A Career in Writing

Judah Waten and the Cultural Politics of a Literary Career

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Summary

This thesis examines the literary career of Judah Waten (1911-1985) in order to focus on a series of issues in Australian cultural history and theory. The concept of the career is theorised as a means of bringing together the textual and institutional dimensions of writing and being a writer in a specific cultural economy. The guiding question of the argument which re-emerges in different ways in each chapter is: in what ways was it possible to write and to be a writer in a given time and place? Waten's career as a Russian-born, Jewish, Australian nationalist, communist and realist writer across the middle years of this century is, for the purposes of the argument, at once usefully exemplary and usefully marginal in relation to the literary establishment. His texts provide the central focus for individual chapters; at the same time each chapter considers a specific historical moment and a specific set of issues for Australian cultural history, and is to this extent self-contained. Recent work in narrative theory, literary sociology and Australian literary and cultural studies is brought together to revise accepted readings of Waten's texts and career, and to address significant absences or problems in Australian cultural history. The sequence of issues shaping Waten's career in writing is argued in terms of the following conjunctions of theoretical and historical categories: proletarianism, modernity and theories of the avant-garde; the "migrant" writer and minority literatures; realism, political purpose and narrative self-situation; communism, nationalism and literary practice in the cold war; utopianism and the "literary witness" narrative of the Soviet Union; assimilationism, multicultural theory and the "non-Anglo-Celtic" writer; theories of autobiographical writing, and autobiography in Waten's career. The purpose of the thesis is not to discover a single key to Waten's writing across the oeuvre but rather to plot the specific occasions of this writing in the context of the structure of a career and the cultural institutions within which it was formed.

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Introduction

This thesis examines selected aspects of the literary career of Judah Waten (1911-1985). It is not conceived primarily as a single-author study nor does it attempt an exhaustive textual analysis of an oeuvre, to cite two familiar modes of literary criticism. Instead its field should be described as cultural history, a study of the institutions and discourses, the structures and techniques, of meaning making in a given society at a given time — for my purposes in Australia from the late 1920s to the early 1980s. Of course, as my arguments will demonstrate, neither the society nor the time is in fact "given" but is to be constructed discursively from discursively-constructed materials. The writings of Judah Waten and the stages of his literary career or careers provide a focus for the investigation of a series of linked issues for cultural history and for theory.

The guiding question of my argument might be summed up as follows: in what ways was it possible (and desirable) to write *this* sort of text, to be *this* sort of writer, at this time and in this place? Already the single question begins to multiply itself parenthetically into further questions for history and theory. How, for example, are we to define the "place" of Waten's writing — Melbourne, Australia, the Communist Party, international communism, Jewish culture? How does the writing place itself? There will be no single answer defining what I have called below the literary *occasion* (the "time and place") of this writing, not even for a single text let alone across the oeuvre. At each stage the occasion will need to be defined in both very local and international or trans-cultural (multicultural) terms, and as a structure or system of structuring possibilities and constraints. In what ways was it possible to conceive for oneself a career as a writer, a novelist, a "man of letters," an Australian-Jewish writer, a Communist novelist? (What difference did it make that one were male, foreign-born, Jewish, communist?) Where could such a career actually be pursued? What groups of writers, intellectuals, communists — what cultural formations — existed or could be brought into existence to provide models or means? What forms of publication, publicity and reception were available? What readerships were imaginable?

Such questions, which we could continue to generate, pose theoretical issues about the relation between text and context or — since this too easily implies a relation of subject to background or inside to outside — between the institutional and textual dimensions of literary discourse. By institutional I am referring to such aspects of the literary field as the means and protocols of publication, notions of authorship or genre, cultural formations and "reading formations" all of which govern how texts get to be

written and get to be read. By the textual I am referring to the techniques and strategies by which literary narrative (which will be my concern) organises both its literariness and its narrativity, its readability and interpretability. This relationship cannot be figured in terms of inside and outside, for the institutional dimensions will be discovered as textual or narrative effects which in turn will depend for their significance on the institutions governing what counts as literariness, as authorship, as appropriate reading, as a "serious" career in a specific literary system. As John Frow has argued:

> The system is ... a normative regime, a semantic code which governs the nature and the limits of literariness and the relations of signification which are socially possible and legitimate for the genres it recognises....
>
> [T]he text and the literary system are defined, given a determinate shape and function, through their relation to the "system of systems" — let us say their interdiscursive relation to other signifying formations and to the institutions and practices in which these are articulated.[1]

It is in articulating the relationship between textual and institutional dimensions of writing that my interest in theorising the concept of the career arises. Despite its place in biographical studies and some historical work, on the rise and fall of the man of letters for example, the concept of a career has played only a minor, footnote role in literary hermeneutics and literary history. In much romantic and post-romantic authorial criticism the career is at best something that adheres to the creative self or the creative act only incidentally or retrospectively, as a by-product of the main creative game for which the primary trope is always individuality (even when it is also tradition).[2] Second-rate writers, perhaps, are the ones who have "careers" and so the notion works in weak opposition to the notion of creativity.

My argument is designed to shift the concept of the career from this casual, even disreputable, status to a more significant position as structured and structuring in the very process of writing as well as in the "business" of a writing life. Again the relation between these two cannot be conceived in terms of inside and outside. Hence the double meaning of my title, "a career in writing," which refers to the career *as* a writer and the career actually prosecuted *in* the writing. Being a writer also means writing a being as an author (at least where the "author function" matters).

The concept of a career, then, itself has both textual and institutional dimensions and, for analytical purposes, can usefully mediate between the two. In any literary system, any print economy, there will be constraints on the ways it is possible to be a writer (to form a "career in the head," to get published, to get taken seriously). As I argue below, to write is to construct oneself as a writer, to construct a writing or authorial self. This is true in a peculiarly strong form in the literary field within the

discourse of authorship which Foucault, and others subsequently, have analysed.[3] Perhaps the point is more accurately expressed by saying that to conceive of oneself as a writer (or man of letters or Party intellectual) is to *take a position*, to stake a claim to a position, within the network of current notions of writer, author, novelist, journalist, intellectual, Australian novelist, communist novelist and so on. The positions are never equal, never equally available, but circulate in an uneven system of differences driven by competing bids for power or authority. Control of the power to bestow or to claim authorship will be one of the stakes in play, and a recurrent concern in my argument will be this issue of cultural authority and authorisation: who is authorised to speak, how is this authority granted, seized or sustained? Just as literary narrators must establish and maintain their authority to narrate on the textual level, so too must authors establish and maintain their author-ity within the literary/cultural institutions.

To be a writer or, more powerfully, an author is to write in the formation of a career in what will always be a multiple, subtly differentiated, but delimited field of possible writing careers. To write involves situating the text in a particular career trajectory the possibilities of which will be determined by the other texts and careers circulating in the relevant literary system (and both text and career will attempt to determine what counts as relevant). The writer's own prior texts and careers will be part of what is at stake, part of the structuring context, in any new act of writing; and any new writing which is granted status within the career will work to re-order, to re-write, this prior history.

Writing in this respect is also like capital, to be accumulated and invested in a career, thereby attracting interest which can be re-invested although never without certain risks, costs and responsibilities. In Chapters 4-6 below I examine what was involved for Judah Waten in re-investing his literary capital as an Australian Jewish writer in a career as a communist novelist. By pursuing the notion of a career, however, I am not necessarily interested in the ethical concept of "careerism" (to disdain which is one way of claiming serious literary authorship) nor in questions of motivation or intentionality except in so far as these can be understood as structural effects and as signs within the institutions of literature. Understood in this way, indeed, we need not be shy of pursuing intention and calculation, not on the model of the self finding expression but of positionality within the literary/cultural system.

The positionality which can thus be understood on the instututional level as a "career structure" (and a structuring career) can also be located textually. Here I find it useful to draw on certain developments within narrative theory, in particular the work of Ross Chambers on narrative "self-situation" or "situational self-figuration" and readability.[4] To summarise Chambers' argument in the simplest terms for the moment,

each text can be interpreted as attempting, through a variety of means, to determine the conditions of its own readability and thus to situate itself as this rather than that kind of text (to be read in this rather than that way, and with this rather than that kind of effectivity): "textual self-figuration is always situational.... it incorporates a model of the relational apparatus, the context of reading, that will produce the text as meaningful."[5]

In *Story and Situation*, in particular, Chambers focuses on the specific narrative strategies — of embedding, intertextuality and specular figuration — whereby this process of self-situation occurs in the readerly text and I have drawn directly on this work in my analysis of Judah Waten's readerly fiction. At the same time I want to emphasise what is already implicit in Chambers' argument, that narrative self-situation always functions at the institutional level. For the text situates itself not (only) in relation to ideal reading situations or to an ideal hierarchy of genres but in the context of local, contemporary, occasional — and therefore political — readings and generic systems which it attempts to anticipate, to determine, to bring into being.

In *Room for Maneuver*, for example, Chambers (re)defines representation as "the production of context(s)," that is, of contexts for reading.[6] One of these contexts, I would argue, is the career. The text figures the kind of career trajectory into which it seeks to be entered, possibly through overtly embedded models (for example in the *Bildungsroman* structure) or through more or less implicit figures of authorship, literariness, audience and narratorial authority. One reads with and against the momentum of a career which both pre-exists the text (even in the case of first books) and is determined and negotiated by the text. Self-situation involves the text situating itself in relation to other (kinds of) texts but also in relation to competing models of authorship, claiming or disclaiming their authoritativeness in the attempt to establish itself, as it were, as the kind of text written by *this* rather than that kind of author and meaningful therefore in the structure of *this* rather than that kind of literary career. Patrick White represents one, possibly extreme form of this textualisation, as the career (or anti-career) becomes an increasingly overt matter of scrutiny at the level of both *énoncé* and *énonciation* in his fiction. Judah Waten represents another kind of example, a writer whose career does not depend upon a strong form of the romantic notions of authorship and which, therefore, always finds part of its meaning in the "bureaucratic administrative" realms of literary entrepreneurship, cultural activism and in the role of spokesperson for one or other collectivity. Waten himself could construct his writing life in terms of "my two literary careers."[7]

Much of what I have said above regarding the role of the career as a concept mediating between textual and institutional levels could also stand as a definition of

the function of genre — hence the foregrounding, in the arguments which follow, of questions of generic contracts and framing. The understanding of genre which motivates my analysis is that summed up in Anne Freadman's memorable phrase: "what we do with genres is not to know them inherently, but to know — `tell,' or enact — the differences *between them*."[8] This can clearly be linked to Chambers' notion of texts situating themselves through the embedding of what are both models and anti-models of their own narrative function or readability. Genre, understood in this manner, is an exemplary instance of a discursive "site" which is at once textual and institutional. A text, at least a modern literary text, needs to inscribe itself in a literary/cultural system as both precedented and unprecedented, as generically "one of a kind" (in both senses). Similarly, in this function genre inscribes the *author* into the literary/cultural system also as one of a kind, as individual and original but no less recognisable as a member of this or that species of author. In different cultural formations and different literary occasions, as we will see, the relative value of individuality *vis-à-vis* recognisability or impersonality will vary but it can never disappear while authorship is at stake.

If we take our lead from this understanding of genre we will see that our notion of a career will never be pure or single but based on a process of interpreting similarity against difference, in a semiotic system in which careers function as signs. The process of pursuing a career will thus involve crossing boundaries and appropriating categories into new combinations (communist/creative writer, novelist/journalist, Australian/Jewish, Jewish/Communist/author) always with an added dimension for the "post-colonial" or "migrant" writer; but it is also, therefore, a process of policing boundaries, of disciplining the cultural signification of writing and any other "literary" activity.

The notion of inscription used above needs a more flexible, elaborated theorisation which can be suggested through the notion of framing. In an argument that builds in part on the work of Chambers, Ian Reid has pursued the definition of genre precisely as a question of framing (and again we can take the notion as textual-institutional in an exemplary manner).[9] The argument is also situational, emphasising the place or occasion of an utterance rather than any essential linguistic features as determining factors in how a text is framed generically and how it frames itself. Reid identifies four kinds of framing which work to determine the generic co-ordinates of a particular text and a particular reading, moving as it were from the textual to the institutional or from the literary system to the "system of systems."

First, intratextual framing which refers to the devices by which a text signals internal sub-divisions and in particular those which change the "reader's mode of

apprehending the text": sub-sections, typographically-marked shifts, stylistic juxtaposition, but also embedded tales-within-the-tale. Second, intertextual framing, the "devices by which a text signals how its very structure of meanings depends on both similarity to and difference from certain other types of text." These two sorts of framing include the processes of situational self-figuration defined by Chambers. Third, circumtextual framing, the tangible "material borders" of a text which work to "constitute it palpably as a text" and again to situate it within a particular system: physical format, cover design, blurbs, dedications, epigraphs, titles, prefaces, footnotes, and so on. As I show within, these details play a significant role in producing "authors" — for the publication of books is also the publication (putting into public circulation) of authors. Finally, extratextual framing, whatever "outside" knowledge, expectations or preoccupations are brought to the text by the reader — from notions of literary genre to explicit political interests — and which provide what we might call "reading frames" felt to be appropriate by the reader and/or assumed to be presupposed by the text. Again the "outside" must be understood relationally, for what counts as appropriate will be constrained by the institutions of reading and (therefore) by the other framing elements defined above and the ways in which, in Chambers' terms, they produce reading contexts.

Although I have only occasionally used Reid's precise but somewhat awkward terms below, they inform my discussion of framing, genre, situation and occasion throughout. I have also understood framing through the notion of generic contracts. The purpose of my argument is precisely to situate the occasion(s) of Judah Waten's writing and to examine how, through the various forms of framing and generic reflexivity, they attempt to produce their own situation and occasion. As will be clear my own theoretical co-ordinates are narrative theory on the one hand and, on the other, certain forms of (for want of a better general term) literary sociology. The thesis might be seen in part as an argument that these two moments of analysis are not incompatible. Chambers' minute narrative analyses are always leading out to the question of how the text finds its readers and how readers find texts. New texts create new readerships which, in turn, make other sorts of texts possible. The blank page is already inscribed with the signs of publishability, publicity and "career-ness" through which the text must make its way.

Before turning to the organisation of my argument and the logic of its chapter sequence, there are two aspects of literary sociological theory which I would like to introduce at a little more length: Raymond Williams' notion of cultural formations and Tony Bennett's of reading formations (both mentioned briefly above). Williams puts forward his argument against romantic notions of authorship and for greater precision

in defining the kinds of associations into which writers (etc.) enter. He elaborates a number of terms in order to distinguish between associations in terms of their *internal organisation* ("working groups" defined by formal membership, organisation around a collective public manifestation, or conscious group identification) and in terms of their *external relations* with other institutions (based on specialisation, or on alternative or oppositional programmes). In the course of my argument, Williams' analysis will inform my account of, say, the oppositional association of writers, artists and communists around the collective public manifestations of the little magazines of the 1930s (Chapters 1 & 2); and my account of the Australasian Book Society (Chapters 4 & 5), defined both by formal membership and group identification, and stretched across both alternative and oppositional programmes for its operation. In general Williams' categories provide a way of articulating the institutional forms in which a writing career, for Judah Waten, could be conceived and prosecuted in a relation of similarity to and difference from the mainstream cultural institutions.

The notion of the reading formation is directed rather to text-reader relations and to the cultural and institutional frameworks governing readability. The argument is not simply that different socially and institutionally constituted groups of readers (academics, newspaper reviewers, "worker readers" etc.) read in different ways, for this might still imply a stable text-in-itself prior to and beyond any of its readings. Reading formations are rather the institutions which regulate and organise the encounters between texts and readers: "a set of intersecting discourses which productively activate a given body of texts and the relations between them in a specific way."[10] Both texts and readers are variably, culturally "productively activated" (interpretation becomes productive activation) within specific reading formations. In this way many of the orthodoxies of authorial criticism, for example, carry a real historical gravity for they have worked productively and specifically to regulate both reading and writing. Bennett's argument can clearly be related to notions of framing and self-situation, as indeed it is in Frow's work.[11] The reading formation will govern what textual framing devices, on all four levels, are activated (and "activatable") in any given reading or, put another way, what specific readers are activated by their capacities to frame texts. It will govern both the effectivity and the (inevitable) failure of the text ultimately to determine its own readings and to produce its own contexts. The reading formation is also to be understood interdiscursively, that is, as constituted relationally *between* discourses; especially, for our purposes, between the discourse of the literary and its "extraliterary" others, the political and ethical discourses it strives both to absorb and exclude. The concept is directly useful in a number of contexts below: suggesting the possibility of specific reading formations activated by distinct

ethnic minority, nationalist or communist projects which Waten's texts, in turn, have an interest in activating.

