested) was in fact for some years "to act as the chief instrument for expressing and defining the national being".  

Whether the Bulletin's

\[\text{History of Australian Literature, I, 359.}\]

\[\text{Legend of the Nineties, p. 92. See above, n. 88 to ch. 4.}\]
poets knew that their contributions were aiding "the conquest of formal literature" is another question.

i. Various Verses

The problem of defining Australia in verse was as ambiguous and unsolved in the Bulletin's early years as it was in the first issues of the Sydney Gazette. In 1880 E.B. Parnell incorporated bell-birds, wattles, and gum-trees in his hymns to love, at the same time as other poets thought back on Ireland and England with gentle nostalgia. Despite an editorial suggestion in 1881 that there was "too much 'far away!'" in a contributor's verses, and that he should "try something nearer home, and of local interest", as late as 1890 the paper published a poem by William Imeson in which the author made it clear that "home"

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5"The Waterfall", TB, 17 April 1880, p. 5; "The Bell-bird's Song", 1 May 1880, p. 3.

The editors' high praise for Adam Lindsay Gordon, Brunton Stephens, and Henry Kendall was based on the belief that they were "the only men...who have written anything with the passion of song in it, and yet smelling sweet of this soil of ours." Poetry in Australia, that is, took precedence over Australian poetry, although Australian poetry was highly desirable. Similarly a correspondent was advised in 1884 that his verses entitled "Truth Dawns" were unacceptable in the first place because they lacked "the one essential of poetry - music." As an afterthought he was counselled to "write of the things around you - the farm, the village, the little joys and sorrows of everyday life. Describe the dawn and the dusk, the sunlit plain, and the moonlit river, the wild flowers of the bush, and the wonderful Australian sylva which yet wait for description. Then write to us again."  

7 Ibid., 3 December 1881; "On the Pier", 31 May 1890, p. 20.  
8 Ibid., 16 September 1882, p. 2.  
9 Ibid., 9 August 1884, p. 13.
The assumptions behind this advice were precisely those which Henry Lawson systematically attacked throughout the 'nineties, but it is significant that the title of Victor Daley's first volume of poetry, *At Dawn and Dusk* (1898), reprinted by the *Bulletin* in 1902, echoed a phrase of the counsel. Daley was the poet most frequently published by the paper during the period, and the romantic lyricism which formed such a large part of the *Bulletin*’s verse might well have been composed with that paragraph on every contributor's writing-desk.

Even after seventy-five years of verse-writing in Australia, language was still the major obstacle to poetic assimilation of the country. Lawson, of course, was not the first Australian author to suggest the inappropriateness of English Romanticism's diction in Australia. One anonymous contributor to the *Bulletin* as early as March 1880 humorously referred to the unseeliness of treating an outback shepherd as a denizen of Arcadia.10 Other versifiers, anticipating C.J. Dennis by 30 years, experimented with the slang of the

"larrikin push": that sub-language of urban thievery which was so incomprehensible to magistrates in the first years of Botany Bay that interpreters had to be employed by the courts:

Trust no cozzer, howe'er pleasant,
Quickly nit, and smoke your head;
Graft whenever they're not present,
Stivers cop out as they're led.11

While this concern for "indigenous" language was not as extreme as the suggestion in an early Continental Congress of the rebellious North American colonies that English be outlawed, it stems from the same source. New worlds demand new forms of language. The success of these attempts in Australia may be gauged from verse and short stories using the jargon of shearing. Terms such as a call for "tar!" have come

11 Ibid., 17 June 1882, p. 8. "In some of our early courts of justice, an interpreter was frequently necessary to translate the deposition of a witness, and the defence of the prisoner": Watkin Tench Sydney's First Four Years, ed. L.F. Fitzhardinge (Sydney, 1961), quoted in L.L. Robson, "The Historical Basis of For the Term of His Natural Life", Australian Literary Studies, 1, 2 (December 1963), n. 7 to 105. See also "A Police Court Ballad: The Leery Barty", TB, 7 November 1885, p. 20.
to be familiar to readers of Australian literature in the twentieth century, whether or not they have observed the shearing of sheep by hand. Yet in 1889 a Bulletin contributor felt that he had to explain this term in a footnote to his "Pastoral Idyll". That such terms are now widely understood reflects the determination of literary nationalists in the late nineteenth century to use them as specifically "Australian" slang.

The results of this search for language, unfortunately, were all too frequently verses like G.H. Shaw's "Drifting", which describes a kookaburra "pealing his grotesque lay" as the night wind moans "through yon gloomy grove of pine" and a prowling dingo "weirdly wails". A more characteristic stance was that of Victor Daley, who, when he was not writing verse like "Even So" ("The world is young, the world is strong, / But I in dreams have wandered long")

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12 Ibid., 7 September 1889, p. 21.
13 Ibid., 21 May 1881, p. 8.
consciously saw an animate Nature in the Australian countryside:

Red gums, with outstretched, bloody hands,
Shook maledictions in the air.\(^{15}\)

Ever since Captain Cook mistook the swamps around Sydney Cove for green pasture, Australia's landscape had deceived its observers. The \textit{Bulletin}'s contributors in the early 'eighties were no exception. Daley's "Vilanelle", published in 1882, suggests how insecurely and self-conscious was the Australian poet's hold on the Australian landscape. Daley waved goodbye to his youth, as "white blooms fell from tree-tops high", and then felt obliged to add "our Austral winter's way of snowing".\(^{16}\) It was this form of determined uncertainty - the sort that resulted in poems like "Wattle Blossom" from "Australasian"\(^{17}\)

\(^{15}\)"A Description (Fragment of a Frustrate Poem, written in Mid-summer in a valley near the Hawkesbury, N.S.W.)" \textit{ibid.}, 12 September 1885, p. 7.

\(^{16}\)\textit{Ibid.}, 25 August 1882, p. 5.

\(^{17}\)\textit{Ibid.}, 1 October 1881, p. 6.
that John Farrell satirised in his serialised verse narrative "Jenny: An Australian Story":

Australian hills o'erlooked Australian valleys,  
And all the scenery was quite Australian.\(^{18}\)

The quest for uniqueness continued in nods at the wattle-bush, while the demands of colonial romanticism and Victorian sentimentality were met by the *Bulletin*’s contributors in sketches of the dying bushman. When a versifier referred to himself in 1883 as "one of the *Bulletin* bards", he was merely acknowledging the paper’s influence in perpetuating these conventions.\(^{19}\)

In the following year, however, the *Bulletin*’s editors began their first attacks on the conventions. Rejecting some verses on a correspondent’s bonnet, they satirically advised her to "try some other line":

\(^{18}\) *Ibid.*, 14 October 1882, p. 5. Although "Jenny" was unsigned, the *Bulletin* identified Farrell as the author on 9 July 1887, p. 14. After 232 stanzas of the poem had been published between 14 October 1882 and 10 March 1883, it was discontinued unfinished. A few months later a correspondent was told that "'Jenny' is dead. Her animation was too long suspended" (28 July 1883, p. 4).

Kill a bushman, or drover, or cattle-duffer, and write of his grave under the wattles. That's what true Australian poets do: it takes about five heads of bushmen and 1000 acres of wattles a week to keep one of them in constant work.²⁰

Two weeks later they brought up the subject again, noting that "real Australian bush-poetry" was manufactured from "three things - wattle, a corpse, and genius." And genius, as they pointed out, was all too frequently lacking.²¹ Nevertheless their reference to "bush-poetry" is significant, for it identifies that stream of popular verse which has come to be associated with the Bulletin's principal contribution to literary nationalism in Australia: the literary bush ballad. The preoccupation of twentieth-century Australian literary historians with this minor popular verse stems from the late 1890s; their data, however, while certainly derived from the Bulletin's contributions, is more useful as an index to the strength of literary

²⁰Ibid., 5 June 1886, p. 5.
²¹Ibid., 19 June 1886, p. 15.
nationalism in the twentieth century than as an accurate reflection of nineteenth-century achievement and taste. A.G. Stephens would not have been able to make his distinction between popular "bush-poetry" ("Bards of the Backblocks") and "serious" verse ("Various Verses") in the 'eighties. A popular tradition of Australian verse-writing was not clearly established until the middle of the next decade; by then, and well past the turn of the century, Victor Daley was regarded as the major Australian poet of the time.

The editors of the Bulletin attempted to isolate the paper's literary achievements of the 'eighties in 1890, when they published a collection of Bulletin contributions as A Golden Shanty. This anthology, compiled by Archibald and Fred Broomfield, sold 20,000 copies in eleven years. Of the twenty-

five poems in *A Golden Shanty*, ten were written by Daley; only six others were unmistakable Australian literary bush ballads.

