Unit 6: Reconsiderations
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Early Twentieth Century

January 1, 1901, the colonies of NSW, Vic., QLD, WA, SA, and TAS federated into the Commonwealth of Australia with a Westminster-style system of parliamentary democracy.

This name shows that although there has always been a strongly-expressed attitude of independence from Britain, Aust. has been reluctant to move towards the fully independent status of a republic.
Aust’s loyalties to Britain were confirmed in Aust’s involvement to defend it in W.W. I (July 28, 1914—Nov. 11, 1918, mainly conducted in Europe & the Middle East between the Triple Entente—GB, France, and Russia aided by the US, Belgium, and Japan—and the Central Powers—Germany & Austria-Hungary, aided by Turkey & Bulgaria.)
This war experiences forged a new sense of national identity that was centred on the image of the digger, i.e. the tradition of endurance during the gold rushes & the bravery and could be relied upon during the war. C. E. W. Bean, Aust.n journalist & historian, is responsible for this national myth-making.

In Aust. the feeling of patriotism at the same time split the nation and hid the divisions, as it turned into the extreme nationalism of xenophobia. Although this was not represented in literature, the search for a basis of national unity became a major force behind the lit. of the years after the war. The writers were engaged on the process of reassessment of Austn. ideals as a country and as a nation.
Some Writers

- Katherine Susannah Prichard (1883—1969): back to the bush settlements in search of the circumstances that produced community
- M. Barnard Eldershaw (pseudonym adopted by Flora Eldershaw & Marjorie Barnard for their work collaboration: examining how the ways Aust. promised brought frustration due to the limited sensibilities brought from European values & ways of seeing
Frank Wilmot: expressing the reactions of the war-weary & seeking images of universal experience in city life

The “Vision” (1923—24, a periodical published in Sydney):
- group of Norman Lindsay, Jack Lindsay, & Kenneth Slessor
- trying to find the universal by entirely abandoning the present for eternal images of joy & delight
Ethel Florence Lindesay Robertson reassessing Austn. & British ideals in her trilogy of novels which were then published in a single volume as The Fortunes of Richard Mahony (London, 1930), actually follows the story of her father’s life.
The Crisis of Belief

Austn. writer like Richardson responds to the crisis of European values and politics: the mass killing in W.W. I, fascism, liberal democracy & scientific progress, the influential idea brought by Nietzsche.

Aust. was significantly affected by the war as many were killed but it was not involved in the causes of the war, had different hopes & disillusions which brought about the factors in the conservatism of Austn. writing between the wars, and also to restore an old order rather than to build a new one.
The problems of society in Aust. was associated with the greed of unionists or business, the prostitution & corruption of politicians or the heedlessness of British commanders rather than a general collapse of civilization. Therefore, the writers, used traditional forms of verse to establish worlds of natural beauty to correct human brutality, or traditional structures of fiction to discover ways of reconciling the individual with society.
John Shaw Neilson (1872--1942)

- Born in Penola, S.A.
- He had been nurtured through the Bulletin by Stephens
- Most traditional & modest in aspirations
- Showing neither obvious nationalism nor easy romanticism in his works compared to his Bulletin contemporaries
- His Australian element coming from the quality of the light, a symbol of love & joy
- Heart of Spring (1919), Ballad and Lyrical Poems (1923), & New Poems (1927)
Frank Wilmot (1881—1942)

Born in Collingwood, Melbourne

Adopted Furnley Maurice as his pseudonym for his works when he established a magazine to attack Stephens, who had declined to publish his work

A socialist & pacifist publishing a collection entitled To God: from the Weary Nations & The Gully and other Poems

According to him, “the problems of individual happiness can be solved by adjustments to the social order to ensure that the products its vitality are shared by all”, and that “the problem of establishing political and cultural independence rests first on discovering an appropriate language”.
Unit 7: Renaissance and Revolution

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Technical Terms:

- Philistine: uncultured person; person whose interests are material & commonplace (Hornby, 1980:627)
- Utilitarianism: political & moral theory that the best role of life is to aim at the greatest happiness of the greatest number/ actions being considered right or wrong according as they help or hinder the achievement of this aim (Hornby, 1980:948)
- Bolshevisim: the principles or practices of ultraradical socialists or political ultraradicals generally (Delbridge, 1991:199)
- Vitalism: the doctrine that phenomena are only partly controlled by mechanical forces and that they are in some measure self-determining (opp. to mechanism) (Delbridge, 1991:1951)
After the First World War

- The end of W.W. I brought about the nation in division:
- separate & conflicting streams in the radical nationalist tradition by emphasizing mateship and bush independence
- conflict between Catholics & Protestants in the labour movement
- conflict between returned servicemen & between the servicemen and others
- conflicting streams in the conservatives between those loyalty to the Empire & fear of bolshevism
This threat of social disintegration & the aggressive materialism of capital resulted in recreating the European renaissance in Aust. by renewing the image of a world hospitable to the expression of human passion & emotion but producing paradoxical effect of emphasizing the unique nature of Aust. while denying its reality.