The above describes the general theoretical grounds of my thesis, but the question still remains: why focus on Judah Waten? I could reply that any single case would do, and so why not Judah Waten, but although true on one level this would be an evasion of the motivation of my argument (and of the logic of exemplariness). First, then, there is an interesting and, I think, significant ambivalence in Waten's status in relation to the canons and traditions of Australian literature: he is almost always present but also almost always in a minor, secondary, even sub-literary manner. Even his "classic," *Alien Son*, has not quite been granted the canonical *literary* status of other works in the canon, although its presence in the tradition is virtually inevitable. One sympton of this ambivalent status is that there has been very little sustained critical treatment of Waten's writing, including *Alien Son*.

Another form of ambivalence can be discovered in Waten's contemporary status, for he was readily granted the place of a serious, respected and respectable writer in most quarters of the literary domain following the publication of the earliest *Alien Son* stories — and this position would later be expanded to that of "man of letters" as Waten comes to speak and write (and to be invited to speak and write) as an authority on a wide range of Australian and international literary and cultural matters. At the same time he was widely-known as a communist and, unlike John Morrison for example, as a Communist Party spokesperson from the late-1950s. Amongst much else this made Waten, then Australia's best-known Jewish writer, thoroughly controversial within Australia's post-war Jewish community and the target of some richly conventional cold war political and cultural criticism.

The more recent development of theories of migrant or multicultural writing has, if anything, increased the ambivalence surrounding the figure of Judah Waten, on the one hand according him a new status as a migrant voice in Australian literary history but on the other consigning him to an earlier "assimilationist" phase in which he was all too readily accepted as an "Australian" writer (Chapter 8 below). I must confess to an interest in Waten not only as an ambivalent marginal-exemplary figure but also as a *recalcitrant* or resistant subject whose often stolidly realist texts would seem to have little to offer the writerly desires of post-modern readers. My argument at a number of points throughout the thesis is that there is much to be gained by the unlikely conjunctions of texts and theories (of the avant-garde, minority discourse, post-modernism, women's autobiography) which I have brought into play, not least because of the way Waten's recalcitrance exposes the institutional and aesthetic limits of certain contemporary critical dispositions (which I largely share).

These points lead on to a second way of formulating the nature of my interest in Waten's writing career: at each point this career will be discovered as *hybrid* in a peculiarly strong form of what might always be the case, as suggested above, when we consider the concept of the career in formation. Waten's politics are significant here, not in the way of "beliefs finding expression" but in terms of how a position is taken within the literary system, moreover, a position which might well function as virtually oxymoronic within that system ("avant-garde realist" or "communist novelist" for example). Elsewhere Waten's identification — as an Australian writer — with migrant, Jewish or non-English minority cultures produces its own forms of hybridity. In short, I am interested in Waten's writing and more than that in his career — in the positions he takes or "figures" to take — as sites upon which a number of disparate discursive categories, categories significant in Australian cultural history, meet and overlap: Australian, communist, migrant, Jewish, literary, political, modernist, realist.... Both in his texts and in the way in which his career is "operational," Waten can be seen to exploit the doubleness, even the duplicity, that is variously available to him as at once inside and outside the mainstream of contemporary cultural institutions. And yet this must also be understood as a set of constraints limiting both the narrative forms and the political effectivities of his career in writing.

The third issue motivating my interest in Waten has already been mentioned briefly: the predisposition, as it were, of his writing life towards analysis in terms of the career. Waten expressed a peculiarly unromantic sense of himself as an individual writer if not of the social function of literature: he was as likely to emphasise stamina and discipline as imagination or inspiration, he described himself as "a clumsy writer," and he defended the involvement of writers in literary organisations.[12] In his own career literary entrepreneurship and cultural activism preceded authorship and continued to accompany it. Thus the business of a writing life can readily be foregrounded in Waten's case. Writing was a matter of professional activity, indeed a way of conducting one's whole life, not merely a confrontation between the imagination and the blank page.

Finally, these points might be summed up by the suggestion that, at least at this point in time, Waten is a writer about whom our arguments can make a difference — a difference, that is, not only to ways of reading his texts but also to ways in which we read the literary archive, the cultural history. This is what I have attempted to do in the chapters that follow, each of which, singly and sometimes in pairs, can be read as an essay addressed not just to a Waten text but to a particular cluster of issues in Australian cultural history and its theory.

Chapter 1 introduces the category of the avant-garde, which has scarcely figured in Australian literary history, in order to read the earliest manifestation of Waten's writing career in the magazine *Strife*. The point is not to claim that *Strife* simply *is* avant-garde but rather to use the category, together with that of the proletarian, in order to analyse the modernity of its occasion and thereby to re-pose modernity as a problem for the cultural history of Australia. Chapter 2 pursues this argument in a range of other publications, including a fragment of Waten's unpublished novel *Hunger*, in order to ask what kinds of careers were possible in the distinctive cultural formations of the early thirties defined by an "unprecedented" conjunction of radical modernist aesthetics and radical revolutionary politics. Waten's own "first" career, and then its abandonment, are located in this milieu. The analysis is followed through to the end of the decade in order to trace the changes in notions of modernity, realism, political activism and literary careers effected by the emergence of new forms of cultural nationalism — changes which would decisively affect the ways in which it was possible for Waten to launch his second literary career.

Chapter 3 is focussed on the writing of *Alien Son* and, as well as continuing a concern with the historical meanings of modernity (and realism), it initiates a new set of questions for the thesis around the linked notions of the migrant, minority, ethnic or non-Anglo-Celtic writer. How did Waten re-create himself as a migrant or Australian Jewish writer before such categories were readily available within the field of Australian literature? How did he go about making a space for himself as a writer and in his writing?

Chapter 4 takes these issues into the more overtly political narrative of Waten's first published novel *The Unbending*. The novel is situated as an intervention into a particular cold war cultural politics. The theoretical force of the argument is, in part, to show that this historical background is never simply background but is anticipated and produced by the text itself (just as its readings anticipate the novel's controversial matter). My analysis foregrounds contemporary debates over art and propaganda, over the ethical nature of authorship and authorial responsibility, over literature, politics and nationality, the traces of which are still discernible in local cultural history. By drawing on Chambers' work I attempt to undo the literature/propaganda dyad and, by implication, to argue a more general case not in defence of realism but for ways of re-reading realism and in particular its modernity (in one sense against both modernist and post-modernist dismissals). This chapter also considers the conjunction of migrant/Jewish and labour/communist politics in Waten's literary discourse.

Chapters 5 and 6 together are focussed on Waten's most explicit attempt to write a political novel, indeed what should be considered seriously as an attempt at

"the great Australian communist novel" in *Time of Conflict*. The level of explicitness, and the more or less overt contradicitions it produces, are the subject of my extended focus on this particular text and on the "new" career that Waten pursues in this period (late fifties to early sixties) as what I have termed a communist man of letters. Chapter 5 analyses the major shifts in the nature and status of fiction writing, Australian literary institutions and communist cultural politics which make this new career possible, desirable (and impossible). It picks up the story from Chapter 2, following it through to the time of the novel's appearance (1961) and tracing the steps whereby, through political and literary journalism, Waten positions himself within the sphere of Australian literature despite (and because of) bearing the marks of his communist difference. Chapter 6 turns directly to *Time of Conflict* in order to examine the narrative means whereby it attempts to establish its own status as a novel, as historical, as national(ist) and as communist. The novel is read against Susan Suleiman's discussion of the *roman à thèse*, Katerina Clark's history of the Soviet novel and Franco Moretti's work on the *Bildungsroman* in order to articulate its belated rewriting of literary tradition within the frames of a "modern," Australian, communist novel.

In Chapter 7, I trace the local history of another genre which, we might say, Waten could scarcely avoid, the narrative of the author's visit to the Soviet Union. The Australian instances of this genre including Waten's *From Odessa to Odessa* have as yet scarcely been noticed, certainly not as a group of related writings. By defining the genre's antecedents in utopian fiction especially, and by reading its transformations against shifts in literary and political discourse (the place of literature in political discourse and vice versa) the analysis produces surprising repetitions and equally surprising shifts: the persistence of aesthetic utopian structures; the relative dissolution of politics in communist literary travellers' accounts; the increasing disaggregation of the utopian model, especially for communist literary travellers, as literature is mobilised in a new (1960s) set of debates about freedom and "humanity."

Chapter 8 returns to the question of migrant/ethnic writing, the categories through which Waten's respectable literary career is established (and which grants him the authority to write such a book as *From Odessa to Odessa*). The chapter first considers the more sophisticated recent arguments concerning ethnic minority or non-Anglo-Celtic writing in Australia, arguments which situate themselves in the same critical moment as post-structuralism and post-modernism. While granting the force of these arguments — their deconstruction of the categories of migrant, Australian and literature, their imperative to read for cultural difference — I attempt to identify a misrecognised aesthetics present in certain instances, one effect of which is to render realist texts unreadable or without political viability. Waten's critical writings about

non-Anglo-Celtic literature are examined in order to see how he positions himself in relation to issues of ethnicity, assimilation and cultural difference on these public occasions; then his later migrant/Jewish stories are read against the categories of "multicultural" theory, both to see what the theory can reveal about the silences in Waten's fiction and to see what silences in the theory Waten's fiction might in turn reveal.

The final chapter introduces a new framework, that of autobiographical writing and theory, and also returns to a number of themes raised throughout the thesis by way of conclusion. It returns deliberately to texts already examined, re-reading them through the frames of autobiographical interpretation, while also introducing some of Waten's writing not considered elsewhere. The categories of my reading for autobiography in this chapter are derived primarily from feminist revisions of autobiographical theory, plus readings of women's autobiography. This is first because I think the most interesting work on autobiography recently has come from these sources; second because I am interested in the hypothesis that cultural difference might function similarly to gender difference in certain circumstances, producing a comparable sense of identity or empowerment (or their lack) in relation to majority cultural institutions; third because I am also interested in the hypothesis that Waten's migrant/Jewish family history produces a different pattern of socialisation from that of the majority of his male literary counterparts, or at least that makes a different cluster of cultural positions available to him. The focus of my chapter will be on the textualisation and framing of autobiography across Waten's writings (not on the autobiography behind or before them). Finally, in the conclusion, I attempt to define the "excessive" sense in which the Waten (auto)biography is one of the contexts most powerfully produced by his writing and by the notion of the career to which it is tied. In more than one sense the career in writing and the autobiography produce each other and do so as further writing.

1. John Frow, *Marxism and Literary History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp.178-79.

2. See Dugald Williamson, *Authorship and Criticism* (Sydney: Local Consumption Publications, 1989), pp.3-19.

3. Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" trans. J.V. Harari, in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), pp.101-20; Williamson, *Authorship and Criticism*, pp.34-39.

4. Ross Chambers, *Story and Situation: Narrative Seduction and the Power of Fiction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); *Room for Maneuver: Reading (the) Oppositional (in) Narrative* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

5. Chambers, *Room for Maneuver*, p.43.

6. Chambers, *Room for Maneuver*, p.36.

7. Judah Waten, "My Two Literary Careers," *Southerly* 31, 2 (1971), pp.83-92.

8. Anne Freadman, "Anyone for Tennis?" in *The Place of Genre in Learning: Current Debates*, ed. Ian Reid (Deakin University: Centre for Studies in Literary Education, 1987), p.116.

9. The summaries and quotations in this paragraph are from Ian Reid, "Genre and Framing: The Case of Epitaphs," *Poetics* 17 (1988), pp.25-35; and "Reading as Framing, Writing as Reframing," paper presented to International Convention on Reading and Response, University of East Anglia, April 1989.

10. Tony Bennett, "Text, Readers, Reading Formations," *Literature and History* 9, 2 (Autumn 1983), p.216.

11. Frow, pp.129-30, 186-87, 220-35.

12. See his interview with Suzanne Lunney, Oral History Programme, National Library of Australia, 27 May 1975.

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Manifesting the Avant-Garde: The Moment of *Strife*

Facts are the new literature.
(Judah Waten, *Strife*, 1930)

During the time of the historical avant-garde movements, the attempt to do away with the distance between art and life still had all the pathos of historical progressiveness on its side.
(Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 1984)

In 1930 Judah Waten finished the manuscript of a novel which he called *Hunger* and published a magazine with the memorable title *Strife*. These two manifestations of his writing and editing are the first which can be understood in terms of a writing career. To make this point enables us to give some meaning incidentally to the notion of "juvenilia," writings which occur before and outside the project of a writing career.[1]

The mode of both *Strife* and *Hunger*, at least in the fragment of the novel that still exists, can be described through a network of terms as left-wing, bohemian, avant-garde, proletarian and realist. It is the relation between these terms in a specific local context that the present chapter aims to investigate, and in particular the uncommon conjunction of the proletarian and the avant-garde. But first, why focus on such "ephemera," a magazine which is only marginally "literary" and which, in any case, disappeared after only one issue, and a novel which was never published except for a single short fragment in a journal based in Paris and The Hague?[2] The answer is not simply that the writings are there, for the "there" is not at all self-evident, not simply given. We need to ask how the writing frames the conditions for its own reading and its own effectivity. How this question is framed will determine where we discover the writing to be. To foreground this early writing, to read it in the light of categories which are largely absent from Australian literary history, is, however slightly, to rewrite that history. In addition, as I will go on to argue, it affects how we think about the shifting possibilities of a "writing career" for Judah Waten.

Our first approach can be via the concept of the avant-garde. In what sense, if at all, can *Strife* or *Hunger* be understood as "avant-gardiste manifestations?"[3] In what sense was there a local (in this case, Melbourne) avant-garde in the late 1920s and early 1930s? What are the historical conditions for the existence of avant-gardes and what textual, generic and institutional forms do avant-gardiste manifestations take? If the avant-garde is at all an appropriate category, then to begin answering these

questions will also be to approach the other categories suggested above. What are the relations between avant-garde and bohemian? What were, what (then and there) could be, the relations between avant-garde and proletarian, avant-garde and realist, avant-garde and left-wing? In what way do any of these categories contain the shape of a literary career?

The other context for my discussion, as suggested above, is that of Australian literary history. *Strife* and *Hunger*, not surprisingly, have left scarcely a trace in this history; nor has the concept of the avant-garde. By contrast, the archives have been turned over by art history, which, unlike literary history, has been involved in the search for "modernist" and "radical" precursors.[4] It is only recently, with the appearance of a small number of books and articles which give a more elaborated sense of intellectual context and literary occasion, that the modernity of writers in the mid-1930s such as Eleanor Dark, Katharine Susannah Prichard, Alan Marshall and (even) Frank Dalby Davison has begun to be seen.[5]

The context of Australian literary history, then, will be present partly as a series of absences, of connections not articulated. There is no ready-made place for an avant-garde to appear. *Strife*, which will be the primary focus of the present chapter, is in many senses unprecedented locally; and the fragment that we have of *Hunger* suggests that the same could be said of Waten's novel as well. This quality of "unprecedented-ness," something that *Strife* itself claims and proclaims, is part of what can be explained by approaching the material through the concept of the avant-garde for it is one of the self-defining and self-situating tropes of avant-gardiste manifestations.

As Peter Bürger argues in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde* the avant-gardiste manifestation has both institutional and textual dimensions which cannot be understood separately. The concept "avant-garde" describes a genre (despite Bürger's point that the distinctive thing about the avant-garde is that it developed no distinctive style), a programme of action and, in the terminology of Raymond Williams, a distinctive kind of cultural formation.[6] It is in terms of these different dimensions that we can attempt to plot Waten's early writings and literary activities.

Strife has a wholly negative relationship to the contemporary institutions of Australian literature: they are ignored or criticised (abused, ridiculed, banished). Its "occasion," then, is to be found elsewhere, in a set of social relationships largely outside those of the established institutions of literature, in a political discourse on history that has little place for tradition, and in a distinctive self-situation in relation to overseas models of artistic and political practice. While *Strife* has remained largely

invisible to Australian literary history, that history, especially conceived of as a tradition, was in 1930 equally invisible to the magazine.

Charles Merewether has discovered a significance for *Strife* in accounting for the "formative years" of social realism (his argument is developed largely in relation to the visual arts). The magazine figures as an initiating moment in the history of "radical consciousness on the part of artists in Australia":

> The editorial proclaims the "coming dawn" of the international proletarian revolution, signifying an early radical consciousness on the part of artists in Australia, and indicating the part they might play in gaining a working-class revolt, subsequently leading to a classless society under socialism.[7]

The term "social realism" compresses and so conceals some of the operative distinctions we will want to develop, around the notion of proletarianism for example, and Merewether's focus on the visual arts also turns his story in a direction which is not readily portable to literature. We will need, then, to disrupt and relocate his narrative to some extent. Nevertheless, his stress on the *proletarian* nature of the project ("working-class" did not necessarily carry the same connotations), on its internationalism and socialism, and, not least, on the very act of "proclamation" which the magazine performs all have a significant bearing on the questions we have posed.