Eleven years later the *Bulletin* published *A Golden Shanty*’s successor in the form of two volumes: one of short stories, and the other of verse. The verse anthology, significantly, was called *The Bulletin Reciter: a Collection of Verses for Recitation*. Immensely popular -- the first edition of 3125 sold out in a few months, and the volume was reprinted several times -- the *Reciter* preserved eighty examples of the *Bulletin*’s most popular "bush-poetry", topical satire, and pathetic romances suitable "for recitation".  

It was, in fact, a wholly representative selection from the *Bulletin* of the 'nineties, but it did not contain what the paper's editors understood to be "serious" verse.  

23 Mackaness and Stone incorrectly note that 80 writers are represented in the *Reciter* (*op. cit.*, entry XXII, p. 65). Eighty verses by 59 authors comprise the collection. Only two verses were reprinted from *A Golden Shanty*: Lawson’s "Faces in the Street" and Farrell’s "The Last Bullet".

24 See *TB*, 19 August 1899, "Under the Gumtree", where it was announced that "A Book of Bulletin Verse" would appear in November, and that "The Bulletin Poetry
established its policy of publishing volumes of "serious" verse under its own imprint. Aside from W.T. Googe's satirical doggerel and the ballads of Will Ogilvie and E.J. Brady, the Bulletin proudly produced the verse of Arthur Adams, Roderic Quinn (twice), James Hebblethwaite, and Louise Mack.

The difference between literary nationalism in the Bulletin's verse of the 'eighties and that of the 'nineties can be inferred by noticing the separate verse publications of the paper's various Australian contributors. Of the Bulletin's dozens of identifiable

Book" was in preparation. The book of "verse" was the Reciter, which was not published until two years later, while the volume of "poetry" never materialised.

25Googe, Hits! Skits! and Jingles! (1899); Ogilvie, Fair Girls and Gray Horses (1898); Brady, The Ways of Many Waters (1899).

26Adams, Maoriland (1899); Quinn, The Hidden Tide (1899) and The Circling Hearths (1901); Hebblethwaite, A Rose of Regret (1900); Mack, Dreams in Flower (1901). This work of Quinn, Hebblethwaite, and Mack, together with Hubert Church's The West Wind (1902) and Bernard O'Dowd's Dawnward? (1903), constituted a series of six "Bulletin Booklets" edited by A.G. Stephens; gathered together, the six were reprinted as A Southern Garland in 1904.
authors of the 'eighties, only nine brought out volumes of verse after they began writing for the paper. John Farrell, George Gordon McCrae, and Francis Adams had already published separately before their Bulletin contributions. George Black did not publish until 1923, and Edmund Fisher until 1912. The remaining four were Philip Holdsworth, Sydney Jephcott, Edward Dyson, and Victor Daley. None wrote verse during the 'eighties in any way distinguishable from that published in other Australian newspapers and journals, much less verse which was vigorously independent or markedly individual.

During the 'nineties, however, thirty-six of the Bulletin's hundreds of Australian contributors published volumes of poetry after they began writing for the paper: ten by the Bulletin itself. Here, then, was that new quickening of the Australian literary pulse, "a creative spirit, inspired by a new outlook on the Australian world", 27 The old outworn "literary inheritance of the race" was given new life from "the back country" 28, through the ballads of Dyson, Farrell,


28 Ibid., p. 127.
Paterson, Lawson, Boake, Brady, and Ogilvie, and the bush poetry of Kenna, Bayldon, Spencer, Souter, and Emerson. But what of the debate, and Lawson's attacks on the conventions of Australian bush poetry and ballads? And what, for that matter, of the other two-thirds of the Bulletin's contributors of the 'nineties who published volumes of verse?

To Christopher Brennan, the finest poet whose work appeared in the Bulletin during the 'nineties, literary nationalism was wholly irrelevant. A.G. Stephens may not quite have understood what Symbolism was ("misty ideas and whirling verbiage"\textsuperscript{29}), but he was hospitable enough to Brennan's poetry and criticism to publish some of it on the "Red Page".\textsuperscript{30} Unlike Dowell O'Reilly, at

\textsuperscript{29}\textit{TB}, 28 August 1897, "Red Page": a brief review of Brennan's XXI Poems.

\textsuperscript{30}The first reference to Brennan in the Bulletin appears in the correspondence column of 5 January 1895, p. 7. Five of his poems were first published in the paper during the 'nineties: "Night-piece" (11 July 1896, p. 3); "Parted" (8 August 1896, p. 3); "She listens by the sources" (23 July 1898, "Red Page"); "The pangs that guard" (17 September 1898, "Red Page"); and "I am shut out" (10 December 1898, p. 16). When Stephens' Bookfellow magazine folded after five monthly issues in 1899, Brennan continued the last four of a seven-part series of Bookfellow articles on "New French Poetry" on the "Red Page"; each article contained his original translations of Verlaine (1 July 1899), Rimbaud (12 August
least Stephens did not call Brennan a "tinkling Cymbalist", although Stephens did accept O'Reilly's satire on Brennan for publication in the Bulletin. 31

Hugh McCrae, too, found Stephens and the

1899), Mallarmé (9 September 1899), and Régnier (21 October 1899). Brennan also contributed letters and notes to the "Red Page" on 13 August 1898, 3 September 1898, 10 September 1898, 5 November 1898, 17 December 1898, and 28 January 1899. As well as reviewing XXI Poems, Stephens commented on Brennan on the "Red Page" on 28 January 1899 ("the-beginning-and-a-bit-of-the-middle-of-a-man-of-letters") and 19 May 1900.

31 30 June 1900. See also the holograph MS of Daley's "Narcissus and Some Tadpoles", at first entitled "The Red Page Room", which includes a passage satirising Brennan in the following form:

I was awake -- yet not awake
And saw a Spectral Band
That did a cold blue music make
Upon a scarlet strand:

While Sorrow, like a hooded snake,
Strode sobbing through the land:

And, on the high asylum roof,
A widowed crayfish mourned aloof.

A Storywriter: "It sounds all right -- but what the devil does it mean?"

Jimfilp [i.e. James Philp] (scornfully): "Don't expose your ignorance. It doesn't mean anything. It's symbolic poetry..."

To make the satire even more obvious, Stephens instructed the printers: "no indentation to rhymed links, and i.c. letters instead of caps. in 1st word...no points at end of lines" (Mitchell Library, Bulletin MSS, vol. 3). In his Poems (Sydney, [1914]) Brennan mentioned "the hospitality which the author's work found in the 'Red Page' of the Bulletin" under Stephens' editorship (quoted in A.R. Chisholm and J.J. Quinn, eds., The Verse of Christopher Brennan [Sydney, 1960], p. 254).
Bulletin willing publishers for his poetry of the 'nineties, and dedicated his first volume to Stephens. Although one of his first poems published in the paper, "Owner Going West", was a humorous ditty in dialect about the resident Ghost of a bush station, McCrae soon discovered his distinctly non-Australian Satyrs. And while Shaw Neilson's first Bulletin contributions concerned the murder of a child and "Polly and Dad and the Spring Cart", the true "Land where [he] was born" was peopled by knights and queens. A.G. Stephens, again, not only encouraged Neilson to write, but published Neilson's first four volumes of verse.

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32 Satyrs and Sunlight (Sydney, 1909). A 100-ff. volume of verses in holograph MS by Hugh McCrae is held by the Alexander Turnbull Library, with a note in A.H. Turnbull's hand "From A.G. Stephens, Sydney, May 1913". Although this volume is probably a fair copy for part of Satyrs and Sunlight, it has, to the best of my knowledge, been overlooked by McCrae scholars, perhaps because it was written on the blank leaves of a binder's mock-up case for Will Ogilvie's Hearts of Gold.

33 TB, 31 October 1896, p. 3.

34 Ibid., 4 May 1895, p. 24; 5 December 1896, "Red Page". Neilson was 23 when the first of these was published in the Bulletin, not 24 as noted by A.R. Chisholm in his introduction to The Poems of Shaw Neilson (Sydney, 1965), p. 5.

35 Old Granny Sullivan (Sydney, 1916); Heart of Spring (Sydney, 1919); Ballad and Lyrical Poems (Sydney, 1923); and New Poems (Sydney, 1927).
By the end of the century, however, Brennan's verse was still virtually unknown, while Hugh McCrae and Shaw Neilson had yet to write the few poems that gave Australian lyricism a new dimension. Instead it was to Victor Daley that Australians turned as Australia's most accomplished "serious" poet. Daley, moreover, was the Bulletin's most prolific contributor; the paper published approximately 170 of his poems between 1882 and 1900 as well as 24 short stories. And Daley, __________

36 Until Brennan had his Poems printed in 1914, his separate publications consisted of eight mimeographed copies of XVII Poems (1897), and 200 copies of XXI Poems (most given away), plus two typescripts of "Fifteen Poems" (1903). Despite growing critical interest in Brennan's work since the late 1920s, in fact, only some 1200 copies of Brennan's various small verse collections were issued before Chisholm and Quinn's edition of 1960.