This paradox marks the work of those associated with Vision like Norman and Jack Lindsay:

“seeking to produce a renaissance in Aust by freeing its culture simultaneously from the narrowing thrall of nationalism, from the utilitarian & materialist values of their surrounding society, & from European decadence”
- This efforts provided a possibility of denying realism & naturalism
- Their works were flawed at its source by the belief that artists could free themselves completely from society & create a self-sustaining world of their own
- Instead of offering social criticism, their writings were merely a form of entertainment & escape
Vision (1923—24)

- A periodical edited by Jack Lindsay, Kenneth Slessor & Frank C. Johnson
- Published in Sydney & lasting only four issues
- Looking forward to a ‘Renaissance’ of ‘creative passion’ beginning in Aust., opposing both European modernism & the nationalist strain in Aust’n writing by taking up a romantic & vitalist philosophy
Hugh McCrae (1876—1958)

- Born Melbourne
- an outstanding poet in his era
- Major works: Satyrs and Sunlight: Silvarum Libri (poetry, 1909), addressing a life of the senses in a world of passion & beauty, soaring away from the everyday life; Creative Effort: an Essay in Affirmation (essay, 1920), viewing the artist as a visionary
- Writing Austin nature through images drawn from European myth & faery
Norman Lindsay (1879—1969)

- Born in Creswick on the Victorian gold-fields providing the setting for his novels
- His works deal mainly with the male search for pleasure, particularly food, drink, & women, & is in effect merely the reverse image of the society he rejects
- Major works: The Magic Pudding (1918), showing the larrikin spirit in which the rules of the adult world are rejected by the children who impose theirs, instead, Redheap (1930), talking about the immortality, Saturdee (1933), on the sources of the larrikin spirit in his native town & its surrounding bush, A Curate in Bohemia (1913) his first novel, Creative Effort, his philosophy he developed in his essay, & Rooms and Houses (1968), his autobiographical novel
- He views life as ambivalence: to learn to understand life is to free oneself from life & true freedom is only enjoyed by those who have to accept their responsibility for themselves
Jack Lindsay (1900—)

- Born in Melbourne & brought up in Brisbane, son of Norman who joined him in establishing Vision Producing autobiographical trilogy, particularly valuable as socio-cultural history of Aust. in the 1st three decades of the 20th c: Life Rarely Tells (1958), The Roaring Twenties (1960), & Fanfrolico and After (1976)
- Recreating his Australia from European perspective
Kenneth Slessor (1901—71)

- Born at Orange, NSW
Robert David FitzGerald (1902--1987)

- Born in Sydney
Katharine Susannah Prichard (1883--1969)

- Born in Levuka, Fiji
Unit 8: War: the Changing Response

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The novels about W.W.I appeared 10 years after the war was over when the peace seemed lost through divisions in Austria & through growing disputes abroad. Therefore, the writers not only looked back at the war but also narrated their disenchantment during the post-war.

Over the next 50 years Austn writers’ starting to drop their imagining world reflect the changes occurring in the society & Austn perceived relationship with Britain.

The problem presented by the war was responded through poetry by those who mostly got immediately involved as soldiers and through novels by the rest of the society.
The works to response the war experiences appeared in 2 forms: a) the English writers using fictionalized memoirs and b) Austen writers using documentary novels.

Such novels turn out to be distinctively Austen quality as through this form the writers discover the pattern or meaning of the events not by experience but by observation of the ordinary infantryman who is isolated from the civilians and even from his officers.
Frederic Manning (1882—1935)

- Born in Sydney, had a limited education, but lived in England from the age of 15 & served as an ordinary soldier in the British army.
- Major work The Middle Parts of Fortunate (1929), told from the point of view of a Private Bourne who is based on his life-experiences.
- For Manning, war is a nightmare within which he can learn what he is & what life is.
Leonard Mann (1895—1981)

- Born in Melbourne, worked as a clerk in the public service before serving in France in the First World War.
- Major work *Flesh in Armour* (1932), set in the battlefields in France, overemphasizing the remarkable qualities of the Austn ‘digger’: the careless appearance, cynical about authority, & superbly disciplined in action; the essentially democratic army as shown by the easy relations between the men and the officers.
- Like Manning’s, Mann describes the lives of men set apart from their commanders, their pre-war past & their civilian fellow-countrymen.
Frank Dalby Davison (1893—1970)

- Born in Glenferrie, Victoria, enlisted in W.W. I and served with the British cavalry in France & returned to Aust. in 1919.
- Major work, The Wells of Beersheba (1933), having commemorated the exploits of the men and horses of the Australian Light Horse in Palestine in the world’s last great cavalry charge in 1914—18
Martin Boyd (1893—1972)

Born in Switzerland, but spent his early years in Victoria.

In W.W. I, he joined an English regiment & served in France in 1915—18, first in the infantry and then in the flying corps. The experience had a permanent effect on his attitudes to war & Britain’s governing classes, determining his anti-authoritarianism & commitment to a ‘qualified pacifism’.

For Boyd, war is an integral part of a society that has lost its grasp of human values.
Major work Lucinda Brayford (1946), novel of social history tracing the history of families torn between England & Aust. but the 1st World War is the event that reveals the precarious quality of civilization in Aust & Britain. The battles in France and the parallel mobilization in England represent the ultimate denial of the human values that a society searches to be realized. When Blackbirds Sing (1962), deals directly with W.W. I and particularly his experience in France.
Contemporary Novels of the First World War

- *1915: a Novel* (1979) and *Fly Away Peter* (1981) are two recent novels dealing with W.W.I. They interpret the war by reconstructing the immediacy of experience rather than by putting them into a particular historical context.
Roger McDonald (1941—)

- Born & educated in Sydney
- In 1915 while living in Canberra, he worked on 1915, about the Gallipoli experience published in 1979, winning the Age Book of the Year Award & the SA government’s Biennial Literature Award.
David Malouf (1934—)

- Born in Brisbane of Lebanese and English parents, living in Europe in 1959–68
- Major work *Fly Away Peter*, set in Queensland before the First World War, centralizing on the crucial events of the life of a dedicated bird-watcher named Jim Saddler who becomes drawn into the war.
- Malouf & MacDonald are concerned to discover the effect of the First World War on Austns’ understanding of themselves.