The sole issue of *Strife* was published in October 1930. Waten is listed as editor, Herbert McClintock as art editor. Others involved included Brian Fitzpatrick (most recently a journalist), Colin Wills (journalist, writing here as John Penn), Bernard Burns (journalist, also writing pseudonymously), Huffshi Hurwitz and James Flett (graphic artist).[8] As Merewether notes, the magazine was published in support of unemployed relief, and its appearance coincided with a march on Parliament House at which most of the copies of the paper were seized by police and Waten and McClintock were charged with vagrancy. Some of the contents of the magazine might have astounded unemployed and police equally. On the inside front cover is its manifesto:

> "STRIFE!"
>
> "STRIFE" is another force added to the world-wide movement to uproot the existing social and economic order of chaotic and tragic individualism!
>
> INSTITUTIONS that represent this must be destroyed, and, on the newly-turned soil of free human aspiration, a nobler edifice erected.
>
> ALL WHO DENY THIS MECHANISM of Progress are our enemies; all who await impatiently the new dawn our comrades! All who accept the permanence of the present regime, whether as protagonists or complacent nay-sayers and futilists, are our foes. All who believe in the permanence and validity of conscious and creative liberating energy, our blood brothers and friends!
>
> "STRIFE" is an organ of the new culture, destructive and constructive, a culture plowing deep into the roots of life, and, as such, contemns and rejects all manifestations in form and content of the social disorder we oppose.

> "STRIFE" affirms the validity of materialism in its widest sense. It affirms that, as the future belongs to the people, the new form and content must be a proletarian form and content!
>
> APPEAL
>
> On this broad basis we appeal to the people of Australia, both industrial and intellectual workers, whose revolt we embody, to further our aims. The columns of "STRIFE" are wide open to all who feel and can express forcefully and really this SPIRIT OF REVOLT.
>
> The sinews of war, in the form of cash contributions, small or great, are urgently needed. We are confident that the advance guard of the NEW AUSTRALIA will not be niggardly in providing this publication, its first and most vital medium of expression, with the means of carrying its CAUSE a step further on its march through the long and stressful hours that herald the COMING DAWN. The attack has already sounded! Forward.[9]

It is thus that *Strife* announces its own lack of precedents and makes its claims to be of the advance guard — in the name of proletarianism. Merewether has already noted the manifesto's similarities to Marinetti's 1909 futurist manifesto in its "spirit of unheeded declamatory revolt, [and] naive poetic anarchism."[10] While I would want to qualify the final phrase through a more specific historical sense of the meanings of proletarianism, Merewether's point suggests that the category "avant-garde" is a productive one for reading this material even if it leads us to a conclusion expressed in terms of the impossibility of an avant-garde in Melbourne in 1930. Moreover, although he is correct to differentiate these futurist and proletarianist manifestos on the grounds of their respective individualism and collectivism, there is more to be said about their similarities, about the overlaps between avant-garde and radical leftist. As a not altogether distant point of reference there are clear precedents in the example of the Russian futurist, LEF (Left Front of Arts) and constructivist groups of the 1920s.[11]

The issues to be pursued are these: the nature of the historical avant-garde and the conditions of its coming into being; the manifesto itself as a genre and its association with left-wing politics on the one hand, avant-garde (anti-)aesthetics on the other; the specific meanings of proletarianism via Soviet and American models, but in this place — Melbourne — and at this time; and the nature of the cultural formation in which Waten's writing and editing occurred.

According to Bürger, what is distinctive to the historical avant-garde is its critique of art as an institution. The avant-gardiste critique no longer takes place *within* the institution of art, say between different schools of tragedy or realism, but is a criticism of the institution itself:

> Dadaism, the most radical movement within the European avant-garde, no longer criticizes schools that preceded it, but criticizes art as an institution, and the course its development took in bourgeois society. The concept "art as an institution" as used here refers to the productive and distributive apparatus and also to the ideas about art that prevail at a given time and that determine the reception of works. The avant-

> garde turns against both — the distribution apparatus on which the work of art depends, and the status of art in bourgeois society as defined by the concept of autonomy. (22)

This argument provides a number of openings and a number of problems. The concept of art as an institution is close to what I have already been calling the institutional dimensions of writing. The negative relationship of *Strife* to contemporary literary institutions can now be hypothesised not simply as a sign of marginality or insignificance but as institutional critique: indeed, marginality *as* institutional critique. At the same time, the terms of Bürger's argument, focussing as they do on a specifically European and early-twentieth century paradigm, do not obviously translate to the local conditions of *Strife*. In particular, it is not obvious what relationship there might be between dadaism and the proletarian realism that *Strife* announces and *Hunger* seems to practice. Secondly, it is not clear that the status of art — in the prevailing *literary* discourse in Australia — was as clearly articulated in terms of the concept of autonomy as Bürger argues for his European examples.

His argument turns on a dialectical model: it is only after art, in the forms of nineteenth century aestheticism, "has altogether detached itself from the praxis of life" (17) that the avant-garde critique can develop: "In bourgeois society, it is only with aestheticism that the full unfolding of the phenomenon of art became a fact, and it is to aestheticism that the historical avant-garde movements respond" (22). The defining characteristic of the avant-garde therefore is its attack on the concept of art as autonomous, or, in positive terms, its desire to "reintegrate art into the praxis of life" (22). This project has a transformative not a decorative function. Avant-gardiste manifestos are full of phrases and slogans which express or indeed "manifest" the desire to thus re-integrate art and transform everyday life. To stay with examples drawn from the Russian avant-garde we can cite Malevich, "Integrate Suprematism into Life"; or Mayakovsky, "Let us make the squares our palettes, the streets our brushes!" (It is in this light also that something like the Italian Giacomo Balla's *Futurist Manifesto of Men's Clothing* can be understood as typical rather than eccentric; it might be thought alongside constructivist functional designs for clothing.)[12] Further, to anticipate our argument about the relations between avant-gardism and proletarianism we can note, first, that Mayakovsky's slogan was related to agit-prop art such as street posters; second, that there are parallels between this kind of avant-gardiste project and Mike Gold's American reading of proletarianism, inspired by the way "the Kremlin had transmuted `vouchers, daybooks and index cards' into poetry."[13]

At the level of the work, the avant-gardiste attack on art's autonomy is directed at the *organic* work of art, an attack carried through via the principle of what Bürger

calls "montage." He discusses dadaist works such as Duchamp's ready-mades which transgress the very category of the "work" and, important for our purposes, also includes explicitly political material such as John Heartfield's photomontages ("They are not primarily aesthetic objects, but images for reading," 75). There is some slippage in Bürger's argument between the categories of aestheticism and those of realism as he shifts from the level of the autonomous institution to that of the organic work. The concept of realism is scarcely present in his argument which thus rests on an unspoken liaison between the aesthetic practices of, say, late-nineteenth century painting and poetry and the organicist ambitions of realist fiction in the same period. But the distinction between institution and work, central to his thesis, enables Bürger to argue that the organicist model guaranteed a work's institutional status as autonomous regardless of its actual political content or "reflectionist" programme. Or argued in the other direction, "the relative dissociation of the work of art from the praxis of life in bourgeois society ... becomes transformed into the (erroneous) idea that the work of art is totally independent of society."[14] The "slippage" in Bürger's argument indeed describes a slippage within realist discourse itself between immanence and autonomy, the very slippage which socialist realism attempts to transcend by force.

Further, Bürger's generous categories provide a way of entering the Australian context into his historical scenario. In Australia, I would argue, aestheticism as a distinct local movement or theory had not been articulated in literary discourse to any significant extent. Cultural institutions were moralistic before they were aestheticist. Nevertheless, the "higher" the culture the more committed it was to art's autonomy. *Vision* (1923-24) had already come and gone, leaving its traces on Hugh McCrae, Kenneth Slessor, R.D. Fitzgerald, and the *Bulletin* whose literary pages were in the hands of the genteel David McKee Wright.[15] Most probably the Lindsay's magazine, at least via the person of Norman Lindsay himself, would still have had a reputation in 1930 and it is an interesting precursor to *Strife* for all their obvious differences: first as a marked response to the First World War, second as a marked response to modernity. As McQueen has argued:

> While [*Vision*] rejected Modernism, it was up-to-date in a way that almost no other local publication had managed. Its contributors scoured the cultural presses of the world in search of decadence to attack.[16]

The language of decadence and rottenness to describe the modern world is also *Strife*'s, and it is not altogether surprising to find Jack Lindsay not long after — as he passes P.R. Stephensen heading in the other direction along the same trajectory from Marx to Nietzsche — willing to adapt his father's views to the point of claiming that "the Russian revolution displays a huge and happy uprush of the human spirit."[17] But

of course *Vision* and (Norman) Lindsay-ism could have nothing to do with *Strife*'s proletarianism (and even Jack Lindsay's Marxism would have to wait for a later stage in left-wing aesthetics). More interesting for present purposes, despite its bohemian aestheticism the magazine had nothing of *Strife*'s *futurism* or its sense of contemporaniety. In this sense, as I will argue later, it cannot be considered avant-garde.

The few traces of modernism that did find a local home up to 1930 were in McQueen's terms "superficial," imitations of modernist mannerisms "in response to no problem — social, scientific or artistic — that could not find some answer in traditional means."[18] We might imagine a cultural economy defined by the daily newspapers, the *Bulletin*, the universities and gallery schools, *Art in Australia* (1916-42) and the *Home* (1920-42), the commercial theatres — and for those with eyes to see by Katharine Susannah Prichard and the Palmers (for example). *Strife* could not see this far, although the local "art theatre movement" does come into its view if only to be dismissed as the "hobby of a coterie of intellectuals" and "as completely divorced from the masses as the commercial theatre."[19]

Strife faced a militant conservatism and a tenuous modernism but not a militant or high aestheticism: its targets were thus more likely to be middle-brow gentility and bourgeois or commercial complicity rather than art for art's sake, whether in the academies, the press, the theatres, or magazine and book publication. What is significant is that *Strife*'s attack is nevertheless directed precisely at the claims to autonomy or the actual dissociation of these art discourses from any *creative* praxis of life, over-riding their apparent differences in style or content. Autonomy is banished to the past (and at the speed with which such writing "manifests" itself the present is always already the past). The empty autonomy of art, in other words, is discovered locally in the very discourse of the middle-brow "realist" novel and the expressive lyric, with their "sickly plots ... ecstasies ... individual heroisms."[20] *Strife* is also a "post-Depression" cultural production (in the sense of after the first moment of the "crash"), and to foreshadow in part the analysis that follows we might argue that the avant-garde moment in a post-colonial situation such as Australia's depended upon this socio-political catalyst and the sense of crisis, of internationalism and simultaneous modernity which it could produce; even more clearly than elsewhere, the avant-garde could not evolve from the institutions of art itself.

The opposition between the organic work and montage will be more fully discussed a little later, but it is important to note that for Bürger the avant-gardiste critique is not a call for a new socially-significant content, but for a new principle of "construction" which problematises the very relations between form and meaning. It is

interesting in this respect that if we do find in *Strife* something approaching an avant-garde "manifestation," it should take the montage form of a magazine before it takes the form of a work. Any unity which can be posited for the diverse materials collected in the magazine — articles, notices, appeals, graphics, verse — is at best strategic and occasional. It is scarcely decorative or decorous in the way of an "art" magazine. On the other hand, typographically the magazine is relatively orthodox compared to, say, Wyndham Lewis's *Blast*, and its linocuts and drawings are figurative even when dramatically stylised. The cover, by McClintock, is striking and dynamic in design, modernist, but in a figurative mode which might be called "proletarian monumental." The verse is conventional in form but anti-poetic in its subject-matter, satirising religious merchandise or efficiency experts for example. It is appropriately careless and indecorous about its form (it serves, but has no necessity). These stylistic points reflect the range of attitudes the magazine assembles unevenly under the general sign of revolt and provocation ("strife"): bohemian, libertarian, communist — and avant-gardiste. Bürger's remark, that for the avant-garde the "act of provocation itself takes the place of the work," describes the magazine accurately although its avant-gardism will need to be very locally defined.[21]

Rather than avant-garde, the dominant mode of *Strife* might best be described as "radical bohemian" (or even "proletarian bohemian"), with the tension between the implied politics of the adjective and the implied life-style of the noun very much to the point. This description also accords with Waten's own later accounts of the group for which the magazine stands, in Raymond Williams' terms, as a "collective public manifestation."[22] The relative absence of the high aesthetic in Australia itself suggests that the magazine would fall short of avant-gardism, so that its revolt can still take aesthetic forms. But my argument is that at certain points, and significantly those where (modern revolutionary) art and (modern revolutionary) communism are co-present and equally foregrounded, *Strife* does participate in the historical moment of the avant-garde.

These points require further elaboration and in the process of doing so we can begin to "read off" *Strife* and Waten's other early work against Bürger's categories. What is at least potentially avant-gardiste about *Strife* is, first, that its critique throughout is directed at the level of the institution (of literature, cinema, journalism, the theatre) — directed at the "productive and distributive apparatus ... and the ideas about art" (22) rather than the content of individual works or the practices of particular schools. As already suggested, this sets it apart from an earlier "bohemian" journal such as *Vision* which criticises art but in the name of Art. The second sentence of *Strife*'s opening manifesto makes this leap to the level of the institution, for I think we

are able to exploit the overlap of its signifiers with those of Bürger: "INSTITUTIONS that represent this [the existing order, individualism] must be destroyed, and, on the newly-turned soil of free human aspiration, a nobler edifice erected." It is also present in what could seem to be a more orthodox piece of criticism:

> Alongside the commercial theatre of the big trusts (dead so far as art is concerned) there exist in Melbourne and Sydney groups of intellectuals who are attempting to revive the drama by means of repertory theatres.... [T]his art theatre movement, however pure its aims may have been, has, in practice, remained as completely divorced from the masses as the commercial theatre. It has usually become the hobby of a coterie of intellectuals; and, for want of contact with social life, such new drama as it produces has tended to become increasingly introvert, obsessed with individual sex problems ... and its ideology increasingly mystical, both in form and content.... [These groups] do nothing more daring than produce works of some of the more advanced of bourgeois dramatists, Shaw and Galsworthy.... Or they produce home-made rubbish, like the "Touch of Silk," by Betty Davies, whose claim to literary distinction rests on the broad acres of her family. They are often dominated by middle-aged spinsters, who censor the appearance of anything shocking to morality.[23]

The critique at each stage moves beyond particular manifestations of the theatre to the broader productive and distributive apparatus, here in the name of "new forms" in a "new mass theatre of the workers" (if this seems to stop short of an avant-garde project it might be because questions of form are not considered; Piscator's theatre, though, is offered as one model). Indeed the critique of culture takes place on exactly the same level as a later critique of the institution of prostitution.[24] It is typical of the critique and provocation in *Strife*, that when its manifesto declares that "the new form and content must be a proletarian form and content," the range of reference is ambiguous — is it literature, art, or every institution of social and political life that must be so transformed?

Moreover, and as a second avant-gardiste characteristic, it is only on the grounds of such an institutional critique that the magazine is able to announce its radical break with the past and thus produce its polarisation of past and future, old and new, bourgeois and proletarian. The projection of "free human aspiration" and, later, "conscious and creative liberating energy," is scarcely avant-garde in itself. What is avant-garde is the manifesto's projection of these categories, categories which are or have become essentially aesthetic, back into the praxis of life. In Bürger's terms:

> art was not to be simply destroyed, but transferred to the praxis of life where it would be preserved, albeit in changed form ... The praxis of life to which Aestheticism refers and which it negates is the means-ends rationality of the bourgeois everyday. Now, it is not the aim of the avant-gardistes to integrate art into *this* praxis. On the contrary, they assent to the aestheticists' rejection of the world and its means-ends rationality. What distinguishes them from the latter is the attempt to organize a new life praxis from a basis in art.[25]

Thus *Strife* proclaims itself "an organ of the new culture, *destructive and constructive*" (my emphasis). On one level the aesthetic is revolutionised "simply" as a reflection of social revolution. On another level, though, the social revolution itself is to be understood as the liberation or forcing of the aesthetic into the praxis of everyday life (here, as a "proletarian form and content"). The avant-garde situating of the project is one mark of the difference between proletarianism in its fullest contemporary sense and more general calls for a working-class, popular or political art.

As David Bennett has argued, in one direction, threaded back through idealist notions of art and community, this project could ultimately be aligned with fascism's "aestheticisation of politics."[26] (It will be useful for our later arguments to note that this phrase can also describe the Stalinist development of socialist realism which, as a literary discourse and a bureaucratic procedure, involves a similar organicist radical utopianism.) For *Strife* — as for the constructivists and one wing of the surrealist movement — the project of forcing the aesthetic into the praxis of everyday life was of course generated by an explicit communist, revolutionary "politicisation of aesthetics." Such an alliance however could signal both the moment of the avant-garde and its passing. In the proletarianism of *Strife* as well as of its American and Soviet precursors we find just this ambiguity, above all in their radical anti-formalism.