37 Daley's first signed contribution was "In Memoriam, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow", TB, 1 April 1882, p. 10. Daley also wrote as "V. J. D.", "Creeve Roe" and "C. R." With the exception of H. J. Oliver's brief selection of Daley's verse for Angus and Robertson's Australian Poets" series (Sydney, 1963), scholarly work on Daley has barely begun. He is still emblazoned on one side as a symbol of "the spirit of old-world romance" (Green, op. cit., I, 411), and on the other as one of the "world's greatest democratic poets" because he captured "the undersong of the oppressed masses" (Muir Holburn, prefatory essay "What Do They Know of Daley?", in Holburn and Marjorie Pizer, eds., Creeve Roe [Sydney, 1947], p. 36).
despite his uncertain hold on the Australian landscape was fully prepared to satirise the Australian artist whose soul was in Italy while "His body dwells on Gander Flat":

Correggio Jones an artist was
Of pure Australian race,
But native subjects scorned because
They were too commonplace.\(^{38}\)

Other poets might drink deep the Rhenish draughts, but for Daley:

No vintage alien
For thee or me!
Our fount Castalian
Of poesy
Shall wine Australian,
None other be.\(^{39}\)

Nevertheless Daley did not actually describe Australia's wine. As Arthur Jose noted in his Bulletin review of Daley's *At Dawn and Dusk*, "perhaps the peculiarity which will soonest occur to a casual reader is the almost entire absence of 'local colour'. We

\(^{38}\) *TB*, 11 June 1898, p. 31.

have got into the habit of thinking that an Australian poet's business is with Australia." The appearance of Daley's volume gave Jose an opportunity to proclaim that it was time "to put more accent on 'poet' and less on 'Australian':"

After all, though the foundations of every building must be laid in the soil of some particular country, the edifice itself rises into air that is common to all the lands of all the world. Our verse has been -- will continue to be -- built, as a rule, on the pattern of our houses: low, one-storied, airy, wide-verandahed, room added to room mostly on the one pattern, comfortable enough, but scarcely dignified. The scent of the bush is about it, the stables are fairly close by, and the woolshed is never far away. It is better that this should be so. These are the things that most of us care about, and among the gum-trees a slab hut is in better taste than pilasters and stucco. But we have room, too, for statelier buildings, based no less firmly on Australian earth, but not sprawling all over it: we have room for the poetry that rises into the higher air, that feels the breath of the elemental passions, that is stirred and swept and purified with those great wind-currents that have the whole earth for playground.

In Daley's work Jose found just this sort of poetry, adding that he was not "exalting it beyond its deserts....Daley has the note of universality which gives a man promise of permanence for his
Whatever the twentieth-century opinions of Daley's merit, Jose spoke for the 1890s.

Other "serious" Bulletin poets of the nineties whose reputations have -- for one reason or another -- extended into the twentieth century include Mary Gilmore and Bernard O'Dowd, both determined exponents of literary nationalism. Although by the end of the century Mary Gilmore's work had appeared only as a short series of domestic verses from "M.J.C., Paraguay", the earliest of them, appropriately, became the title-poem of her first volume of verse, Marri'd (1910). And although O'Dowd had contributed

\[40\] Ibid., 16 July 1898, "Red Page", signed "Ishmael Dare". Other Bulletin contributors were still puzzled by Daley's nationalism, if not his merit. "R.A.F."'s verse "To V.J.D.", rejected by the paper, included a stanza (printed in the correspondence column) with one line describing Daley as "ours still, yet foreign -- quaintly strange" (14 October 1899, p. 15).

\[41\] Ibid., 10 December 1898, p. 16. Mrs. (later Dame Mary) Gilmore had joined William Lane's "New Australia" scheme in Paraguay; she returned to Australia in 1902. A volume of her verse was planned in the "Bulletin Booklets" series (19 August 1899, "Under the Gumtree"), but it never appeared.
only thirteen verses to the paper before Federation, it was his sonnet "Australia" which won a small contest for a poem commemorating the new Commonwealth, a contest run by Stephens on the Bulletin's "Red Page".  

Again appropriately, it was Stephens who published O'Dowd's first slim volume of verse in 1903 as Dawnward.

Unfortunately for the "Australian legend", these seven "serious" poets, together with a dozen authors of "bush-poetry" and ballads, represent only half of the Bulletin's contributors of the 'nineties who later published separate collections. The other half, in fact, reflected the Bulletin's "creative spirit" of the 'nineties as accurately as the bush-poets, balladeers, and "serious" versifiers.

Edmund Fisher's The Kiss of Dolly Day and Other Cynical Rhymes for Recitation (1912) and William Goodge's Hits! Skits! and Jingles! (1899) represented

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42 Ibid., 12 May 1900, "Red Page", signed "D. Fenton". Hugh Anderson's entry for this poem in Bernard O'Dowd (1866-1953): An Annotated Bibliography (Sydney, 1963), p. 14, is confusing; his annotation "p. 20 Bulletin 1 February 1900" should be cancelled.
one extreme. The first volume was written by one of the Bulletin's subeditors, and the second was published by the paper. Both represented a main stream of verse published in the Bulletin since its first issue of 1880: topical and humorous doggerel destined for the Bulletin Reciter.

Equally representative was a stream of late-Victorian album verse: occasionally humorous, usually full of pathetic sentiment; occasionally touching on Australian life in a way that would have been familiar to readers of the Sydney Gazette, more usually musing on Faith, Destiny, and Justice. Infrequently one or two examples of this album verse reappear in anthologies; the rest, mercifully, has disappeared, except perhaps to circulate among descendants of Agnes Rose Soley, James Allan, Dowell O'Reilly, Agnes Storrie, Ambrose Pratt, Randolph Bedford and, ironically, A.G. Stephens himself. 43

43See bibliographical entries in E.M. Miller's Australian Literature, vol. 1, for the various publications of these authors. Agnes Rose Soley wrote in the Bulletin as "Pistachio" and "Rose de Boheme"; Dowell O'Reilly used the pseudonyms "Pedlar", "Mathinna", "D. O'R." and "D".
The other extreme, to the *Bulletin*’s critics, was an outgrowth of the paper’s fondness for sentimental, dramatic, and tragic musings on Love. The collections of two *Bulletin* contributors of the ‘nineties, George Essex Evans’ verses on thwarted and treacherous love, and Frank Morton’s celebrations of love, were representative and wholly unremarkable fin de siècle examples of that archetypally Victorian preoccupation, the "sex question". But what "Dogger Joe" meant by "Dirt" in the contributions of the *Bulletin*’s "poet blokes and poetesses" was undoubtedly summed up for him in the first four titles issued by A.G. Stephens as the "Bulletin Booklets": James Evans, for example, published *The Repentance of Magdalene Despar* (London, 1891), *In Tenebris Lux* (Brisbane, 1892), *Loraine* (Melbourne, 1898), *The Sword of Pain* (1905), and *The Secret Key* (Sydney, 1906). Morton, who moved to New Zealand in 1905 and was associated with the Triad, published his *Laughter and Tears* in Wellington (1905). Lothian published his *Verses of Marjorie and Some Others* (Melbourne, 1916), while he had privately printed *The Secret Spring* (Sydney, 1919) and *Man and the Devil: A Book of Shame and Pity* (Sydney, 1922).
Hebblethwaite's *A Rose of Regret* (1900), Louise Mack's *Dreams in Flower* (1901) and Roderick Quinn's *The Hidden Tide* (1899) and *The Circling Hearths* (1901).

Dogger Joe was probably a man of the world, prepared to accept James Hebblethwaite's "The Quiet Life":

> 0 love! 0 dew of youth clear, undefiled!
> 0 violet of life! 0 azure light!
> 0 dawn that holds the sweetness of the night!
> 0 floating odour haunting, vague, and wild!
> Again I feel thy might.\(^45\)

And Louise Mack's "I take my Life in my Hands..." ("'Oh, love me, Woman, love! / Your eyes are like stars, your mouth a flower.'") was no worse, although he might have raised a shaggy brow at the unsubtle eroticism of "In the Attic":

Open the door with the rusty key,
Close and lock it, and enter in:
Straightway walk into Paradise,
And let your time as a god begin.

Rolled in the mighty atmosphere
We stumble heavenwards bar by bar,
Through the midnights, till feet refuse,
And reel and tremble—and there's the star!\(^46\)

\(^{45}\) *Rose of Regret*, p. xvii.

\(^{46}\) *Dreams in Flower*, pp. xxiv, xxvi-xxvii.
But when A.G. Stephens claimed that Roderic Quinn "stands highest in kind of all Australian or quasi-Australian poets"\(^{47}\), and published two of Quinn's slim volumes as "Bulletin Booklets", Dogger Joe might well have wondered what had happened to Australian poetry. In both he could find only silky scented hair, clasping fingers, red moist lips, and verse like the Seducer's "Song of the Violin":

"Not now, if you please, sir! -- a moment she strove --
   The curve of my arm softly circled her head...
   A violin somewhere was singing of love,
   And "Kiss, kiss, kiss, and kiss!" it said.\(^{48}\)

Dogger Joe had had enough. He looked back to the days when the Bulletin was "racy of the sile", not full of "lop eared torfs an thaire flash wimmen".

ii. "The Old Bush Life"

"'Let me write the songs of the people!'", a Bulletin editorial began in 1882, "'and I care not who

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\(^{47}\) _TB_, 15 October 1898, "Red Page". Italics in original.

\(^{48}\) _The Circling Hearth_, pp. xxi-xxii, for example; _The Hidden Tide_, p. viii. Ellipsis marks in original.
makes their laws.'" But "the days have now gone by," they went on, "when songs were powerful political engines for moving the minds of the masses. The modern newspaper has usurped the functions of the ballad-singer, and has stripped the pedestal of Pasquin's statue of its potent lampoons."\(^49\) Nevertheless the Bulletin made lively use of what its editors called "ballads" as extensions of the paper's news, political, and social columns.

But if it was the informality of balladry which gave it special merit as the voice of the "people" in song, conquering "formal literature in Australia by the indigenous and 'nationalist' approach", the Bulletin's editors were remarkably slow to recognise the fact. The paper's first ballad, or verse apparently intended to be sung, was published in the "Brief Mention" column on 6 November 1880. An untitled work of two stanzas and a chorus, it is a sarcastic song about a local cattle-stealing incident. The term \(^49\) "TB, 4 February 1882, p. 1."
"ballad", however, was not used until January 1881, when "The Tragedy of Tucker" - a humorous addition to a news item - was satirically subtitled "a Romantic Bulletin Ballad". With two exceptions, all the Bulletin verse called "ballads" in the early 'eighties was simply humorous commentary in any metre on local Australian politics or the vicissitudes of love. The first exception was significantly subtitled "a Pathetic Ballad", and the second was Gibson's wholly untypical "A Ballad of Queensland".

If balladry was an especially nationalistic expression of the "people", the editors of "the national Australian newspaper" were again remarkably imperceptive. John Farrell, the Bulletin noted in 1887, "has inaugurated a new era in Australian poetry", departing from "the models of his predecessors": not because he wrote distinctively Australian ballads, but because his "distinctively Australian" poetry was

50 Ibid., 22 January 1881, p. 9.

51 See ibid., 12 February 1881, p. 81; 12 March 1881, p. 2; 30 July 1881, p. 9; 22 October 1881, p. 9; 26 November 1881, p. 8; 7 October 1882, p. 5; 20 October 1883, p. 7.

52 Ibid., 19 February 1881, p. 9; 26 March 1881, p. 8.
"of cosmopolitan interest", Verse like Farrell's "How He Died" and "E. Mc"'s "The Dying Stockman" was noteworthy for the Bulletin principally because it perpetuated the convention of the "dying bushman".

Although "The Dying Stockman" was published for a specific reason (it was "full of Australian colour"), local colour was in no way related to what the Bulletin understood to be balladry. "The Dying Stockman" was simply "bush poetry", while the verse subtitled "a Pathetic Ballad" contained virtually no "Australian colour". Their only common point was unabashed sentimentalism. Less sentimental productions -- the possible beginnings of an ironic rather than romantic mood of Australian verse -- were even scarcer in the early 'eighties. J. M. Marshe's "Old Fossicker Jack" was less ironical than rhetorical in its denunciation of landlords: the informing spirit of topical (and urban) social protest, not literary ballads.

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53 Ibid., 19 February 1887, p. 15.
54 Ibid., 21 July 1883, p. 12; 25 April 1885, p. 18.
55 Ibid., 18 April 1885, p. 17.
56 Ibid., 5 September 1885, p. 5, signed "J. M."
Even the few ballads published in the Bulletin's first five years -- whether or not the paper recognised them as ballads -- were by no means exclusively Australian. One of the earlier long narrative ballads to be published in the paper was written in New Zealand by Thomas Bracken, and another was written in the United States, presumably modelled on "Casey Jones." Australians themselves were conscious of their sources; while the author of "Tempted to Kill" intended his verse to be set in the Australian bush, terms such as "six-shooter" and "druggist" clearly reveal the ballad's American influence.

The Bulletin, furthermore, was not tapping any traditions of that elusive entity, the "folk", in its publication of "bush poetry". The editors, as they said, "certainly like bush poetry", and by 1885 could say that "one of the chief merits of the poetry of any

58 "Joseph Sieg", ibid., 9 June 1883, p. 9, signed "Exile". Author unidentified.
59 Ibid., 3 April 1886, p. 20.
country was that it should have the flavour of the soil from which it sprung". But as a correspondent also wrote that year:

bush poetry, so called, is, like Dibdin's sea songs, more frequently heard elsewhere than in its proper surroundings. The sea songs of the stage are not the "shantys" of the fo'ksle, nor is the bush poetry of the city the galloping rhyme of the back-blocks. The dying stockman of the poet (and, by the way, I never saw or heard of a dying or dead stockman, not in harness, anyway), is not the dying bushman of the bush. The only difference between a dying stockman and a dying policeman is that the latter "dies" while the former "pegs out". The "Silver punch bowl", "The broken-hearted shearer", "Burke and Wills", and the "Stockman's grave", are not nearly so well known in the bush as "Nancy Lee", "Widow Dunn", "Silver threads", etc.  

The subject of "bush ballads" was so unexplored, in fact, that J.M. Marshe referred to these observations by "A.O." -- the first extensive commentary on the topic in the Bulletin -- two and one-half years later in his own discussion of "Bush Songs".

60 TB, 10 October 1885, p. 13; 7 November 1885, p. 6.

61 "Bush Ballads", ibid., 31 October 1885, p. 5, signed "A.O." Author unidentified: see ibid., 27 April 1889, p. 6.
Marshe's article noted that while oral balladry may have been a living part of Australian folk culture, it was just as likely to be the product of the United States, Ireland, or England. "These popular songs", he said, "covered a wide range of subjects":

from the "homely pathetic" or concert-hall melody, to the "Old Bullock Dray", the "Broken-mouthed Shepherd", or the effusion -- generally with a rattling chorus -- of some bush poet. Among the latter the localised parody of some popular song -- with plentiful personal allusions -- generally gained a wide popularity. 62

The examples cited by Marshe suggest that bush ballads, far from being the creation of Adam Lindsay Gordon, or the spontaneous consciousness of the folk -- much less the Bulletin itself -- were the cumulative products of importations from the British Isles and the United States, the popular stage, and occasionally, of individual Australian authors.

The Bulletin's editors make no distinction between "bush-poetry" and bush ballads. The oral (and usually anonymous) folk ballads of present-day literary anthropology were occasionally called "bush songs", interesting for their curiosity, perhaps, and deserving to be preserved, but definitely the product of a time past. "Ballads", the Bulletin noted in a review in 1885, properly speaking were distinctly inferior to poetry, although again interesting for their "music" and "homely tears". "But even here", the editors implied in their chastisement of Thomas Walker, the elements of pure poetry took precedence over bush themes, balladry, and literary nationalism: the poet "must stick tightly to the meanings of words, and he must stick tightly to faithfulness in rhyme." 63 The editors undoubtedly agreed with "Tommy the Rambler", when later in 1888 he quoted the words to "The Old Bark Hut", and added defensively:

63 Ibid., 28 November 1885, p. 22.
There is nothing very poetical about this song and it is scarcely pathetic even when sung, but it has two good points which may recommend it to the not too critical bushman. It may be fitted to almost any kind of tune, either lilt or dirge, and it embodies the maximum of solid fact with the minimum of fancy.  