Bürger's point concerning the avant-gardiste attempt to reintegrate art into everyday life thus functions as an axis around which the arguments and declarations of *Strife* revolve; or, seen in another way, it acts to define the limits of *Strife*'s avant-gardism. Similarities between the avant-gardiste and the proletarianist projects exist at the level of the artwork, in terms of principles of composition or construction; and at the institutional level, in terms of the critique offered and the forms in which it is expressed (the manifesto, the magazine, the act of provocation, the writers' or artists' group). But there are also fundamental differences in the ways that material or "content" is conceived. If we think of these generic frames in terms of "family resemblances" rather than as essential categories, then it is here at the level of the "material" that we find near-relatives turning into deadly rivals (and it might well be the question of the inheritance that is at stake). The early history of Soviet art, spectacularly, suggests just such a scenario in the relations between futurist, constructivist and prolet-cultist: art as construction or manufacture meets art as "fact" or "direct action" in a complex pattern of overlaps and oppositions.[27]

The metaphors through which *Strife* declares itself "an organ of the new culture" illustrate some of the ambiguities, not least within proletarianism itself. On the one hand, the *Strife* manifesto sees historical progress as a mechanism — a metaphor which guarantees the dissolution of the autonomous institution of art, as art

becomes a (mere) function of the mechanism of history. The metaphor is also anti-organic and anti-individualist, and is thus a key sign of the avant-garde. Both avant-garde and proletarian projects characteristically centre on some kind of a celebration of the "destructive and constructive" power of the machine, of technology. The machine metaphor is generated by the very project of a radical break with the past, with all past traditions and institutions, and it recurs in the futurists' dominant symbols, in the dadaist notion of automatic writing, in constructivist "factography," in the avant-gardiste fascination with cinema and photography and with reading and writing machines. What other metaphor would do against the organic work, against art's autonomous status and bourgeois individualism? Writing, in one sense, is itself to become machine-like, which is to be understood as a *positive* image of "conscious and creative liberating energy" — the writer as type-writer, camera-eye, engineer (if not yet Zhdanov's "engineer of human souls"). Katerina Clark has shown how the image of the machine was a dominant cultural symbol in Soviet society between 1928 and 1931, the years of the first Five-Year Plan, a relevant reference for *Strife* as I will show. It functioned as an image of progress, of modernisation, of reason *and* a "release of energy."[28] We do not need to propose a direct influence although the USSR, above all in its contemporaneity, is foregrounded in all Waten's signed contributions to *Strife*.

Here is the writer as machine, with all the impersonality of a radio, a diagram or a headline, but also with their modernity, the dynamism of reason and "creative liberating energy" simultaneously:

> The proletarian writer will tell us why wars are made. They (sic) will tell us about the international competition for oil, coal, steel, markets! He will state facts. He will condemn; he will annihilate.[29]

At the same time, the "destructive and constructive" culture which is projected is seen as "a culture plowing deep into the roots of life." Are we returned to that most organicist of all images of culture, a culture "rooted in the soil" (as earlier and later generations of Australian culture critics would want to put it)? Not quite, although those connotations will not disappear altogether and are reinforced elsewhere in "vital" images of blood and sinews. The image is a rather muddled one but it is interesting that, "creatively" if not "consciously," culture seems to be the plough rather than the roots. The image of a *radical* cutting and over-turning (a turning over of the roots) seems a rather nice one for the purpose after all.

The more critical issue is discovered in Waten's pronouncement, as above, that the proletarian writer will "state facts." In what sense is this radical proletarian "literalism" also avant-gardiste? In what sense is it part of a critique of art as autonomy

and thereby, in Bürger's terms, an attempt to return art to the praxis of everyday life? We can turn to Waten's specific project for literature:

> LITERATURE
>
> Facts are the new literature. The proletarian writers will break with the sickly plots, tremulous love chirpings, ecstasies, sex triangles, and individual heroisms of the writers of the past. He (sic) will work with facts. He will not worry too much about form; he will transcend the antiquated forms of the past, to create a new form based on facts.
>
> Utility and social theory will create a beauty of form in the proletarian masterpieces of the future. In Soviet Russia this is already true. The works of the American proletarian writers, Gold, Dos Passos, Charles Yale Harrison, Paul Peters, and others herald the growth of the new revolutionary literature.
>
> "STRIFE" is unique. We will confound the fainthearts and sceptics. We believe that the present conditions of our life can produce men who can give us masterpieces. Masterpieces are made from periods of great social activity.
>
> The capitalist world has to be changed. We will contribute to the change.
>
> "STRIFE" announces the birth of a new full-blooded fighting literature. To Hell with futility, hypocrisy, and sex obsession. Hey, there! Make way for the voice of the despised.[30]

Before answering our questions directly, we can do so indirectly by commenting on the "manifesto-ish" form that Waten's writing tends to assume throughout *Strife*. As Jochen Schulte-Sasse notes, it "is no accident that the active, even aggressive artistic manifesto ... became the preferred medium of expression for the avant-garde artist of the twentieth century."[31] K.K. Ruthven, following an argument back from Pound and Eliot to Wordsworth, has argued that one mark of the modern work is that it appears together with discourse about the work, with an in-built or adjacent manifesto to announce its newness, its break with past or present.[32] For our examples, the point can be put even more strongly: the manifesto itself becomes a form of the avant-garde work or *manifestation*. As its name implies, the act of "declaring" functions not simply as exposition but is performative. Hence the characteristic address to an audience with which the manifesto signs off or rather sends itself out into the world: "Forward" or "Hey, there! Make way for the voice of the despised." Further, the moment that marks the shift from narrative or exposition into manifesto throughout the articles in *Strife* and generally for the form is the moment at which the text situates itself on the critical point between the death of the old world — "torn asunder by the crisis of over-production ... driven on and on ... to its final crash" — and the birth of the new, of the *future*.[33]

What is declared in a "modernist" manifesto is a radical break with the past. It is in this light that Marshall Berman has described the *Communist Manifesto* as "the archetype of a century of modernist manifestos and movements."[34] This original radical polarisation of bourgeois and proletarian is also, for Berman, one of the great documents of modernism; above all because

> Marx is not only describing but evoking and enacting the desperate pace and frantic rhythm that capitalism imparts to every facet of modern life. He makes us feel that we are part of the action, drawn into the stream, hurtled along, out of control, at once dazzled and menaced by the onward rush.[35]

Perhaps the rhythm is not quite the same, perhaps the polarisations do not reach the level of paradox which Berman finds in Marx. But the comparison does help to suggest the kind of "release of energy," the proximity of destruction and creation, the desperate pace of past into future, that the writing in *Strife* can still evoke. It is thus that the choice of the manifesto form or of its typical gestures is significant in the fullest sense: the style itself comes to signify.

This is the case, I think, with Waten's radical dissolution of the institution of literature quoted above. The list of conventions which he conjures, from "sickly plots" to "individual heroisms," functions at the level of the institution rather than at the level of the contents of individual works, as a list of epitomes.[36] His prescription for literature is avant-gardiste, then, in so far as the manifesto form itself summons and embraces a moment of crisis in which it sides unreservedly with modernity. The "mechanical" emphasis on facts evokes a radical dissolution of art's autonomy and the artwork's organicism; and as utility becomes another word for beauty, both utility and beauty are changed utterly.

At the same time, Waten seems still to subscribe to the category of the masterpiece, the very antithesis of the avant-garde work. Perhaps there is a hint *avant la lettre* of the fatal attraction of socialist realism (the term is not recorded even in the Soviet Union before 1932). But there is little to suggest that the "proletarian masterpieces of the future" will look much like the (bourgeois) masterpieces of the past. They are not, in any case, seen to be the creations of individual genius but the products of "periods of great social activity" (and the cliché has a certain force in this context). Nevertheless, we are here up against the limits and the reversals of avant-gardism in *Strife*, and in the proletarian project generally.

What is distinctive about the proletarianism of the period is the combination of the factual and the heroic, another form of the combination of reason and the release of energy that defined revolution. It is a combination that in one direction encourages the sense of art as construction (a radical new form, an assemblage or montage of facts), while in another it encourages a kind of super-reflectionism (beyond any form at all, life larger-than-life, "mass creative effort"). The heroic here is impersonal and collective and relentlessly modernising. Its energy is produced by a dialectic between the banal and the revolutionary or between "utility and social theory" (so it is announced with "revolutionary elan" that the Soviet workers now have theatres in their factories...). With the promise of a new form and content, proletarianism moves

from the dissoluton of art towards forms of monumentality, a quality expressed in the still-modernist photographic work characteristic of the magazine *USSR in Construction.*[37] Hence the proletarian masterpiece: radically anti-formalist and radically materialist but offering a new "beauty of form" both before and beyond art.

John Frow's discussion of intertextualty and the relations between text and literary system provides a way of theorising these divergent or paradoxical tendencies. Intertextuality here is understood to refer, not simply to textually embedded narrative models or situations, but to the institutional relations which govern the functions of text, genre, author and reader within the literary system (and thus within the "`system of systems' ... their interdiscursive relation to other signifying formations and to the institutions and practices in which these are articulated").[38] The emphasis is systemic and relational: an emphasis not merely on the conditions of textuality but "the way the text constructs itself in and as a specific *relation* to these conditions"; not merely on the representation of "realities embedded in the knowledge conditions ... of particular genres of discourse" but of "realities which are constructed in the relations between genres." For our immediate purposes the point is that this model of textuality and literary history shows that there "can be no total break with literary norms, since deautomatization (sic) can occur only as a relation and an ongoing textual process."[39] *Strife* is addressing itself to a specific organisation of the *literary system* (both words deserve emphasis). In one sense this is all it can do in its relation to the literary; but in another sense, in its relation to the system, we might say that it cannot do less than this "all."

At the simplest level, the demand for a new literature — and for a new relationship between literature and social life — takes the form of a call to "open the windows [and] let the clean sunlight of truth come in" or to "create new forms adapted to the workers' struggle."[40] But these modest calls for spring-cleaning or renovation are always ready to turn into a far more radical demolition job conducted, of course, under the authority of future construction projects of an utterly unprecedented kind. This is more likely to be the case, as it is in Waten's writing, when the projection of the new literature is informed by a more politically- and (here the two words are inseparable) theoretically-conscious proletarianism — that is, where we get more than just a demand for a new political content in the artwork.

So what would a proletarian masterpiece look like? There is some suggestion of the forms such writing might take in the list of American proletarian writers Waten provides — writers of reportage, sketches, montage novels (and of course manifestos). There is a rather more startling suggestion elsewhere in Waten's own "Notes of the Month," this time under the heading of another sort of proletarian construction:

SOVIET RUSSIA

A fascinating book has been compiled by the State Economic Planning Commission, and adopted by the Soviet Government. Published in England ... under the title of "The Soviet Union Looks Ahead: The Five-Year Plan for Economic Construction."

Every line in this magnificent book breathes of the mass enthusiasm for socialist construction; of mass creative effort.

Unlike most books of figures and tables, it is quite as exciting to read as is it important. It is of supreme importance, because it represents the concrete working programme of a socialist-planned economy, without the aid of capitalists. It is exciting because it represents a picture that forms a pattern to the eye, because it is conceived as a whole and a picture of a moving situation, a process of creation and growth.

Each successive year brings tremendous increases in the economic development.... It has become increasingly clear that, as industrialisation proceeds ... the economics of socialism would sustain the tempo of development. Moreover, the electrification schemes, the Turkestan-Siberian railway is bearing fruit, and creating new facilities of production which did not exist before.

The tremendous growth of socialist economy in Russia has not only confounded the sceptics, but has sounded the death knell of capitalist society. The U.S.S.R. is the beacon light of the Communist world revolution.[41]

What else is being described here but a new literature of facts? What else but the *aesthetic* experience of this new material (as "conscious and creative liberating energy")? Utility and social theory create a new beauty of form which trangresses and so transfers the institutional categories of art, fragmenting its autonomy and thereby returning the aesthetic to the praxis of everyday social and political life. The objection that the Five-Year Plan is not a work of art misses the point (or hits it precisely). The alliance of the artwork, understood as construction, with the work of "socialist construction" was a deliberate and aesthetically-informed "offensive" move; and, posed against the bourgeois institutionalisation of art, as radical as it could be. Again there are precursors. It was the avant-garde LEF group in the Soviet Union who, in the late 1920s, argued for "a `literature of fact' encompassing sketches, newspaper material, diaries and memoirs, biographies of people and of `things,' autobiographies, travelogues, ethnographic literature, historical records, and various kinds of reports."[42] Even more striking, the constructivists had conceived of their own *State Plan of Literature*, likening literature to the economic state plan, to "the growing of the state plan into art and imaginative literature."[43] And in the early 1930s, under the dominant influence of RAPP (Russian Association of Proletarian Writers), proletarian literature was directly linked to the Five-Year Plan.[44]

All of which is to say that it is not mere fancy to read Waten's account of the Five-Year Plan report as "aesthetic" or even to hypothesise it as an avant-gardiste manifestation. No doubt such hypotheses or forced readings risk absurdity but they are worth entertaining seriously because they reveal what might indeed be paradoxical, the "socialist"/"realist" *and* avant-garde nature of Waten's writings. They can suggest why a prescription for literature that prefigures socialist realism also echoes avant-

gardiste manifestos. If history is written by the victors, then the kind of avant-gardism that can be absorbed most readily into a modernist aesthetic tradition has won the day; but I would want to make the case also for the avant-gardism, however ephemeral, of a more politicised art or anti-art discourse that has had quite other historical progeny.

The same overlaps and oppositions can be observed at the level of the work. For Bürger, the avant-garde "work" is opposed to the organic work on the grounds of fundamentally different practices of composition which he discusses in terms of the artwork's production, purpose or function, and reception. In the organic work the individual parts are immanent with the meaning of the whole; all elements are necessary and integral to a totality. The materials themselves carry meaning which the artist "respects" and treats as a whole, even as they are made over into art. The work therefore stands in an homologous relation to reality which it reveals or imitates. The avant-gardiste, by contrast, "tears [the material] out of the life totality, isolates it, and turns it into a fragment" (70). Meaning is posited, rather than revealed, in the clearly *constructed* and contingent nature of the work as montage. "Reality fragments" are inserted or obtrude, "left unchanged by the artist" (but estranged from their "natural" context).[45] The avant-garde work, then, stands in a contingent relation to and "is continuous with a reality whose conflictual, non-synthetic materials (fragments of discourse, images, objects) it borrows or *uses* rather than imitates or re-presents."[46] To sum up, in Bürger's words:

> The organic work intends the impression of wholeness. To the extent its individual elements have significance only as they relate to the whole, they always point to the work as a whole as they are perceived individually. In the avant-gardiste work, on the other hand, the individual elements have a much higher degree of autonomy and can therefore also be read and interpreted individually or in groups without its being necessary to grasp the work as a whole. (72)

As I will go on to argue, this description of the avant-garde work applies just as well to the proletarian work — which, rather than re-entering the debates of the 1930s, we can define here as writing which in one way or another, intertextually or intratextually, posits "proletarianism" as a frame for its intelligibility and effectivity. The characteristic forms of proletarian writing are those which fall between or fall just short of literary genres: reportage, the sketch, the montage novel, the mass recitation, the statement, appeal or manifesto (in the visual arts: the cartoon, the poster, the photograph). They bear fragments of "undigested" matter — newspaper headlines, political slogans, facts and figures — or as fragmentary sketches pose as such matter themselves.[47] Above all, this work falls short of or violates organic form although it might claim a new and more dynamic kind of "wholeness," one deferred or dispersed rather than self-contained because of the way it is continuous with reality.

And perhaps these terms can even be extended to the book of the Five-Year Plan, for is not this new literature of facts, of "figures and tables," itself a non-organic assemblage or collage of "reality fragments" isolated from their life context whose unity must be posited elsewhere. Further, no less than in a text like Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer*, the aesthetic experience manifested by Waten's description of the book is the experience of modernity, here, of "mass creative effort," of speed and scale. It is thus in terms of "tempo" and movement that the facts are posited as a totality, and an aesthetic experience is discovered in the transformed praxis of everyday social and political life. Its wholeness is perhaps that of the machine rather than the organism.

On the other hand, of course, the "facts" are nothing if not bearers of meaning, and their meaning is grasped in an image that could stand as the very definition of the organically-conceived realist novel: "it represents a picture that forms a pattern to the eye, because it is conceived as a whole." For Waten, as for the avant-gardiste, the material is conceived radically as *material* but never merely as an "empty sign" (for Bürger, the precondition of the avant-garde montage-work). As noted earlier, avant-gardiste attacks on the autonomy of the art institution do not amount to a demand "that the contents of works of art should be socially significant" (49). What we find in *Strife*, by contrast, is a *content-driven* transgression and transference of the realm of the aesthetic. From this perspective we seem to have an absolute opposition between the avant-garde work which proclaims its own mediation, its own artifice, and the "proletarian" work which claims access to the truth of unmediated content — between the radical formalism of the avant-garde and the radical anti-formalism of the proletarian.

This is indeed the case. But form and content will not stay so neatly apart once we start to note that the "opposed" avant-garde and proletarian/communist attitudes to the material lead to similar practices of composition and programmes of action. Indeed it is at the extremes of formalism and anti-formalism that the positions and practices overlap, in their mutual assaults, through the art work and the discourse that surrounds it, on the institution of art. In the documentary/polemical works of proletarian realism, as in the montage works of the avant-garde, art is replaced by construction (in the name of a new art practice *and* a new social practice). In so far as the oppositions refuse to stay neatly polarised, the provocation towards the autonomy of art retains its charge. *Strife* provides an exemplary case to illustrate two points argued incidentally in Frow's *Marxism and Literary History*: first, that modernism "is not so much opposed to a realist aesthetic as it is the culmination of the internal contradictions of

realism"; second, "that there is no political art (indeed, to put it brutally, no politics) which cannot be read as style."[48]

Overall *Strife* is an uneven mix of attitudes and positions. Partly a "bohemian" refusal of middle-brow taste and bourgeois commercialisation, partly a call for a new sort of political content in art; but also, when tied to a revolutionary sense of modernity (a complete break with the past, with art's autonomy, with individuality), a set of attitudes that participate in the historical moment of the avant-garde. Thus the assault on literature in *Strife* — and on the cinema, the theatre, the press — goes in two directions at once, aimed at its uses (propaganda and profit for the ruling classes) and at its uselessness (sentimentality and mysticism). These are complementary: where the latter assaults (in order to redirect) the "sensuousness" of the organic work, the former assaults (in order to change) the "means-ends rationality" of bourgeois society. Although lacking the alogism characteristic of the avant-garde, the magazine's extreme anti-formalism — and Waten is to be found at its extremes — evokes its own "revolution of the word."

By reading *Strife* in terms of the category of the avant-garde we are able to see how certain demands for realism in this period occurred under the sign of modernity. The fact that the term "realism" is not used in the magazine is symptomatic of how *Strife* positions itself in relation to "literature." We can also see that demands for a new realism, for proletarian or mass art, involved more than just a call for new content. There is such a call but it tends to over-reach itself and to become involved in the revolution of form, on the one hand, and of the institutional status of art on the other. By comparison, later activities such as the Australasian Book Society are involved more in a broadening of the established institutions.

These points in turn provide us with a way of reading texts such as the fragment which has survived of Waten's novel *Hunger*, prose sketches in a magazine such as *Masses*, or Alan Marshall's 1930s work which, together with their institutional supports in magazines and movements, will be the focus of the following chapter. To conclude the present discussion, Bürger's arguments about the historical conditions of the avant-garde suggest why such a position could be held only partially and temporarily at this time and in this place, but also how and why such a position could be held at all. The modernity that *Strife* manifests when read against the categories of Bürger's thesis argues that there is no simple continuity of a realist tradition in Australian literature from the late-nineteenth century into the twentieth.

1. For example, the *University High School Record* of Christmas 1926 prints an article on "Use and Beauty" by "J.W.," pp.23-24.
2. *Strife* is dated October 13, 1930. The novel *Hunger* was never published in full. An excerpt was published in *Front* 4 (June 1931), pp.289-91. An excerpt from this excerpt is reprinted in Waten's last published novel, *Scenes of Revolutionary Life*, (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1982), pp.74-75.
3. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Manchester: Manchester University Press; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p.50. Further references will appear in the text.
4. See Charles Merewether "Social Realism: The Formative Years," *Arena* 46 (1977), pp.65-80; Richard Haese, *Rebels and Precursors: The Revolutionary Years of Australian Art* (London: Allen Lane, 1981); Humphrey McQueen, *The Black Swan of Trespass: The Emergence of Modernist Painting in Australia to 1944* (Sydney: Alternative Publishing Co-Operative, 1979).
5. See David Carter, "Documenting and Criticising Society," in *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia*, ed. Laurie Hergenhan (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1988), pp.370-89; Drusilla Modjeska, *Exiles at Home: Australian Women Writers 1925-1945* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1981) and "Dialogue with Dark," *Age Monthly Review* 5, 11 (April 1986), pp.3-6.
6. Raymond Williams, *Culture* (Glasgow: Fontana, 1981), pp.63-71.
7. Merewether, "Social Realism," p.66.
8. See Don Watson, *Brian Fitzpatrick: A Radical Life* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1979), pp.30-35; Colin Wills, *Australian Passport* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1953), pp.96-97. For an affectionate account of Hurwitz see Audrey Blake, *A Proletarian Life* (Malmsbury, Vic.: Kibble Books, 1984), pp.15-20.
9. *Strife*, inside front cover. This editorial manifesto is signed "The Board of Editors." I would argue that we can take Waten, listed as the magazine's editor, to be its principal author. The style and argument are close to his signed column later in the magazine.
10. Merewether, "Social Realism," p.67.
11. See, for example, David Elliot, *New Worlds: Russian Art and Society 1900-1937* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1986), pp.20-21 & 84-117; Herman Ermolaev, *Soviet Literary Theories 1917-1934* (New York: Octagon, 1977), pp.73-77.
12. Malevich and Mayakovsky quoted in Elliot, pp.15 & 16. Balla's manifesto is in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. with an Introduction by Umbro Apollonio (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), pp.132-34.
13. The phrase containing Mike Gold's words is from Daniel Aaron, *Writers on the Left* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.207.
14. See Bürger, p.46: "the *autonomy of art* is a category of bourgeois society. It permits the description of art's detachment from the context of practical life as a historical development — that among the members of those classes which, at least at times, are free from the pressures of the need for survival, a sensuousness could evolve that was not part of any means-ends relationships. Here we find the moment of truth in the talk about the autonomous work of art. What this category cannot lay hold of is that this detachment of art from practical contexts is a *historical process*.... And here lies the untruth of the category.... In the strict meaning of the term, `autonomy' is thus an ideological category that joins an element of truth (the apartness of art from the praxis of life) and an element of untruth (the hypostatization of this fact, which is a result of historical development as the `essence' of art)."
15. McQueen quotes C. Hartley Grattan's description of Wright as "a kindly soul to whom rhymes and poems are indistinguishable, and to whom literature is something `genteel' and `refined' in the most wishy-washy senses of those wishy-washy words," *The Black Swan of Trespass*, p.15.
16. McQueen, p.19.

17. Jack Lindsay, "*Vision* and the *London Aphrodite*," in *Cross Currents: Magazines and Newspapers in Australian Literature*, ed. Bruce Bennett (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1981), p.100. Lindsay is quoting himself from the *London Aphrodite* (1928-29).
18. McQueen, p.21.
19. Lawrence Watson, "The Theatre," *Strife*, p.13. Betty Roland's *The Touch of Silk* (first performed in 1928) is singled out for particular abuse. The name Watson does not appear among the associate editors. Could "Lawrence Watson" allude to Judah *Leon Waten*? There are similarities in syntax and argument with Waten's signed work.
20. Judah Waten, "Notes of the Month: Literature," *Strife*, p.7.
21. Bürger, p.56. The cover of *Strife* is reproduced in Charles Merewether, *Art & Social Commitment: An End to the City of Dreams 1931-1948* (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1984), p.50.
22. Williams, p.68. Waten describes his associates on *Strife* in an interview with Barret Reid, February 1967 (State Library of Victoria): "Fitzpatrick and myself were the principal editors, and the art editor was Herbert McClintock.... There were others, at least four or five other people who wanted to become writers, who wrote poetry, who dreamt of writing novels.... It came partly out of a pub. It wasn't the Swanston Family, it was a pub in Elizabeth Street ... a very lively place where you could drink until two or three in the morning — the Licensed Victuallers Club.... But it was also partly a political journal as a lot of literary journals were in that time. It was a left wing journal. It was only partly specifically communist, because most of the people involved were not communists. But they were iconoclastics and radicals. Youthful radicals. Most of them had a university background. Some ... had abandoned studies ... and often for economic reasons. Some of them had gone into journalism." This description also informs my discussion of cultural formations in Chapter 2.
23. Watson, "The Theatre," *Strife*, p.14.
24. H. Hurwitz, Rev. of Albert Londres, *The Road to Buenos Ayres*, *Strife*, p.16.
25. Bürger, p.49.
30. David Bennett, "*transition*: Modernism, the Avant-Garde and the Little Magazine," in *Outside the Book: Contemporary Essays on Literary Periodicals*, ed. David Carter (Sydney: Local Consumption Publications, 1991), pp.238-40.
27. See Dave Laing, *The Marxist Theory of Art* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1978), pp.32-33.
28. Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp.93-97.
29. Waten, "Notes of the Month: War!" *Strife*, p.7.
30. Waten, "Notes of the Month: Literature," *Strife*, p.7-8.
31. Jochen Schulte-Sasse, Foreword to Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p.xxxvi.
32. K.K. Ruthven, "Appropriating a Space for Modernism: Ezra Pound and the *New Free Woman*," in *Outside the Book*, ed. Carter, p.217. In the Preface to the "Lyrical Ballads" Wordsworth draws on the language of sickliness and decadence to characterise the present but aligns himself with permanence and beauty in ways quite foreign to the later avant-garde; thus he claims access to a past in ways that are without interest to the later provocateurs.
33. *Strife*, p.8, from an unsigned notice of *Australia as Part of the World Revolution*, a booklet produced by the Communist Party of Australia: "A veritable text book of revolution."
34. Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1983), p.89. See also Rosalind E Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," in *Zeitgeist in Babel: The Postmodernist Controversy*, ed. Ingeborg Hoesterey (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp.69-70: "The avant-garde artist has worn many guises over the first hundred years of his existence: revolutionary, dandy, anarchist, aesthete, technologist, mystic.... One thing only seems to hold fairly constant in the vanguardist discourse and that is the theme of originality.... More than a rejection or dissolution of the past, avant-garde originality is conceived as a literal origin, a beginning from ground zero, a birth." Krauss's argument is to point to the repetition which underlies the originality trope, and to deconstruct the originality-repetition dyad.
35. Berman, p.91. Berman does not distinguish between modernist and avant-garde (cf Bennett).

36. Bürger's argument throughout depends upon the distinction between individual works and institutional frameworks: "works of art are not received as single entities, but within institutional frameworks and conditions that largely determine the function of the works" (12). Similarly: "[I]t is necessary to distinguish between the institutional status of art in bourgeois society (apartness of the work of art from the praxis of life) and the contents realized in works of art" (25).
37. This magazine was imported into Australia. See Merewether, *Art & Social Commitment*, pp.11 & 56. Elliot also reproduces examples of its work, pp.140-41. Avant-garde artists such as Lissitzky, Rodchenko and Stepanova worked on design and contributed photographs, and photomontage continued to be used. Merewether also reproduces covers of Australian magazines which show both montage and monumentality in operation: pp.58ff.
38. John Frow, *Marxism and Literary History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p.178; and Chapters 6 & 7 passim.
39. Frow, pp.151 & 158.
40. Michael Juste, "The Dance of the Penny Paper Dolls," *Strife*, p.13 (the topic is the press); Watson, "The Theatre," p.16.
41. *Strife*, p.7. Clark has analysed the significance of images of electricity/electrification in literature and political rhetoric in the Soviet Union during this period (1928-31), *The Soviet Novel*, pp.96-97. Like the images of the machine with which they are closely linked, images of electricity stand both for the bringing of "light" (consciousness/reason) and a "release of energy," which might be destructive as well as constructive.
42. Ermolaev, p.74.
43. Ermolaev, p.76. The words are those of Kornely Zelinsky and actually pre-date the Five-Year Plan, referring rather to the New Economic Policy 1921-1928, which shows that the attitudes have a history.
44. Clark, pp.94-98; Ermolaev, pp.55-61.
45. Bürger, pp.70-78.
46. Bennett, "*transition*," p.229.
47. These points are argued further in my "Documenting and Criticising Society," pp.370-74, and in Chapter 2 below.
48. Frow, pp.117-18.

2

"Modernize Your Technique": Proletarianism, Modernity and the Literary Career

1. Paris, Moscow, Melbourne

The initial moment of literary proletarianism and the left avant-garde in Australia occurs in the early 1930s. It is constituted by *Strife*, the unpublished *Hunger*, and scattered pieces in magazines such as *Masses*, *Stream* and *Proletariat*. But the influence of forms of proletarianism continues throughout the decade. It can be argued that in Australia, as in England and the USA, ideas of proletarian or mass art, reportage, workers' art and documentary realism reach their point of widest influence in the middle to late 1930s as a specifically "western" post-Depression phenomenon. We find its traces in novels such as J.M. Harcourt's *Upsurge* (1934), Jean Devanny's *Sugar Heaven* (1936) and Alan Marshall's *How Beautiful Are Thy Feet* (completed 1937), and in sketches and scripts in the communist press or the Writers' League magazine *Point* (1938).[1]

But proletarianism is also more than a series of texts. The magazines themselves are significant as "manifestations," not simply as containers of bits and pieces of writing; and the formation of writers' and artists' organisations, from the *Strife* "co-operative venture" through a series of modulations to the Writers' Leagues, is one of the typical forms of expression that proletarianism takes. In the middle and later thirties, in such organisations as the Leagues and in works such as the novels mentioned above, proletarian avant-gardism is overtaken by a new array of practices and new discourses for both politics and literature such that the specific force of the concept of proletarianism is diffused. The category of "the mass," for example, might shift to become "the people," proletarian art might be recast as worker or socialist art. As I will show the institutional sites of "proletarian" writing alter over the course of the 1930s. Nevertheless a significant number of works from the later thirties and early forties can still be read in the light of Judah Waten's writing at the very beginning of the decade.[2]

Waten's writing of *Hunger* probably began towards the middle of 1930 in Melbourne.[3] In March 1931 he sailed for Europe with the manuscript and tried unsuccessfully in both Paris and London to have it published whole. The only piece that has come to light was printed in *Front* in its final issue (four issues appeared between December 1930 and June 1931). The publishing history of this magazine has

its own significance for the present argument. *Front* situated itself precisely in the moment of the left avant-garde. It was a product of the Servire Press which also published the avant-garde *transition* after its revival in 1932 (the press was located in The Hague, "but the books that bore its imprint were created in Paris, sold there, and read there"[4]). Like *Strife*, *Front* was internationalist: it published work in English, French and German, and had editors in Spain, Japan, USA and the Soviet Union. It is worth quoting a description of the magazine at some length:

> Beginning as a literary magazine with leftwing tendencies, but interested primarily in literature *per se*, *Front* ... emphasizes more and more the urgent necessity for a socially informed literature and art. The last issue announces its complete agreement with radical politics: "Henceforth, we will only concern ourselves with literature as an art when it arms the workers against the bourgeoisie." The magazine attracts writers who are alive to experimental tendencies in modern letters and who eagerly anticipate the fullest use of literature as a social weapon. V.F. Calverton's essay in the issue of December 1930, with its emphasis upon the "demands of social organizations," establishes a platform for many of the writers of the thirties. Contributions include poetry by Norman Macleod ... Louis Zukofsky ... William Carlos Williams ...; fiction by Kay Boyle, Robert McAlmon, John Dos Passos, and many young writers who are later to be published frequently in proletarian literary magazines; criticism by V.F. Calverton, Ezra Pound (a "dissenting voice"), and Louis Zukofsky.[5]

The list of contributors itself suggests the crossover of experimental art and the desire for literature as a social weapon. The proximity of an interest in literature "*per se*" and the sense of an *urgent* necessity for a socially informed literature is historically momentous (precisely of its moment). Perhaps even the fact that it is the magazine's final issue that announces its radical political project is symptomatic. *Hunger* finds its place, then, however fragmentary its presence. Indeed it is utterly characteristic of the avant-gardiste aspects of the left literary project described in Chapter 1 that the novel was conceived in such a way that it could be broken up into fragments dispersed around the magazines, "read and interpreted individually ... without its being necessary to grasp the work as a whole."[6]

At the same time it is no less characteristic of this writing project that, in Waten's own words, "everything went into it." He has written about *Hunger* in a number of places:

> I returned to Melbourne and I began my first novel which I called *Hunger*. Not an original title, considering that Knut Hamsun's novel *Hunger* was very much around then. Everything went into it — the unemployed, stowing away and jumping trains, gaol, burglars, religion and Communism. Not everything of course. There was nothing about my migrant background nor was there anything about sex.