"Bush songs", that is, represented the antithesis of what the Bulletin's editors were attempting to foster as "serious" Australian poetry. Nevertheless the Bulletin served future folklorists well in the few examples of bush songs that were reprinted, even as sub-poetical curiosities. Marshe, for example, cites the instance of a literary ballad written by a friend and taken over by anonymous songsters, who later repeated his composition to the author as an oral bush song. One of the paper's own contributors, C. Wesley Caddy, inadvertently provided another example of transmission when his literary ballad "Jack Campbell's Mate" was printed in 1886. In a footnote Caddy describes the incident on which he based his ballad: "some years ago, a miner was taken ill..."

64 "Bush Songs", ibid., 4 August 1888, p. 4. Author unidentified.
in a Victorian mine; was taken to hospital and found to be a woman. She had worked at it for 18 years without being discovered." This incident had in fact happened, but either Caddy was being excessively coy or the story had been changed in successive retellings. Caddy's "some years ago" were actually fifty-six years, for the Colonial Times of Hobart reported the incident in its issue of 22 January 1830. Caddy's version failed to mention that the miner - actually a pit-sawyer who took the name "James Allen" - was not only a woman, but that she had been married for twenty-one years to another woman. Despite a certain amount of incredulity expressed by the coroner's jury, Allen's wife maintained that she had not known that her husband was a woman.

65 Ibid., 25 December 1886, p. 21.
66 "The deceased...was always considered a sober, steady, strong, and active man; there was rather a peculiarity in the tone of her voice, which subjected the deceased to raillery amongst the men with whom she worked.... The deceased did not appear to have indulged in the 'feelings' of her sex." The benefit club to which she belonged, feeling itself imposed upon by misrepresentation, refused to pay funeral expenses. The reporter covering this "Extraordinary Investigation; or the Female Husband" concluded his article on an incongruous note: "the deceased was of good figure, extremely well proportioned, and had a highly interesting countenance."
That this story should have circulated orally for fifty-six years before being turned into a literary ballad is in itself a revealing aspect of the sources of later literary balladry. More significantly, it emphasises the role of the *Bulletin* as a medium of transmission. In Canada, and to a lesser extent New Zealand, no equivalent to the *Bulletin* existed; the relative scarcity of a tradition of popular "native" balladry can in part be ascribed to the absence of a recording medium in the nineteenth century. Several oral bush songs in Australia have been recorded only in the *Bulletin*, while later literary ballads - such as Paterson's "Clancy of the Overflow" - were first read there by the singers who would give them currency.67

67During the 'eighties, *Bulletin* correspondents recorded at least three orally-transmitted and anonymous bush songs, a small number, but valuable documents: "The Broken-Hearted Shearer" (31 October 1885, p. 5); "The Dying Stockman" (23 June 1888, p. 6); and "The Old Bark Hut" (4 August 1888, p. 8). Marshe's example of a "literary" ballad which went into oral circulation -- he refrained from naming its author -- was "The 'Jackaroo'" (10 March 1888, p. 14). All of these have been reprinted in one or more of three accessible collections: Douglas Stewart and Nancy Keesing, eds., *Australian Bush Ballads* (Sydney, 1955); Stewart and Keesing, eds., *Old Bush Songs* (Sydney, 1957), based on
Neither oral bush songs nor literary "bush poetry", however, were regarded as especially "nationalistic". "Bush poetry" was commended for its local colour by the Bulletin, but terms such as "patriotic sentiment" were reserved for verse of social protest. Perhaps not accidentally, "Banjo" Paterson's first published contribution to the Bulletin (his second was rejected) was a political "allegory". In any case, as the editors pointed out, "the cadences of correct verse" took precedence over "patriotic sentiment". "Bush poetry", moreover, included effusions

"Banjo" Paterson's collection of Old Bush Songs (Sydney, 1905); and Hugh Anderson, Colonial Ballads (2nd ed.; Melbourne, 1962). Several literary ballads first published in the Bulletin of the 'eighties have themselves attained some degree of currency (and have been reprinted by Stewart and Keesing), including "W.J.B"'s "A Tale of the Bush" (28 April 1883, p. 13: author unidentified); "E.Mc."'s "The Dying Stockman" (loc. cit.); and J.M. Marshe's "Old Fossicker Jack" (loc. cit.).

68 "The Bush Fire: An Allegory", TB, 12 June 1886, p. 20, signed "The Banjo". It was accepted by the paper on 6 March 1886 (p. 12). The editors were "not interested" on 1 May 1886 (p. 9).

69 Ibid., 18 September 1886, p. 5.
in any meter during the 'eighties, from "The Drover's Life" ("A life in the bush for me, / The life that is ever free") to Marshe's "At Sandy Crossing" and Farrell's "The Last Bullet".\(^70\)

The first published collection of "bush poems" based on contributions to the Bulletin was John Farrell's How He Died and Other Poems (1887). The paper's review of this volume was enthusiastic, but the terms of its praise reveal how far Farrell was from working within an established tradition of popular balladry. That tradition was not certainly established until 1895, when Paterson's The Man From Snowy River and Other Verses met with unprecedented sales. Farrell, the Bulletin's reviewer claimed:

> has inaugurated a new era in Australian poetry. He has proved that there are vast sources of inspiration on this Continent open to him who with patriotic ardour searches for them. Most of the poems are distinctively Australian, yet every verse is of cosmopolitan interest. In many respects he has departed from the models of his predecessors. He is economical for instance in his use of wattle -- not too much wattle you know but just wattle enough. ---

\(^70\) Ibid., 24 October 1885, p. 22; 18 September 1886, p. 6, signed "J.M."; 16 October 1886, p. 5. The last two were reprinted in A Golden Shanty.
and none of his heroes knock out a colossal fortune with one "downstroke of the gleaming pick".\textsuperscript{71}

The "patriotic ardour" to which the \textit{Bulletin} referred, however, was more a comment on Farrell's political beliefs and his topical verse -- such as his encomium "To Henry George" -- than to any special literary nationalism.\textsuperscript{72}

\begin{flushright}
\textit{Tbid.}, 19 February 1887, p. 15.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textit{Tbid.}, 19 April 1884, p. 13, unsigned. In 1888 and 1889 Farrell edited the \textit{Lithgow Advertiser and Australian Land Nationaliser}, organ of the Georgite "Land Nationalisation Association of New South Wales" (see \textit{TB}, 30 July 1887, p. 6 and 21 January 1888, p. 19). In expectation of George's visit to New Zealand and Australia in 1890, Farrell, a confirmed Single Taxer, visited New Zealand in 1889. Henry Parkes introduced Farrell to Sir George Grey as "a gentleman of considerable literary talent... Mr Farrell entertains similar views to Mr. George and he is in many ways an interesting man" (Auckland Public Library, Grey Papers, Parkes to Grey, 18 November 1889).
\end{flushright}
However much his reputation as a bush balladist has persevered (probably on the sole evidence of "How He Died"), Farrell himself came to doubt the "cosmopolitan" appeal of his verse from the 'eighties. When he compiled a later collection, Bertram Stevens wrote, Farrell consciously rejected his "occasional verse containing topical allusions". All that remained from How He Died was the title poem, together with a memorial tribute to Charles Gordon after his death at Khartoum ("his martyr-face / Looks up to Heaven to greet the Master's smile") and "The Bell of the Ly-ee-Moon", a pathetic "song" on the death of his English love. And like Farrell, the few versifiers of the 'eighties who attempted "bush poetry" were as determined as the rest of "the Bulletin bards" to write "serious" verse. Even J.M. Marshe, one of the paper's most frequent contributors of simple bush ballads, submitted album verse indistinguishable from the

73"Memoir" to How He Died (Sydney, 1905), p. xliv.
romantic lyricism that flooded into Archibald's office.  

Prior to 1887, with the exception of its willingness to publish satirical political verse, the Bulletin published little poetry that in any way set it apart from other Australian periodicals catering to the reading tastes of the Victorian middle classes. But the paper's review of Farrell's poems in that year, with its reference to "a new era in Australian poetry", revealed the first promptings of the Bulletin's political policies in its criticism of verse. For 1887 saw the codification of the paper's editorial platform in the publication of its "consistent and distinctive Australian National Policy", in its decision to call itself "The National Australian Newspaper", and in its serialisation of Frank Donohue's "History of Botany Bay". The literary result of this political focussing attempted to answer the opening remarks of Donohue's "History":

74 In the same issue of the Bulletin in which his "Song of the Shearer" was published, for example, Marshe's "En Passant" appeared: verse describing how life's dark ways have been illuminated by his beloved's presence.