The absences will be discussed in later chapters. Elsewhere Waten has written:

> I was under the influence of James Joyce and American left-wing writers like John Dos Passos ... and Michael Gold.... My pseudo-Joycean style guaranteed to some extent that my stories would be published in *avant-garde* publications in Paris and New York.[7]

This combination of left-wing and avant-garde models, which characteristically heads towards fragmentation while aiming for a kind of globalism, produces fiction-writing like the following:

> morning... a man in a room. cold and barren apartment house. ROOMS TO LET. bugs and lice. he dresses and his clothes smack of the sea. white canvas trousers and stink socks and washes in an iron bucket. shits. wipes himself with the editorial of the morning news. who reads an editorial anyway? wanders down decrepit staircase... rent? — pay or get out.
>
> morning... the sky is pale and cold. a bird chortles. dogs piss at lampposts. he wanders dark slimy streets. peers into gloomy lanes and doorways. so many flagstones on that street. gloomy slimy street. spermatozoan reek and acrid pot and garbage. gloomy slimy street.
>
> man must eat. food. dogs bark.
>
> 500 men are waiting for the gates to open. oh lord we thank thee in thy infinite mercy. AMEN. man must eat. food. smell of frankfurts. frying.
>
> oh frankfurts is the life of man,
> frankfurts for my johnny.
>
> — dont push.
>
> salvation army and ymca and police.
>
> — behave yourself or you"ll go without.
>
> he is last. hahaha. no there are more. coming coming coming.
>
> — THIS MORNING ONLY 150 MEN WILL BE FED.
>
> salvation army and ymca and police.[8]

This passage clearly yields to analysis in terms of the principle of montage in its use of sentence fragments, dissociations of sequence, quotations and "reality fragments left unchanged by the artist" (in Bürger's terms). These effects are reinforced by typographical techniques: the use of lower case throughout except for the quoted "real" signs, the use of ellipses, the spacing. The prose is also "de-individuating" of both author and character. If in one sense it is all style, it is also anti-style. Its fragmentation says that it has no time for style or for art (there is an "urgent necessity" pointing elsewhere); yet it is the very fragmentation, along with patterning techniques, that lays claim to art. This double gesture is also performed by the quotation from Francis Thompson ("The Hound of Heaven") which stands at the beginning of the passage as printed in *Front*: "Must thy harvest fields/be dunged with rotten death." Waten thus lays claim to the literary, but does so by displacing the literariness of the quotation, isolating it from its context.

At the same time, the array of montage techniques in the passage is in tension with a narrative trajectory which bears unambiguous "proletarian" and realist meanings. The point about such writing, its effectivity, I would argue, is precisely this quality of being both-and-neither. It is anti-art and anti-style via a highly self-conscious technical performance which claims the power of art; it frames itself as literary but refuses to be (merely) literary; in refusing art it aims to revitalise art; and it claims to be realistic but can do so only by violating the conventions of realism.[9] I

have written elsewhere of a range of similar effects in the sketches and documentary writing, later in the 1930s, of Alan Marshall and John Morrison, and in novels by Marshall, Devanny and Harcourt (and one might add the little-known novel by R.D. Tate, *The Doughman*, 1933).[10] It is possible to identify recurrent "experimental" techniques in these works which produce their literary anti-literary effects: the use of present tense, very short sentences or sentence fragments, "camera-eye" narration, second-person narration, plotlessness, the absence of characterisation, abrupt shifts between the documentary and the didactic, and quotation from newspapers or other "factual" material inserted into the fiction.

Rather than continue the detailed analysis of individual writings, I want to examine the institutional dimensions of my two primary texts, *Strife* and *Hunger*. By this I mean to answer questions such as — in the broadest terms — *how* could these texts occur (at this time and in this place)? What models or precedents existed? What milieux? What cultural formations? And how did these change to make such texts no longer possible?

As suggested in Chapter 1, there is little evidence of any local precedents to 1930 for either *Strife* or *Hunger*. We might say that they are not only unprecedented but precocious, and Waten's own precocity at this time as a communist "functionary" and writer while still a teenager becomes a kind of historical sign, a sign of the speed of modernity and revolution. By 1932 it is possible to plot a number of sites where radical aesthetics and radical politics do meet; by the late thirties, proletarianist strains have already been absorbed by other populist, nationalist, socialist realist and modernist discourses — the first two at least in a form of left literary mainstream. But I think we would be correct to see *Strife* in 1930 as marginal even to the "literary" left, and certainly to literary and artistic circles more generally. Moreover, this marginality is what enables, or forces, it to enter into the scope of the avant-garde.

As for *Hunger*, the communist and bohemian Guido Barrachi could write to Nettie Palmer: "I am sending over to you Number 4 of `Front', with an extract from an unpublished novel by a Melbourne boy, Judah Waten, well in front, & some language to make the hair curl on the first page."[11] Unfortunately we do not have Palmer's reply so we are unable to read off Waten's text against one "centre" of Australian letters. But Barrachi's note would have arrived a few months after Palmer had read Edmund Wilson's *Axel's Castle*: we can imagine one kind of context for the reception of Waten's text as she ponders the fate of modernity and of "writers who are unable to interest themselves in our contemporary society, either by studying it scientifically, by attempting to reform it, or by satirizing it."[12]

The most immediate models for proletarian/left avant-garde literary texts and for the discourse that read them appropriately were to be found in the American *New Masses* magazine (published under that name from 1926) and in the early writings of John Dos Passos and Mike Gold. Part of what we need to explain is how experimental works such as *Manhattan Transfer* and *The 42nd Parallel* could be received as models of "the proletarian novel."

In addition, up to 1931, there were scattered pieces in the local communist press and overseas communist papers read here; in English-language magazines from the Soviet Union; and possibly in the English *Plebs* magazine. A little later, the English *Left Review* (1934-38) would become important.[13] Between 1927 and 1929, the *Workers' Weekly*, the Communist Party newspaper from Sydney, published a poem by Joseph Freeman from *New Masses*; an article by H.W.L. Dana from *Plebs*, which in turn summarises the views of Americans Eden and Cedar Paul in their book *Proletcult* (1921); an article from the Soviet Union entitled "Art For Workers" ("scenic art has assumed a mass character.... Art in all its forms is becoming more accessible to workers — this applies particularly to the cinema — `The most important of all arts' to quote Lenin"); and a review of Fedor Gladkov's novel *Cement* ("this story is based on fact; but it is none the less gripping and thrilling for that").[14] The notion of a proletarian culture is present, this suggests, but at best sporadically and from *elsewhere*, although the sense of global contemporaneity that internationalism brings should not be underestimated. There is a militant opposition made between bourgeois and proletarian cultures, but the call for the latter is also likely to turn into the simpler claim that literature is a universal good thing and the workers should have access to it.

Proletarian culture, in other words, never becomes a question of method and again it can be argued that it was not until the Depression that such questions became problems for local writers, artists and intellectuals that could not be solved within traditional means or indeed within traditional institutions. The different positions articulated locally in the late twenties loosely reproduce the debates in the Soviet Union about proletarian culture and the bourgeois tradition, and by the time of *Strife* Waten's politics and prescriptions for literature are certainly informed by a knowledge of Soviet literary policies as linked to the First Five-Year Plan and the sectarianism of the "social fascist" critique.[15] His call for a literature of facts nevertheless echoes the slogans of LEF as much as the explicitly proletarian "ultra"-realist platform of RAPP.[16] More generally, although "formalism" or equivalents were already available as terms of disapprobation there is no evidence in the period preceding *Strife* of any detailed local response to the positions of the Russian avant-garde. There is little, in

short, beyond a general sense of a proletarian orientation in art. Readers of the Party press are advised to read Upton Sinclair and Jack London, but also Dickens, Scott, Thackeray, Hardy and Eden Philpotts.

The importance of *New Masses* against this background was that it could place the political agenda in the midst of immediate questions of artistic practice and intellectual responsibility, and could provide textual models for both fiction and criticism. The American situation was comparable to the Australian, but *more so* for the USA was the very model of modernity, of modern capitalism in all its characteristic signs (the modern city, the cinema, technology, speed, massification, experiment and *crisis*). In the twenties and at least until the mid-thirties it was America rather than Britain that provided the models for a radical left-wing artistic practice. Influences from continental Europe, including the Soviet Union, would also be mediated through their American reception; it was the Americans in Paris, no doubt, who were indirectly responsible for giving European literary modernism some presence in left-wing circles in Australia. John Sendy has recorded that Andrade's Bookshop in Melbourne stocked *New Masses*, and mentions Waten as one of the shop's customers; the *Workers' Weekly* of 19 April 1929 announces that "Michael Gold's mass recitation, `Strike,' will be given by the Workers' Dramatic Club [in Melbourne]."[17] Waten's own column in *Strife* possibly takes its title, "Notes of the Month," from Mike Gold's column in *New Masses*.

We can thus establish, though with scanty evidence, that American models of radical proletarian art were present in Australia in the late 1920s and early 1930s. But we also need to argue *how* they were present, how they could become influences or models. One aspect has already been emphasised, the perception of America as the epitome of capitalist modernity with its stunning decadence, its "destructive and constructive" energy. We might also think of the appeal of a radical (avant-gardiste) proletarian art which is projected, first, against those other contemporary and essentially modern "mass" cultural forms, the cinema and the newspaper; second, against the currency of British socialist literature represented by Shaw, Wells, and Morris further back: at best, the progressive literature of the old world.[18] Despite their sometimes dubious politics from a communist perspective, the likes of Jack London, Upton Sinclair, Sherwood Anderson and Sinclair Lewis could represent a radical break from this "genteel" tradition.

This, I think, was the appeal of the American material: its contemporaneity and radical difference. Further, the intellectual milieu especially of New York, *the* modern city, meant a relatively sophisticated articulation of writing practices as well as providing a model of a distinctly *urban* cultural formation, a quality no less

significant in the Australian (Melbourne) context. In September 1930, almost contemporaneous with *Strife*, Mike Gold in *New Masses* published his own manifesto for "proletarian realism." Aaron has summarised its arguments:

> 1. Workers, because they are skilled technicians, must write with the technical proficiency of a Hemingway, but not for the purpose of engendering cheap and purposeless thrills.
> 2. "Proletarian realism deals with the *real conflicts* of men and women." It spurns the sickly, sentimental subtleties of Bohemians.... The "suffering of the hungry, persecuted and heroic millions" precludes the inventing of "precious silly little agonies."
> 3. Proletarian realism is functional; it serves a purpose....
> 4. It eschews verbal acrobatics: "this is only another form for bourgeois idleness."
> 5. Proletarians should write about what they know best ... "our own mud-puddle."
> 6. "Swift action, clear form, the direct line, cinema in words..."
> 7. "Away with drabness, the bourgeois notion that the Worker's life is sordid ... we know that the manure heap is the hope of the future; we know that not pessimism, but revolutionary elan will sweep this mess out of the world forever."
> 8. "Away with lies about human nature. We are scientists...."
> 9. "No straining or melodrama or other effects; life itself is the supreme melodrama. Feel this intensely, and everything becomes poetry — the new poetry of materials, of the so-called `common man,' the Worker moulding his real world."[19]

Here we find the combination of positions and gestures that recurs in *Strife*: radical anti-formalism which betrays a direct investment in formal innovation, the banality of facts combined with the heroism of life as "the supreme melodrama," and a celebration of technolgy and modernity ("cinema in words") in a militant anti-capitalist, anti-bourgeois manifesto.

Other contexts for the reception and dissemination of this proletarianist aesthetic beyond *Strife* can be discerned: a minor but emergent presence for international(ist) "high" modernism; Marxism understood as a radical intellectual practice; and a developing critique of bourgeois popular or mass culture. Three magazines which appeared in Melbourne in the two years following *Strife* serve to exemplify these contexts and their overlaps: *Stream*, which had three issues between July and September 1931; *Proletariat*, the journal of the Melbourne University Labour Club, which ran from April 1932 to late 1935; and *Masses*, which appeared only once, in November 1932. Although it is unlikely that *Strife* directly influenced any of these, they do show a "thickening" of the contexts in which proletarian and modernist discourse became significant, contexts in part constituted by such discourse. This in turn tells us something of the cultural formations in which Waten's own career might initially have been conceived, although it also underlines the "precocity" of *Strife*.

Stream is the most remarkable of the magazines to appear in the early thirties because of its unapologetic assumption of the simultanaeity of the modernist project wherever it occurred — Paris, Moscow or Melbourne ("a place teeming with modern

activities"[20]). This is announced, if in relatively conventional terms, in its opening editorial:

> STREAM ... is a medium of international art expression.
>
> STREAM is universal in outlook, and does not definitely ally itself with any particular art movement of the day: it seeks, in short, only what is vital and genuine in contemporary art, literature and thought....
>
> STREAM has no geographical prejudices: by Australian art it means no more than art that is created in Australia: and its evaluation of such works will depend entirely upon the degree of sincerity and vitality that informs them.[21]

Despite what sounds conventional now, even the magazine's recognition of art *movements* and its linking of art and *thought* are marks of its "newness" in the local, contemporary context. *Stream* manifests its internationalism in the range of articles, references and contributors included.[22] By no means least in importance is a column in each of its issues significantly entitled *Montages*. This is an assemblage of paragraphs of news about "contemporary art, literature and thought" and of quotations drawn from magazines in France, Italy, Germany — and the Soviet Union.[23] The form itself is modernist and internationalist for its montage structure implies simultaneity and speed; the quotations function not just as commentary on, but as virtual fragments of modernity. *Montages* works to suggest that its array of references is of immediate and pressing concern to readers here and now in Australia — not exotic so much as irresistibly contemporary.

The primary allegiance of *Stream* appears to be to a broad modernist tradition that would embrace symbolism, post-impressionism, surrealism, Eliot and Pound, Huxley and Lawrence. In its second number it announces that it has been granted exclusive Australian rights to publish any of Pound's new work. And in its first number it publishes the following individualist-aesthetic *Credo* from Rémy de Gourmont:

> A writer's capital crime is conformity, imitativeness, submission to rules and precepts. A writer's work should not only be a reflection, but the magnified reflection of his personality ... his only excuse is to be original. He should say things not yet said, and say them in a form not yet formulated. He should create his own aesthetics, and we should admit as many aesthetics as there are original minds, judging them according to what they are not.[24]

It would be difficult to get much further from the project of proletarian realism. But it is precisely the reception of the ideas of proletarian realism in this apparently unpropitious context that is significant for my purpose. Although *Stream* could celebrate the artist's individuality it was also alive to the radical democracy of modernity (evident, if perversely, even in the passage just quoted) wherein every person could be an artist and the materials of the everyday, from the city streets to dreams, the materials of their art. Above all, what is significant is the perception of

"the latest thing from Moscow" as a contemporaneous and even complementary movement in modern art.

It is possible to see, over the course of the magazine's short life span, an increased engagement with proletarian art as its modernity becomes irresistible. There is little in the first number to suggest that it could ever become an issue for *Stream*. Indeed the magazine's editor writes that the very first requirement for understanding the artist and his work is that "he must be released from the meshes of sociology."[25] We might, though, note the semiotics of the cover used for the first two issues: it features a wispish, naked female figure, rather *fin-de-siècle* in style, holding a copy of Eliot's poems and a paint-brush; but she is partly encircled by two gear wheels which in turn are topped by a horizon of skyscrapers and factory chimneys shown with a dynamic distortion of perspective. The different signs in foreground and background are incongruous except that they all signify modernity. It also helps to thicken our context to note that Jack Maugham, whose linocut it is on the cover, was a communist and a founder member, in 1931, of the Workers' Art Club.[26]

In the second issue of *Stream*, Soviet/proletarian writing appears on the agenda. There is an article on the Soviet writer Leonid Leonov (translated from *Le Mois*); also an article from a French music critic on collective music forms. Perhaps more significant, because of the way they stand as "news" and define a current debate, are items in the *Montages* column. These include quotations from Eisenstein and Vsevold Pudowkin; a piece from the *Moscow Literary Gazette* to the effect that "Proletarian literature must enlarge its field of conquest ... its mission is to surpass not only the Pilniaks, but the Tolstois and the Shakespeares"; and from Ernst Glaeser writing in *Bifur*:

> The writer should be acquainted with the great laws of economics and their influence on our spiritual make-up. He should know modern man, conditioned by the ideas of the group to which he belongs and the economic laws that control him, as a representative of his social group.... He should express what is, neglecting no perspective of his epoch. He will only achieve this by studying the structure of his time and the collective forces which are at grips, and by abandoning the chimera of individual liberty.[27]

A reading across the three issues of *Stream* suggests that this quotation represents accurately enough the framework of terms through which proletarian writing enters its field of vision. *Stream* cannot be aligned with any one position (as it boasts about itself); the point is rather the key terms of the debate: the individual or the collective as the source of art, the spiritual or "economic laws" as its field, and individual expression or social change as its end. Each option embodies a question of method as well. What was the approprate post-realism: surrealism or the new realism (or something in between)?[28]

It is interesting that the American proletarian writers are scarcely mentioned in *Stream*.[29] I think this is because its internationalism is Eurocentric rather than proletarian, so it finds its proletarianism first in Moscow or Berlin. Also it works from a position within the domain of the aesthetic, the autonomy of which it does not question, in a way that sets it apart from *Strife* or from the polemics of Mike Gold. What is remarkable, again, is the fact that proletarian realism becomes an issue in the kind of forum that *Stream* thus represents.

The third issue of *Stream* goes even further in its dialogue with proletarian writing — but not as far as the magazine intended to go in the future. It includes an article on proletarian literature by Soviet critic Zinovy Lvovsky; a review-article on Lionel Britton's *Hunger and Love* ("England's first important proletarian novel") by Russian-Australian Sacha Youssevitch; a short story by Soviet writer Valentine Kataev; and a poem by Mayakovsky. The article by Lvovsky is the most surprising. It is mostly a long quotation from the Soviet novelist Panferov on proletarian literature ("I have learned my trade from Knut Hamsun, Jack London, Tolstoi...") and on his own "classic" Five-Year Plan/RAPP novel, *Brousski*:

> What is important to-day is the literature of the masses.... We must carefully examine the production of workers who make literature their concern even while tending their machines. We must also pay the greatest possible attention to poster newspapers and factory publications.
>
> .... The aim of our literature is to completely eradicate bourgeois ideology in the realm of art....
>
> Every writer is obliged to keep in touch not only with current affairs but, above all, with industrial production and socialist reconstruction. We are witnesses of absolutely new industrial processes; we are spectators of the demolition of all old methods, of the colossal construction of a new world....
>
> Our conception of life and literature is absolutely realistic; we shatter ruthlessly all the old canons, we reject all traditional and antiquated forms wherever we find them....
>
> What is a soviet writer? We must define him once and for all. He is primarily a practitioner. But he is at the same time a theorist who, before commencing his work of art, makes a long and careful study of economics and marxism, the indispensable bulwark of all creative art.[30]

Once more there are also telling items in *Montages*: an account of Ilya Trauberg's film *The Blue Train* ("The interest of this propaganda film derives from its technical perfection ... the realism of Trauberg is less brutal than that of Eisenstein, and employs all the resources of rhythm, of movement and photography"); a set of statistics about what Soviet youth are reading; also a quotation from N. Putnikova writing in *VOKS Bulletin* (USSR Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries), presenting realism in its renovated organicist mode:

> it is possible that never before was man capable of feelings of greater intensity than now, in the epoch of the greatest of revolutions. But we may see these feelings — "personal" as they may be — refracted through the prism of our unique integral life,

> in which not only is there no clash between the personal and the social, but these elements are indivisible.[31]

There is nothing as "orthodox" as this, or the previous long quotation, in the more explicitly militant *Strife*. Again what is significant is the presence of such orthodoxy in the context of the modern, defined in this issue for instance by an article on Wagner as modernist precursor,[32] a short story by the American Robert McAlmon, an attack on English letters by Basil Bunting, a Credo from Pound, and, in *Montages*, a declaration from the *Union des artistes modernes* that "our modern architects and decorators point to locomotives and airplanes, dynamos and Chicago wheat silos, and say: There are our masters and our models."

The terms of the dialogue between proletarianism and a modern tradition in *Stream* are spelt out most explicitly in a symposium that the magazine announces for a future issue (which unfortunately never appears):

> PARIS OR MOSCOW A SYMPOSIUM
> *Stream* announces for publication shortly a symposium on a subject of the first importance: the possibilities and claims of the two rival aesthetics indicated by the above title. Is individualist literature doomed? Is the collectivist idea capable of supplanting it? The question cannot be discussed without reference to the creative process itself. Is this process, as we see it manifested in masterpieces of the past, constant in art? Or can it be changed or radically modified by external life forces? It is possible to come to conclusions on this matter which shall be quite detached from current political considerations. The symposium, to which many writers will contribute, will therefore be non-political.[33]

As in Waten's magazine *Strife*, proletarianism is seen here as a contemporaneous art practice of immediate and *local* significance — the crises and the energies of modernity can be discovered here and now and in Melbourne. Proletarianism can thus share the moment of the avant-garde, raising with it the spectre of a radical break with all the past institutions of art and the radical simultaneity of "modern art" and "modern life."

But it is also just at this point that we begin to distinguish the two magazines and their sense of the proletarian. Despite the avant-gardism of certain of its contributions, *Stream* falls short of (or goes beyond) the avant-garde because of its self-situation within the domain of the aesthetic. Similarly, although proletarian realism can be seen as a "rival," it is a rival on the same plane, a rival *aesthetic*. It is from within the discourse of the aesthetic that the issues are comprehended as those of individualist versus collective practice or the "creative process" versus "external life forces" — issues which can be concluded outside politics (that is, within the aesthetic).

On the other hand, despite the "mere" politics of much of *Strife* — its calls merely for a proletarian content — the magazine does function as something akin to an "avant-gardiste manifestation." It situates itself at the very moment of a radical break with the past, a break which it wants to manifest, to enact; and it projects a

dissolution of the aesthetic which, however content-driven, entails a dissolution and transformation of (organic) form: from form into construction. Unlike some later manifestations of proletarian realism, Waten's writing in both *Strife* and *Hunger* can still see form itself as transformation, not merely as the reflection of transformation.

Thus, whereas the later magazine can advertise itself in terms of a modernist main "stream" (a remarkable leap of the imagination itself given what one takes to have been the limits of its local audience), the earlier *Strife* announces itself as provocation, disruption. But it is the overlaps that we have been emphasising: that proletarianism became an irresistible question in the context of the modern; that it came in the first instance *as* a modern-ism not as a continuity with a realist past.

2. Alternative Cultural Formations

The two further manifestations of proletarianism to be considered, the magazines *Proletariat* (1932-34) and *Masses* (one issue, November 1932), present intellectual, political and organisational provenances overlapping with those of *Strife* and *Stream*. But there are also significant differences in (self-)situation. *Proletariat*, the magazine of the Melbourne University Labour Club, can be understood in terms of its organisational base within the university, but as a "weapon" designed to break down the perceived traditional isolation of the university from contemporary history and politics, and from non-academic intellectuals.[34] To choose the name *Proletariat* for the magazine of a university club comprising largely students and junior academics is clearly to take a position against the bourgeois institution of the university: the title signifies that knowledges are class-based and not politically neutral. It is interesting that proletarianism rather than communism is the sign under which this occurs. Of course these concepts overlapped, just as the contributors to the magazine overlap between members of the university and non-university members of the Communist Party; but I would argue that proletarianism, at this time, signified more specifically an engagement with a *politicised*, *theoretical* re-reading of history, whereas communism meant (or could mean) the realm of actual politics. The primary interests of *Proletariat* are contemporary history and Marxism as a radical intellectual practice — Marxism *as* contemporary history — which means frequent negotiation of the ground where Marxism meets "other" modern-isms.

Literature enters as a sub-section of this larger concern, as one of the areas of revolutionary change in contemporary history but not necessarily its advance guard. Proletarian art is nevertheless present from the very first issue. In an article by Winston Rhodes on the "New Realism" proletarian art is described as an "infant among new literary movements" and the article's primary question is how to respond to it. In other words, Rhodes writes from a position outside proletarianism even though his piece is an argument in its favour. The "we" who are constituted as his audience are the already self-constituted consumers of art:

> This new school of writers is a reaction against the introspective literature of our time.... Individual problems, the personal experiences of separate egos may be of value at other times, but the living human experience of the workers is chiefly of another sort. Therefore Proletarian Art attempts to give vivid representations of social passions. The aim of such a literature is to reflect the forces conflicting in a revolutionary period, to look at life from the point of view of the masses....
>
> [H]owever crude it may be, however horrible, here is something thrown into artistic form by the volcanic energy of a mind that knows what it is to be but a fragment of that nameless, formless thing which cries: "The Masses count, not men"....
>
> [H]ere we have writers whose aim is to place the stamp of proletarian ideals on the culture of the world. We may resist them if we will, welcome them if we can,

> but if we ignore them we will do no service either to reality or art, which is the expression of that reality.[35]

The force of contemporary history, in literature as in social and economic life, is "the masses." This was the primary meaning of Marxism as proletarianism: the sudden irruption of mass consciousness into bourgeois history; mass consciousness perceived as energy, revolution, destruction and construction. (It is the concept of the mass rather than any mere utopian promises for the future that is central to the radicalisation of university members in Australia and elsewhere in the thirties.) The masses meant history perceived as class struggle, and the "idea of the proletariat as a class inheriting the responsibility for the production of a new social reality on the technological base of the present."[36] Proletarianism in art, in its fullest or strictest sense, thus meant more than a general working-class or socialist "content"; it meant a new form adequate to the moment. *Proletariat* characteristically positions itself, not so much *as* that force (which we might say of *Strife*), but as its ally. It asks how we, the young, radical intellectuals, can align ourselves with the modernising, revolutionary movement of history.

Rhodes mentions Upton Sinclair and Michael Gold, and devotes the large part of his essay to Ernst Toller and his play, *Masses and Men*.[37] *Proletariat*'s second number recommends the American *New Masses* to its readers amongst a host of political journals. In February 1933 the magazine prints a fascinating essay entitled "American Scenario" consisting of a montage of quotations and headlines (unemployment, Sacco and Vanzetti) plus three "close-ups" of proletarian heroes, Big Bill Haywood, John Reed and John Dos Passos, using what it calls the "cinegraphic" techniques of the latter.[38] The effect is to dramatise the literary points as part of a general "revolutionary upsurge of consciousness" in American life, and by its form to focus on the very question of technique. Revolutionary consciousness is defined as "the perception of the implicit economic forces that render life barren, and the will to participate in the making of a new order." The essay concludes with an account of Dos Passos's array of techniques — cinegraphic montage, the newsreel, the camera eye. The piece is representative of proletarianism understood in its contemporary meaning as a "modernist" revolutionary art practice within capitalism; and in its own construction as montage it still bears traces of the avant-gardiste project.

Waten himself had left Australia before either *Stream* or *Proletariat* were established. Nevertheless, *Strife* is an early manifestation of a distinct and rather unusual kind of cultural formation which begins to operate in Melbourne during the early thirties and which is crucial in the early shaping of Waten's writing career. There are no recognised literary or artistic figures in *Strife* — by definition one could almost say. The "co-operative venture" comprised mainly young journalists, young

commercial artists and young communists like Waten with no defined profession and probably no regular income. The critique of the institution of art, then, comes, not from altogether outside it, but precisely from its borders — from journalism, graphic art, and an articulate political theory (which made the link between politics, economics and culture). It is no accident that the critique comes in large part from those working at the commercial end of both writing and visual art, for it is here that the claims of art to autonomy are at their most vulnerable.[39] Moreover, it is to the very techniques of these "marginal" areas that the radical writers and artists turn — to reportage and the prose sketch, the cartoon and the print block — techniques themselves marginal in the hierarchies of fine art. Communism also transgressed boundaries, providing both an intellectual and cultural framework for political practice, and a political framework for cultural and intellectual practice. I have argued elsewhere that to become a communist was not simply to march or to "fractionalise"; it was also, and above all, to *read*.[40]

Charles Merewether's brief biography of Waten's co-editor, Herbert McClintock, describes the milieu in which commercial art, communism and bohemianism could overlap on the fringes of the established institutions:

> As a young man McClintock took commercial artwork jobs.... He became a signwriter and then got a job where one condition of employment was to study at the National Gallery School. He studied painting under Bernard Hall and McInnes where he met George Bell, Eric Thake and Jimmy Flett. On Friday nights they met together to (sic) Fasoli's Cafe in King Street. This was the place for young bohemians. Here he met Roy Dalgarno, Judah Waten, Dominic Leon, Bill Dolphin and others. Meanwhile he began to paint and read voraciously, including the work of Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Dostoyevsky....
>
> He returned to Melbourne in 1930, re-enrolled at the Gallery School, struck up old friendships with Flett, Dalgarno, Waten and with those now meeting at the Swanston Family Hotel. At this point he also met Noel Counihan and [Nutter] Buzacott. With the Depression descending it seemed that the Communist Party was the only organization which offered hope and was ready to fight the oppressive conditions of most people's lives. He joined up.[41]

The groups being formed in the late twenties and early thirties were rather different from existing artistic circles in Melbourne such as that around Max Meldrum, although they might be seen to share bohemianism (as they shared certain pubs and restaurants).[42] The Meldrumites represented an alternative artistic practice within the institution of art; the younger artists were only tenuously connected with that institution. Their organisational "rationale" was as much political as aesthetic (art practice and life-style). In Williams' terms, it was always likely to be oppositional not merely alternative.[43] It is probably accurate enough, as suggested in Chapter 1, to describe *Strife* as "bohemian." What separates the cultural formation the magazine represents from earlier versions of bohemianism is the break with the aesthetic that can be brought about, not by communism alone, but by the intersection of aesthetic

categories with revolutionary political categories. The difference between the two "generations" of artists is the (post-Depression) perception of modernity as a sudden break with the past and of contemporary history as mass history, a perception which transforms the relationship of art to the everyday praxis of life.

The journalists were in a similar position in relation to the literary institutions as the commercial artists were in relation to fine art, the radical students in relation to the academy, and the communists in relation to mainstream politics. The university would, no doubt, have seemed a very long way from *contemporary* literature and journalism. The establishment press could also seem a long way from the realities of contemporary life. *Strife* keeps some of its most outrageous language for the press, that "most formidable fortress of Babbitry and Moronia ... a dance of lingering putrifying death":

> giant dope machines, foul, slimy octopi that suck and suck and grow fat on the brains and hearts of men. In their stead, they leave flabby, bloodless, putrifying pulps of sycophantic content, servile acquiescence, and lily-livered inertia....
>
> [F]amily-owned bilge factories for the wholesale production and dissemination of reactionary propaganda, the sole purpose of which is to retain the people in their physical and mental chains.... We content ourselves with the realisation that at last the social stomach will be full, and that then there will be a magnificent vomiting....
>
> [The press] always has its gun levelled at the head of any conscious constructive effort which aims at ending the existing social disorder.[44]

I suspect that local *literary* journalism would also have been perceived largely as happening somewhere else and as being someone else's.[45] There was little until the mid-thirties to suggest the presence of a national literary tradition, least of all one adequate to the critical present.

We have already noted that *Stream* positions itself very differently from *Strife*, within an international modernist tradition. This is expressed in its impressive list of European contributors. But at a local level, the editors and writers of *Stream* present a kind of marginality not dissimilar to what we have seen in *Strife*. Again there is a significant number of journalists involved (or university students soon to enter journalism): editor Cyril Pearl, H. Alwyn Lee (then editor of *Farrago*, the Melbourne University student paper), Edgar Holt, possibly David Lockhart. Others were communists, without a professional footing in the institutions of culture: Sacha Youssevitch, Jack Maugham and Nat Seeligson. At the same time, *Stream* could accommodate a group of professional cultural figures like Frank Clewlow, then director of Melbourne ABC radio, A.R. Chisholm, Professor of French at the university, Adrian Lawlor, painter, writer and free-lance provocateur, young symbolist Bertram Higgins, and Nettie Palmer, "well-known in Australian literary circles." It is the convergence of these different groups that is significant, for although it is without

the radical and declared marginality of *Strife* it also represents the formation of an alternative cultural network along the borders of the established institutions — which it is just as likely to find impotent, philistine and "bourgeois."

Most important is the magazine's origin, again, in a new artistic and intellectual formation where the key figures are likely to be, not the established painter or poet, but the student, journalist or communist. It is within this cultural formation in the pages of *Stream* that "high" modernism meets "high" Marxism, communist discourse meets the academic and the avant-garde — or in simpler terms, "art" meets "thought" — in a re-drawing of the *local* map of culture. The magazine's own confidence is such that it is easy to forget how marginal its position was in relation to dominant literary, artistic and critical practices in Australia.

Proletariat provides further evidence of the existence of a cultural formation comprising student, journalist and communist — and, of course, student-journalists, communist-students, communist-journalists. Jack Maugham and Noel Counihan do most of the covers.[46] Furthermore, as with *Strife* and *Stream*, and like the images of proletarian art itself, this cultural formation is distinctively urban. This city-centredness is probably not unusual, even in the prior Australian history of artist and writer groups. But it does seem to have an added dimension in this period because of the dynamic sense of the modern city which forms an essential part of the discourse through which both art images and life choices (where to live, how to live) were made.[47] Here there are no images of rural retreat, only of bigger cities.

A further site of the cultural formations we are drawing together is present in the third item in our series, *Masses*. This was the journal of the Workers' Art Club, which had been established in Melbourne in late 1931. As with the Labour Club, the impulse to *organise* is itself significant of a new, political way of conceiving of culture and knowledge; from their different perspectives, both existed "to draw together members of the working-class and `progressive' members of the bourgeoisie."[48] The point is not that the provenance of and the constituency for the different magazines was identical. On the contrary, their discourses range from the aesthetic through the bohemian to the communist, their personnel from academics to journalists to Communist Party officials to unemployed workers. The point is rather that at this time and in this place these diverse cultural formations could and did overlap in significant ways — significant enough to produce the magazines that we have.