75 TB, 19 March 1887, p. 9; 19 November 1887; 19 November 1887, p. 6.
The trail of the serpent, as it were, is over all we do. Do we soar into sentiment? Our airy flight is impeded by the deadweight of the Past that hangs like plummets on our nobler parts... Do we, like Mr. Silas Wegg, drop into poetry? Every bushman in this afflicted land scourges our ears with damnable iteration of platitudinous phrases about the balmy fragrance of the yellow wattle-blossoms, until that Australian vegetable has come to have no more romantic sentiment in association with its name than the fatuous cabbage or the hypocritic onion.

The codification of literary nationalism, however, did not come until 1890, following the special Christmas issue of the Bulletin for 1889 and its appeal for "short stories, or ballads, especially on bush, mining, sporting, or dramatic themes." Verse in the Christmas issue, unlike the regular weekly editions of the Bulletin, consisted almost entirely of light narratives set in the bush. "Banjo" Paterson's "Clancy of the Overflow" proved so popular -- two months later "Rolf Boldrewood" reportedly called it "the best bush-

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76 Ibid., 19 November 1887, p. 6, signed "D". Donohue continued his "History -- separately published by the Bulletin in 1888 -- as "Arthur Gayll".

77 Ibid., 21 December 1889, p. 28.
ballad since Gordon" — that it was added to A Golden Shanty at the last moment. \(^{78}\)

The Christmas issue of 1889 (whose circulation may reasonably be expected to have exceeded 100,000 copies\(^{79}\)) clearly demonstrated that the editors of the paper were consciously prepared to foster a new popular strain of Australian verse. The paper's most prolific authors of "bush-ballads" became Australia's most popular versifiers, as Paterson, Lawson, Edward Dyson, Barcroft Boake, E.J. Brady, and Will Ogilvie all had collections of their work published during the 'nineties. Nearly two-thirds of the verse published in their six collections first appeared in the Bulletin's columns \(^{80}\); A.G. Stephens was responsible for collecting Boake's work, while the paper itself published

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\(^{78}\) Ibid., 8 March 1890, p. 9. Although the preface to A Golden Shanty was dated July 1890, the volume was advertised in the Christmas issue of the Bulletin.

\(^{79}\) A reasonable estimate, that is, in light of the paper's claims to have sold 82,560 copies of its Christmas issue of 1886.

\(^{80}\) See acknowledgment pages to Paterson's Man from Snowy River, Lawson's In the Days, Dyson's Rhymes from the Mines (Sydney, 1896), Boake's Where the Dead Men Lie, Brady's Ways of Many Waters, and Ogilvie's Fair Girls and Gray Horses.
Brady’s and Ogilvie’s books. After 1890, for the first time, the literary "bush-ballad" gained a certain place in Australian literature.

iii. Bards of the Backblocks

The balladists of the ’nineties may not have read Berkeley’s famous lines on the westerly progress of civilisation, but they had no doubts that the destiny of Australia lay somewhere to the west. From western Victoria and New South Wales through the "dead heart" to Coolgardie, their themes expanded to include the semi-arid topography of the interior, and the people who by accident or intent had rejected the "blue-moulded" life of the eastern littoral. But as the balladists moved westward in song, their eyes were fixed on the east: not towards the Bulletin’s office in Sydney, but to California, and further still to the foothill and plains country of the American Midwest. Uniquely among the English-speaking writers of the Empire, Australian balladists momentarily made her popular verse a regional variant of American literature.
The Bulletin's 1889 Christmas number gave an anonymously-written hint of what was to come. A curious imitation of Whitman, "Austral Panorama" celebrates Australian history and her "Hidden National Will"; Australia's model for development, significantly, is not "hybrid Canada" but "free America":

Behold our Model:
Australia, the twin sister of America,
Pole positive and negative, Siamese Twins,
E pluribus unum, pro bono publico.
Southern Cross married to the Stars and Stripes —
That's the ticket!...
The show is only just begun. Old worm-eaten piles
Are rotting off; and soon they'll all be new. 81

The Bulletin was careful not to publish
ballads which were obviously American, although it
cheerfully accepted "The Road to Wyoming" in 1894. 82
At least one correspondent was told flatly in his
rejection notice: "Sounds American. 'The blanky mule'
isn't common in Australia." 83 Yet the following month
the paper began to print cartoons from American period-

81 TB, 21 December 1889, p. 24. The unknown author did not intend his verse to be satirical.
82 Ibid., 23 June 1894, p. 22; unsigned, but attributed to Evelyn Threlfall in the Bulletin Reciter.
83 Ibid., 27 March 1897, p. 11.
icals with the stock "nigger" speaking in dialect to that very mule. By the late 'nineties the San Francisco Argonaut was an occasional advertiser on the "Red Page". American models were obvious in "J. Jingle"'s short story "Counting up to Thirty", actually set in the Midwest of the United States; as early as 1891, moreover, Paterson's short story "His Master-piece" introduced - for the first time in the Bulletin - a cattle stampede, already a stereotyped episode in American western fiction. The absence of sheep stampedes in the Bulletin's pages, however unlikely, is noteworthy; whatever the area in Australia, "drovers" in the Bulletin's fiction and verse almost invariably drove cattle. The Australian literary drover, in fact, was the American cowboy in moleskins instead of denim.

When G.M. Smith sang that "the Eastward is the grave of all things old, / But the Westward is the

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84 Ibid., 24 April 1897, recto of back wrapper.
85 As an example of the Argonaut's advertisements, see ibid., 27 May 1899, "Red Page". The Bulletin acted as Australian distributor.
86 TB, 24 April 1897, p. 28; 4 April 1891, p. 22.
cradle of the new", he implied only one "new"
Australian interpretation of the American literary
West: that it would not be the Wild West. Armed
violence, despite the popularity of the bushranger
as a fictional theme, did not penetrate literary
balladry in Australia. When "Texas Jack", an
American cowboy entertainer, visited Australia in 1890,
Henry Lawson satirically attacked him for his pre-
sumption in "a-civilisin' us", and was careful to
add "if you feel like shootin' now, don't let yer
pistol cough - / (Our Government is very free at
chokin' fellers off)". Irritated at criticism that Australian writers
were imitating authors like Kipling, A.G. Stephens
once claimed that a Bulletin contributor had preceded
Kipling's distinctive "energy". While Kipling's
work of the 'nineties did come to influence some
minor Bulletin songsters by the end of the century,

87 Ibid., 16 December 1893, p. 6, signed
"Steele Grey".
88 Ibid., 29 March 1890, p. 15.
89 Ibid., 3 October 1896, "Red Page". The
contributor was actually a New Zealander, J. Spence Evison.
their literary antecedents were writing in the United States as early as the 1850s. Bayard Taylor's "California Ballads", followed in the 'seventies by Bret Harte's The Heathen Chinee and Joaquin Miller's Songs of the Sierras: all served to define the Australian "West" for Australian literary balladists.

Harte's verse in particular was so popular in Australia that George Robertson issued a special Australian reprinted edition. The Bulletin occasionally reprinted verses by Harte, referred to his work in reviews, and was thoroughly conscious of his influence in Australia. As early as 1892 one of the paper's editors noted that "it is one of the painful results of being a 'caulinity' that when an Australian...

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90 As That Heathen Chinee (Melbourne, 1871), Robertson also published a cheap edition of The Luck of Roaring Camp.

91 For example, "The Station Master of Lone Prairie", TB, 8 February 1890, p. 19; and "Truthful James", 23 March 1895, p. 22.

92 See ibid., 13 March 1897, "Red Page" and 28 August 1897, p. 21.
produces a piece of decent verse the cognoscenti
sniff through a lordly nose and patronisingly say:
'Not bad, you know, but too suggestive of Bret Harte.!'  
But at least one contributor to the paper knew what
conventions he was following when he described a fight
between two miners over a woman:

No Bret Harte maiden she, with love intense,
With unkempt hair and garments disarrayed,
And voice as sweet as a blackbird's note - not
much
She was a modern maid.

The accidents of geography gave Australia a
semi-arid landscape similar to that of parts of the
United States, while the development of the western
"local colourists" in the United States equally accident-
ally furnished Australian versifiers of the 'nineties
with a set of ready-made conventions. When Australian
popular balladists appropriated the concept of "the
West", ironically, they ensured that their apparently
indigenous verse was as derivative as the main stream
of Australian album verse. As a former Bulletin sub-

93 Ibid., 24 December 1892, p. 7.
94 "A Modern Girl", ibid., 28 June 1890, p. 18,
signed "The Sluggard". Author unidentified.
editor, Fred J. Broomfield, complained in 1897:

Our so-called Australian types...are gathered chiefly from House of Commons reports on convictism and the pages of Bret Harte. What literature we have that doesn't voice an immigrant's wail for the joys of other days and memories of lands overseas, is saturated with the spirit of the West Pacific Slope.95

Despite Broomfield's claim that it was immigrants who wailed for the "joys of other days", a contributor to the Bulletin's Christmas issue of 1889 had in fact demanded that very wail as the essential quality of the Australian "Bard That Is To Be". "J.W." lamented that except for Gordon (who painted a false picture in any case, he said), Australia in her "mighty youth" has had no poet who has truly sung "a wondrous song":

We have no tales of other days,
No bygone history to tell,
Our tales are told where camp-fires blaze
At midnight, when the solemn hush
Of that vast wonderland, the Bush,
Hath laid on every heart its spell.

95Ibid., 25 December 1897, p. 31.
"J.W."'s capitalisation of "Bush" and his archaic diction are both revealing, for his aim, he stated, was to recapture for young Australia "the old bush life" of "olden days", to glorify the deeds of Australian pioneers so that urban workers may in turn cultivate heroism enough to recreate "one vast united brotherhood". 96

Not wholly coincidentally, Henry Lawson's "The Roaring Days" was also published in the Christmas Bulletin. Reflecting both the political mythology that was growing up around the "Eureka Stockade" incident and the literary mode of Bret Harte, Lawson's verse celebrates the heroic virtues of the diggers of the past, the men "who gave our country birth". Lawson carefully pointed out that he was not writing of Australia as it was in 1889, when "the mighty bush with iron rails / Is tethered to the world". 97 His exercise in literary nationalism was not an attempt to glorify the men and landscape of the present (like

96 Ibid., 21 December 1889, p. 30. Author unidentified.

Paterson's "Clancy of the Overflow" in the same issue), but to recreate the men of the past as the objects of national pride.

Thereafter Australia's romantic past floated through the Bulletin in a haze of nostalgic reminiscence, from Lawson's "The Song of Old Joe Swallow" and Paterson's "In the Drovers Days" to Randolph Bedford's "In the Days of '84" and "Breaker" Morant's "Since the Country Carried Sheep". The good old days may have been the roaring days, but as "Curlew"'s "Going West" noted, "the roaring days are over". The picturesque characters celebrated in the Bulletin were more likely to be W. Crompton's mate Bill, now droving those "heavenly cattle" in the sky, than "Banjo" Paterson's "Man From Snowy River", And the landscape may have forced men to be self-reliant and


100 Ibid., 24 September 1892, p. 20; 26 April 1890, p. 13.
even heroic, but the Bulletin's balladists ensured that for every bushman who perished there was at the end of their verses a woman waiting "for a letter that never came".  

So popular was "bush poetry" in the Bulletin that it developed its own set of romantic conventions as early as 1892. One satirical verse located the themes and diction of nearly all the balladry that had resulted from the paper's appeal of 1889:

I wrote a little ballad of the Bush,  
A simple, touching tale I thought would please  
I brought in "mallee scrub" and the "soft rush  
Of wind through silver gums and wattle-trees".  
I had a "swagman with his bluey", too,  
A "gunyah", and "a cool tobacco cloud",  
Some "dingoes", and "an old-man kangaroo",  
A "stockman" and "a squatter bad and proud",  
A "dark lagoon" still haunted by the dead,  
A "dried-up creek", and then a "nameless grave",  
With "station children romping overhead".  

More significantly, however, this satire revealed how closely "bush poetry" had come to be associated with overt literary nationalism. Although their dying bush-

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101 T.H. Wilson, "The 'Thirsty Land!'", ibid., 14 April 1894, p. 24, signed "T.H.W."

102 Ibid., 18 June 1892, p. 24, signed "J.M.A.". Author unidentified.
men were for the most part dying cowboys resurrected in Australia, the balladists of the 'nineties clearly wrote from nationalistic motives. Not all of their colleagues agreed with the direction they were going; one dryly remarked in "My Farm":

I'd plant a gumtree, in whose shade
I would rehearse
The patriotic thoughts I made
Australian verse.

I'd have a dummy grave, so I
Might sprinkle free
Pathetic lines on folks who die
In poetry. 103

And although the editors of the Bulletin claimed in 1891 that "the poetic taste is, we consider, strongly national nowadays", they took every opportunity to correct what they considered to be the excesses of the "bush bards". 104 As one of the editors advised a correspondent in 1896, "no merit in being Australian, unless you make some." 105

103 Ibid., 22 September 1894, p. 15.
104 Ibid., 17 January 1891, p. 7.
105 Ibid., 15 August 1896, p. 11.
The *Bulletin* particularly objected to the "Ode to a swagman": "even the weariness of the wattle-bard isn't so weary as the swag bard's weariness".  

"Nil Never-Never", writing from Orange, N.S.W., was gently advised that his verses were "not absolutely bad, but the swagman gets wearisome as a subject for poetry. Life is not all swag." Three months later they were more blunt with "R. A. B.": "the sort of poet you are always starts by intimating that the story was told by a swagman - evidently your kind of poet thinks that all the human race is in the swag industry."

The "swag industry" of the bush poets was sustained by the various poets killing off their verse heroes. The *Bulletin* responded by advising one versifier that his work was "declined. The 'Grave in the Bush' is declined a little harder than the rest, a grave in the bush being no more surprising than one in a cemetery." The "bush bards" took little notice, and in 1895 the editors remarked grimly

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106 Ibid., 15 October 1892, p. 15.
107 Ibid., 30 January 1892, p. 16.
108 Ibid., 2 April 1892, p. 18.
109 Ibid., 16 July 1892, p. 15.
that "the dying swagman poem and the ode to the bushman's grave are the twin curses of Australian literature."\textsuperscript{110} "The dying bushman", they complained, "affects this paper like an itch it can't reach".\textsuperscript{111} Although they began calling their editorial wastepaper basket "the bushman's grave", the flow continued, relieved only in 1897 by the gold discoveries in Western Australia and a resulting stream of verse about miners.\textsuperscript{112} In July the editors wearily noticed that "the dying miner is beginning to supplant the dying bushman - thanks to W.A."\textsuperscript{113} By this time the theme had become a standing joke among some \textit{Bulletin} versifiers, such as George Humphrey. In his "Dirge of a Dead-Beat" Humphrey's city tramp wishes that he had a swag so that he could "cadge around the runs":

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{110} \textit{Ibid.}, 1 June 1895, p. 7.
  \item \textsuperscript{111} \textit{Ibid.}, 29 June 1895, p. 15.
  \item \textsuperscript{112} \textit{Ibid.}, 7 May 1898, p. 15.
  \item \textsuperscript{113} \textit{Ibid.}, 24 July 1897, p. 11.
\end{itemize}
And maybe die upon the plains -
The home of blood-red suns.
And p'r'aps a backblocks bard would serve
My endin' up in verse;
While, dyin' here, I'd only get
A grim poetic curse.\textsuperscript{114}

The Bulletin's editors, moreover, advised their readers in no uncertain terms that "bush poetry" was a term reserved for inferior verse. "The average backblocks bard either shrieks or maunders", they told one correspondent. "You mostly maunder."\textsuperscript{115} Another hopeful poet had his effusions rejected because they were "not even up to bush bard level. Ponder that awful 'even'."\textsuperscript{116} Nevertheless the paper continued to published "bush poetry" which betrayed its own injunctions against shrieking and maudering. But a bush setting failed to redeem "Machette"'s contribution; his "Old Stockyard", the editors felt, was "not without points, but so doggerelish that even its subject

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 11 September 1897, p. 3, signed "Uloola".

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 21 September 1895, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 12 October 1895, p. 11.
won't lift it into 'Backblocks' col."  

In the same issue in which "Machette"'s work was rejected, A.G. Stephens called Paterson's first verse collection "the characteristic book of Australian verse", but added revealingly, "for friends at a distance."  

For despite the immense popularity of Paterson's *The Man from Snowy River* and Other Verses, the *Bulletin*’s praise of the paper's best-known balladist was highly qualified. Stephens began his

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119 Paterson's verse was published in October 1885, and sold 30,000 copies in the next ten years. By May 1896 it was in its seventh thousand (*TB*, 30 May 1896, "Literary Notes"), and thereafter: twelfth thousand (August 1897, advertising endpapers to Boake's *Where the Dead Men Lie*); thirteenth thousand (*TB*, 20 November 1897, "Red Page"); twenty-second thousand (*TB*, 15 December 1900, p. 21); thirty-first thousand (November 1905, advertising endpapers to Farrell's *How He Died*). Paterson's second collection, *Rio Grande's Last Race* (Sydney, 1902), was in its fifth thousand by November 1905. Cf. Lawson's *In the Days*, in its twelfth thousand, and his prose collection *While the Billy Boils*, in its twenty-third thousand, both by November 1905 (endpapers to *How He Died*).
review of *The Man from Snowy River* by praising Angus and Robertson, the publishers, for the volume's "admirable dress - a close imitation of Methuen's original edition of Kipling's 'Barrack-Room Ballads'". He next suggested that the book should have been called "Bush Ballads and Other Verses". Adam Lindsay Gordon called some of his own verses "Bush Ballads", but Gordon's work contained "too much 'culture!'", such as "alliterative effects". The true balladist, furthermore, should not be an "introspective pessimist".

Paterson, that is,

is just the ordinary bush bard sublimated -- raised to the nth power, as it were. He is not akin to the bush "poet", for his work is not, and does not profess to be, all poetry, though it is sometimes highly poetic, when (as in "Kiley's Run") the subject suggests pathos.

Stephens hastened to assure his readers that Paterson's "sense of pathos" was quite healthy: the same sense "that any average bushman has when he comes across a deserted selection, or his girl of yore who married someone else. With such an invitation nine bushmen out of ten will sit down, if they are by themselves, to compose doggerel which they call 'poetry'. But it isn't
poetry." It can, instead, be "very decent verse", and Paterson's verse Stephens considered to be "good". He was especially good when he touched "the humorous or sentimental side of some commonplace bush scene or incident". Despite his "verbal faults" and weak lines, "he is 'The Banjo', of whose verse every Australian already knows at least some snatches, and we love him."

Then, more nastily, he concluded that "it is easy to predict" that Paterson's book would have "a great and permanent sale". 120

Stephens clearly understood that his two columns "Bards of the Backblocks" and "Various Verses" were intended to cater for popular and "serious" contributions respectively. His mistrust of popular taste was not limited to literary balladry. When Paterson began collecting folk songs, Stephens observed that "the bush songs of Australia do not look a too hopeful field, but A.B. Paterson is out collecting.... Generally speaking, the alleged bush songs that reach

120 TB, 26 October 1895, "'The Bulletin' Book Exchange".
'The Bulletin' are merely bad verses relying on a bad tune to ferry them over the river into popular acceptance.\textsuperscript{121} And when a correspondent sent in a version of a "Whaler's Rhyme", to be sung to the tune of "Paddy's Land", he commented that "it looks like patch-work by several hands at several times - also, as if it wasn't worth patching. But 'tis precisely the class of folk-song which is moulding minds and tuning ears outback in 'this great country'".\textsuperscript{122}

In the decade between December 1889, when the Bulletin's new policy for regular publication of "bush poetry" began, and 1901, when the Bulletin Reciter was issued, a new emphasis had been given to literary nationalism in Australian verse. Popular, sentimental, pathetic, and narrative, the literary ballad gave Australians for the first time verse which was widely known, easily understood and recited, and flattering to their developing image of themselves.

\textsuperscript{121}Ibid., 11 September 1897, "Red Page".

\textsuperscript{122}Ibid., 9 July 1898, "Red Page".
Influenced by literary images of the American West and Midwest, the Australian "bush" was apparently confirmed as the authentic verse landscape of the country.

The melodramatic conventions bred by the "bush bards" were far enough away from the "decadent" English lyric tradition to allow Australians to praise that "one side of recent Australian poetry, its open-air vigour and 'joyous animal motion'". But the actual present, and most Australian verse, were far removed from that one side. In 1889 Barcroft Boake described the "back blocker" whose "favorite I may say only poet" was Adam Lindsay Gordon:

I am sorry to say Emile Zola is his favorite prose writer, his books are published now in very cheap form and have a tremendous circulation a strange partnership indeed for these two men so different in their tone, to share popularity. I am afraid after all the bushman is not a very fine animal.

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123 Ibid., 10 July 1897, p. 11.

124 Mitchell Library, Bulletin MSS, vol. 4, Boake to B.C. Boake, 20 November 1899; reproduced here as written. A.G. Stephens includes an edited version of this letter in his memoir to Where the Dead Men Lie, pp. 188-91.
And so Boake set out to make his own poem "out of the back country", its mysterious "romance though a grim one a story of drought & flood, fever & famine murder & suicide, courage & endurance". The result, Brunton Stephens noted, was not simply "strong local colour", but something better than that: Boake's verse had "atmosphere --Australian atmosphere". A.G. Stephens explained why he had edited Boake's verse from "a personal standpoint", rather than a "literary standpoint". He did not, he said, want to disappoint those "many persons who care little for the niceties of style, and find in vigorous picturing and natural emotion ample amends for bad rhymes and false accents." In any case, "Boake's least remarkable compositions, with two or three exceptions, are as characteristic of Australia and himself as are the most remarkable."

125 Ibid.

126 TB, 2 October 1897, "Red Page".

127 "Preface" to Where the Dead Men Lie, pp. [v]-vi.
"Vigorous picturing and natural emotion", not literature, were the central criteria for establishing a characteristically Australian atmosphere in verse. But neither were acceptable, Lawson discovered through the debate, if the bushman was described as Boake found him: "not a very fine animal". What the readers of the Bulletin wanted was the sort of verse written by that "bush lyricist", Will Ogilvie; "in verse often finely phrased, and always touched with tender sentiment, he has embalmed many of the romantic moods of a bush horseman".128 The Bulletin published Ogilvie's first volume of verse (appropriately titled Fair Girls and Gray Horses), and saw it sell approximately 10,000 copies in the next seven years.129

The Bulletin's choice of a word to describe Ogilvie's accomplishment -- "embalmed" -- may not

128 TB, 27 November 1897, p. 11.

129 See Mackaness and Stone, Books of the Bulletin, entry IX, p. 55. Although the authors note that they cannot trace a third edition of Ogilvie's volume, a third edition (fourth thousand) was advertised on the "Red Page" of the Bulletin, 18 November 1899.
have been the happiest, but the paper inadvertently struck on the same point to which Lawson objected so strongly. To write of the noble bushman in the 'nineties was not far removed from writing of Arthurian England, if Australian literary nationalists accepted Lawson's argument. Most of them did not; nor, in effect, did Lawson himself in his verse. To Edwin Brady (another balladist whose first volume was published by the Bulletin), the fact that Lawson no longer sought "an earthly Eldorado of Truth and Justice" had "nothing to do with Australian literature."

For Brady felt that Australia's growing literature would probably be "a very cheerful literature, because Australia is struggling hard to be a cheerful country, in spite of The Bulletin," Australia's cheerfulness, if it could not be found in the romanticisation of the present, could be found in the glorification of her past, "embalmed" in verse. Lawson, that is, attempted to define the Australia of the 'nineties, and of necessity was pessimistic. And if he was pessimistic,

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130 TB, 11 February 1899, "Red Page".
Australian literature could have little to do with him. The other side of "recent Australian poetry", the Bulletin suggested in 1897, was its "refinement and grace", represented by Victor Daley.  

"Less Australian", A.G. Stephens wrote, "he is more literary". The publication of his *At Dawn and Dusk*, Stephens claimed just before it appeared in 1898, "will be the most memorable Australian literary event since the publication of Kendall and Brunton Stephens": the most memorable Australian literary event in over a quarter of a century. "Daley has not the rugged force of Lawson or Boake, but he has the sense of form which permits [him] to write nothing bad or ungraceful-- he is our classic, our dexterous master of poetical arts."  

Daley's "sense of form" raised him into the position of Australia's "master" poet, acknowledged as such by Stephens and most of the Bulletin's "serious"  

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131 Ibid., 10 July 1897, p. 11.  
132 Ibid., 11 June 1898, "Red Page".
contributors. He had managed (Arthur Jose suggested) to combine his affection for Australia with "universality", and was thus the true Australian literary nationalist. The "bush bards" of the 'nineties were considered good versifiers, of course, so long as they were cheerful, romantic, and full of "tender sentiment". The more their verse embodied these qualities, the more popular it was; and the more popular it was, the more copies the Bulletin sold, if Australians bought the paper for its literature alone.

Was their lack of a "sense of form", then, that "indigenous and 'nationalist' approach" which began to conquer "formal literature in Australia"? The Bulletin of the 'nineties did indeed encourage verse that was both popular and "characteristically Australian", just as the paper's editors encouraged the album verse of the 'eighties to flower into the wilted blossoms of the 'nineties, and the love ditties of the 'eighties into what Dogger Joe called "Dirt". The Bulletin's verse of the 'eighties and 'nineties was truly the mirror of its time, reflecting the same fin de siècle concerns that also dominated the literature of Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa. And for all the
Bulletin's bush balladists were taking part in the formation of Australia's "civilisation of the future", they might as well have been in Canada, New Zealand, or South Africa. If Australia was to be identified in literature at all, few of the Bulletin's contributors acknowledged that it would be done by "bards of the backblocks."