Even more clearly, the primary model for *Masses* is again the American *New Masses*, an issue of which it reviewed. The moment of the Workers' Art Clubs is that of the Kharkov Conference of revolutionary artists and writers, held in November

1930, the resolutions of which are quoted in *Masses* and linked to the *Draft Manifesto of John Reed Clubs* (described as "the Workers' Art Clubs of USA").[49]

The roll-call of names in *Masses* will, by now, be familiar from both *Stream* and *Proletariat*: Lee, Gibson, Youssevitch, Seeligson, Lockhart and Maugham.[50] Counihan and Buzacott were also involved in the Club (Waten was overseas until mid-1933, but his name is generally linked to it). Proletarianism in the magazine is still as militant as ever, still prone to the manifesto, but it is now able to suggest a platform and a constituency in a way not available to *Strife*. Perhaps this is represented well enough by an advertisement: addressing "Workers! Writers! Artists!" the magazine asks for "news from the Class Struggle ... Stories, Sketches, Reviews, Poems, Cartoons, etc. *ANYTHING REAL*!" For the first time, the magazine also includes two prose sketches, one by Ralph Gibson, the other by Alwyn Lee. The former in particular shows the characteristic techniques of proletarian realism — short "objective" sentences or sentence fragments establishing time and place ("Nightfall."), an insistent present tense, structural fragmentation (the short sketch comprises five shorter sketches), the inclusion of "facts," and shifts from documentary to didactic rhetoric ("Churches with pulpits dedicated to the extirpation of Communism, materialism, and class-war").[51] It should be remembered that proletarian writing, or reportage more specifically, was as clearly opposed to what it saw as naturalism as to formalism.

Masses thus shows a continuation and extension of arguments first articulated locally in *Strife*. But the comparison once more suggests that the "left avant-gardism" of the earlier magazine is in part the product of its precocity. Two years later *Masses* can represent itself as a left mainstream, however exaggerated its self-location. *Masses* continues a concern with technique (workers are advised to produce newsreels, montage films, documentaries); it repeats Waten's sense of the Five-Year Plan (here, the film of the book!) as "plain historical fact" *and* "a story of sheer creative effort ... vibrant with the released energies of the enfranchised Russian masses"; and it declares again, in the voice of the manifesto, that "the pretence of the independence of art is worn thin." Realism, in other words, can still be found in dialogue with modernism, still as part of an intellectual agenda, and still in an aggressively marginal posture towards the institution of art. But there are only faint traces of *Strife*'s avant-gardism, and only when questions of technique are to the fore.

Perhaps we can observe in operation certain of the conditions which, according to Bürger, guarantee that the avant-gardiste provocation cannot be repeated indefinitely. It becomes an aesthetics or a politics, possibly one masquerading as the other. *Masses* declares a militant alternative art practice, but it never risks an "anti-art"

position in the way that *Strife* does, however briefly. Paradoxically, this is because *Masses* is without the anti-formalism of *Strife*:

> Proletarian art gives expression not only to the essential humanity which can only derive from the social class, the workers, but to the actual field of antagonism between the working-class and the anti-social ruling class. The communist works to make complete and effective the social consciousness of the workers, and so for the struggle against capitalism; the proletarian artist strives to give expression to the spiritual renascence which has its roots in that struggle.... [T]he working class carries the germs of an all-embracing civilization within it.[52]

In the *Masses* manifesto, under the banner "Art is a Weapon," proletarianism is a political imperative linked homologously to an aesthetic. As such it can be folded back into an organicism that is indeed ultimately aesthetic ("an all-embracing civilization"). Of course such confident pronouncements solved little for the artist or writer at the immediate level of the work, and the practical experimentation, the debates about technique and subject-matter, continued into the next decade. Thus the avant-gardism of Dos Passos remained on the agenda throughout the thirties, alongside *New Masses*, Hemingway, Gorky, surrealism and expressionism.[53] There is nevertheless a "shrinkage" in *Masses* toward a simpler anti-modernism. Proletarianism here is more a struggle over the *popular*, over true and false mass cultures, than a struggle or dialogue over the modern.

3. A Proletarian Career?

The proletarianist project as articulated in *Strife* or *Masses* re-cast traditional notions of a literary or artistic career. Such a career could no longer follow the trajectory of the bohemian detachment from life for the sake of Art (and Life), no longer the professional trajectory of the man of letters, and even the status of "serious" novelist, poet or painter was uncertain. The exemplary proletarian literary career was a kind of anti-career, a career path which defined itself by continually losing itself (in politics, in "work"...). Further, the examples of Gold, Dos Passos or Ernst Toller, as *Masses* itself points out, were not immediately transferable to a local context either as textual or career models. Similarly, "mass" organisations (however small their actual memberships) were ambiguous launching-places for a career, providing opportunities for otherwise disenfranchised "intellectuals" while problematising traditional career paths.

Despite the problems and often the pathos of their attempts to express their historical moment, the new kinds of cultural formation that existed around the magazines, the writers', artists' and workers' clubs, the Communist Party, the Swanston Family and other pubs and cafes, did enfranchise a new intelligentsia from the fringes of the established cultural institutions. The process continued throughout the thirties,

through the Writers' League, the New Theatre, the Contemporary Art Society and the reformed Fellowship of Australian Writers. In the first instance these cultural formations were enabled by the coming together of radical aesthetic and radical political discourses, and for a brief period proletarianism was the primary vehicle for this convergence or confrontation. By the mid-thirties cultural opposition to international fascism together with an increased sense among younger writers of their occupational identity altered the discourse and mode of operation of the different groups.[54] Nevertheless the issues that proletarianism had raised continued to figure on the agenda of left writers and intellectuals even when its "official" moment had passed and when it had been absorbed within other nationalist and anti-fascist projects. The relatively sudden forcing together of artistic and political discourses marks the "generational" break for a wide range of emergent careers.

Beyond the well-known examples of painters such as Counihan and McClintock, a large number of the names we have touched on went on to have significant public careers as artists, writers (not least as journalists) — and communists. It is not surprising that in one way or another individual careers should eventually enter the more traditional institutions of exhibiting, publication, and so on; but they tend to do so via the alternative organisations and media which themselves transformed the existing institutions and so the possible trajectories of an artistic career.

By the middle thirties, the artists had begun to exhibit and scattered texts had begun to appear in the magazines, the Party press, and one novel with some proletarian claims, Harcourt's *Upsurge*.[55] Interestingly, Prichard's *Working Bullocks* had not yet found its place in the radical canon. But despite writing what must have been Australia's first proletarian novel with *Hunger*, Judah Waten did not emerge as Australia's first and foremost proletarian writer. This is not simply because he was overseas at a crucial period (March 1931-June 1933), for there is evidence to suggest that on his return he was soon involved with the Labour Club, the Workers' Art Club, the Communist Party and the Swanston Family set. Instead we need to understand his very departure from Australia in terms of a "career structure": whatever else was involved, his decisions to travel overseas and then to abandon a literary career can be understood as "career" decisions, indeed as *literary* career decisions.

This point is clear in the case of the former: after having made his first public literary statement with *Strife*, the young Waten sets off in early 1931 for the Paris of Joyce and Dos Passos armed with his radical proletarian novel. Paris, above all, is the place where the European and the American, the avant-gardiste and the proletarian, meet and overlap. Waten had a room just around the corner from Shakespeare and

Company, and his partner, Bertha Laidler, possibly worked for Black Manikin Press, the publishing concern of Edward Titus.[56] As we have seen, he published in *Front* and *Nouvel Âge*, two of the key magazines where communism and modernism, proletarianism and the avant-garde, co-habited.[57] In London his rooms were near Bloomsbury, the centre of literary and "marginal" political activity.[58]

The second decision, to abandon a literary career, can also be understood positively as a "literary" career decision. After failing to get his novel published as a whole in London (where he was by early 1932) and after some contact with left literary and political circles, Waten accepted an offer to become co-editor of the *Unemployed Special*, the newspaper of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, on which he worked from July until his arrest in November.[59] (His fellow editor was another Melburnian from the same circles, a communist, bohemian and drinker, university graduate and later journalist in Australia, Theo Moody.) The move from marginal literature into marginal political journalism — marginal but based on the notion of the "masses" — is utterly comprehensible in the career of a proletarian writer at this point in time. It is one extension of the logic present in proletarianism from the outset, and a career pattern repeated numerous times worldwide in the period.

Perhaps Waten's decision can also be read as a critique of the avant-gardiste or "formalist" aspects of proletarian art which he had himself practised. On his return to Melbourne there was no return to literature despite the existence of a Workers' Art Club and then a Writers' League. The model for his career at this stage might best be understood as that of the "Party intellectual." The *Workers' Voice*, the newspaper of the Victorian section of the Communist Party from September 1933, carries a number of announcements for Waten as a speaker — and more than once a speaker on that most "intellectual" of Party issues, Trotskyism. Fortunately or unfortunately, this career was cut short. The *Workers' Voice* of 12 July 1935 announced that the Party had "expelled Judah Waten from its ranks":

> For a long time the Party has persevered in attempting to make a Communist out of Waten and to help him rid himself of his petty-bourgeois irresponsibilities which continually lead him away from the Party and which caused him on a number of occasions to hinder and damage Party activities.[60]

It appears that bohemianism and communism could still overlap, although no longer quite so happily. The *Worker' Voice* adds that Waten had "deserted" the Party. But perhaps even here there was a more literary imperative in operation, an imperative towards "experience" — or perhaps we should say towards literary "material." Around July 1935, together with Noel Counihan, Waten set off on a journey through Victoria and New South Wales; in 1936 they went touring again, to Sydney and eventually Brisbane. Counihan earned money from drawings and caricatures done along the way,

and has spoken about the trip as a period of apprenticeship. He has also described the literary aspects of the trip for Waten:

> He became very self-critical, very fed up with what he was doing and when he came back to Australia he didn't do any writing at all. We thought this might be an opportunity, while we were away together, that he might resume. As we needed money badly in Sydney to get going again, he started to try the commercial radio stations for short radio stories and of course, he discovered that they worked ... they would for example accept a script, read it, reject it and use it with variations, they would alter it.[61]

Waten is recorded in a number of places as a member of the Writers' League which began in Melbourne and Sydney in 1935.[62] However there is no evidence that any writing came out of this connection, although his membership of the League meant a continued involvement with the issues of proletarian literature, writing and politics, literature and communism. It remains, then, to describe the continuities of the League with earlier organisations and their magazines, and to suggest some of the changes occuring on this "wing" of the writing world which would mean that when Judah Waten begins again as a writer in the 1940s the task, and the possibilities of a career, will be conceived in a vastly different manner.

From one perspective by 1935 the moment of proletarianism had passed. For the communist left, fascism rather than bougeois ideology had come to be seen as the principal enemy although, of course, one might be merely an extension of the other. Comintern policy had shifted from the social fascist critique, which emphasised class consciousness and the historical revolutionary role of the proletariat, towards the policy of the united front against fascism. Thus there was a Communist Party bureaucratic imperative in the shift from a consciously proletarian organisation such as the Workers' Art Club to the united front and anti-fascist Writers' League. Whereas the policy of the former might be said to have been to proletarianise the progressive bourgeoisie, that of the latter was to "unite all progressive forces." In such a context, the radical emphasis on proletarian literature found in *Strife* or *Masses* appeared sectarian, divisive or "left formalist." In addition the proletarian era in Soviet literature had been officially declared over at the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in August 1934, and the era of socialist realism had begun.

It is unclear, however, whether either of these policy changes had significant effects on the way the League conducted itself, and in particular, on its *literary* ethos. Certainly the League was a united front organisation, set up in response to the visit of Egon Kisch to Australia (November 1934-March 1935).[63] Further, established writers and artists were involved from the outset, first with the Kisch visit — Vance and Nettie Palmer, Katharine Prichard, Louis Esson and Max Meldrum among others — and then with the setting up of the League itself. Prichard and Jean Devanny,

Communist Party members *and* published novelists, were instrumental in the latter. Kisch himself was a complex sign, a communist and a writer, co-chairman of the World Congress for the Defence of Culture, an established literary figure, although initially not well known in Australia, and a leading exponent of the new realism of reportage, *the* art-form of proletarianism: crucially he was "not just ... a practitioner but also ... a theorist of reportage."[64]

We might say that a Party imperative and, much more significantly, a literary/intellectual imperative among writers themselves coincided in the establishment of the Writers' League. Anti-fascism, especially as it came to be associated with the defence of culture and thus with writers' own cultural and professional identity, did not need the support of a Party platform to be prioritised. In Australia as in England, then, proletarianism reached its "highpoint" through a set of linkages made between the crisis of the Depression (versus the Five-Year Plan) and the crisis of the rise of fascism; but these very linkages meant that proletarianism came to mean something different from what it had meant at the beginning of the decade.

Established writers, artists and critics figured in the League's activities in a way that differentiates it from the organisations or looser cultural formations that we have examined so far. John White recalls Nettie Palmer, Basil Burdett, Frank Wilmot, Frederick Macartney and Arnold Shore as speakers or visitors at its functions. On the other hand, the bulk of the active membership was again comprised of those (at best) on the fringes of literature: journalists, commercial artists, students, communists. White gives a long list of members of the Melbourne League, and this includes only those who went on to some kind of public career: Kim Keane, Gavin Greenlees, John Fisher, Douglas Wilkie, Wilfred Burchett, Stewart Brown (all journalists), Frank Huelin, Frank Hardy, Robert Close, Albert Tucker, A.F.Howells, A.R. "Rem" McClintock, Bill Wannan, Dick Diamond, Catherine Duncan, Len Fox, Alan Marshall — and Judah Waten.[65] This list suggests that the League was continuing to function as an alternative cultural formation, its marginality, but also its effectivity, guaranteed by the conjunction of literature and politics, of theory and practice, which it instituted. Its location is nicely suggested by White when he distinguishes the League from two contemporaneous literary organisations, the Bread and Cheese Club (established in 1938 to "foster a knowledge and love of Australian literature, art and music"; its journal was called *Bohemia*!); and the Victorian Fellowship of Australian Writers, also established in 1938, and restricted to "writers of definite standing."[66]

Despite a report of the First All-Union Congress being tabled for discussion at the League's first meeting in Sydney,[67] there is little evidence to suggest that socialist realism arrived in Australia intact, little evidence that it was present as a method or

style rather than a broad set of ideals or a critical rhetoric — and there is little to suggest that even these were more than one voice in an on-going debate. The united front policy itself would have worked against it, and the cultural formation that the League represents, its emphasis on practice, would have baffled the monolithic bureaucratic ambitions of socialist realist doctrine.[68]

Within the League itself the issues show a good deal more continuity with those of proletarianism from the early thirties than with Soviet socialist realism. Its characteristic activities are classes on journalism, shorthand, poetry and languages, and competitions for short stories written from a working-class point of view: "the best written sketch, describing a shift at work, a day in the life of an employed or unemployed worker, a demonstration, meeting or strike, or some incident of working-class interest."[69] The notion of a literature of "facts" is still alive — Devanny writes that the organisation "threw open its ranks to those writers and would-be writers who would present to their readers the real facts of life, who would combat Fascism and war and other forms of oppression."[70] And although the facts might be different, the call is still to "modernise your technique"[71]: questions of technique and of appropriate contemporary models are still at issue.

Thus the dominant emphasis was on realism, and still on a *new*, a modern realism. The Party press in Sydney records talks on "the trend of modern literature"; on the question "What is a working-class writer?"; on John Dos Passos, "the leading American writer and `fellow-traveller' of the working-class movement. No writer is more discussed than Dos Passos..."; plus C. Hartley Grattan, in 1937, on American writers, praising Dos Passos and Mike Gold. In Melbourne we find talks on "Proletarian Literature in USA"; "Modern Art"; and Sinclair Lewis.[72] John White recalls that:

> members of the League with literary ambitions generally had a realist approach to writing, to tell the facts and come to the point (this is exemplified in the title of the periodical produced by members), that the emotions and atmosphere will come naturally with the urgency and intensity the author compounds into the descriptions and narratives. Members felt this mode of expression was strikingly illustrated in the writings of Hemingway and Gorky, and even more so in the famous trilogy ... by John Dos Passos.[73]

The modernity of realism continued to be registered most acutely where art met politics (or work or the praxis of everyday life), and where this conjunction was posed as a question of technique. The first publication of the League was a lecture by a Sydney journalist, under the heading "Modernize Your Technique," on the subject of *Newspaper Reporting and Modern Reportage* ("With Notable Examples from the Works of EGON ERWIN KISCH"). The author distinguished reportage from mere reporting and defined it as "*a new literary form*":

> A Reportage might be described as a report in literary form or as a dramatised report ... a report plus atmosphere, description, comment and deduction — all with the thread of accurate fact running through it....
>
> The best reportage is propagandistic, and plus all these aspects it strives for artistic quality....
>
> As reportage deals so seriously with dates, proclamations, placards, documents, and sometimes the minutest details of fact, some may fall into the error, that reportage is merely a mechanical recording of dry facts....
>
> [M]y point is to emphasise that reportage must not be mechanical, and must be more than photographic.
>
> [Reportage as a weapon is that] which seeks in the facts of industrial slavery and economic vicissitude, the lessons for further human progress — which fearlessly draws the moral from the situation before it and indicates with subtle finger or trumpet blast the newest stage of the long white road to human peace and social justice.[74]

The lecture sums up all that was "new" and all that was paradoxical in the project of contemporary realism, not least in its concept of the literary. It is the sense of newness that links its project, and the cultural formation it addresses, back to the proletarianist manifestos of *Strife*.

Within the network of the Writers' League both Harcourt's *Upsurge* and Devanny's *Sugar Heaven* were described as "proletarian"; the first of Alan Marshall's work to appear were short pieces collected as a "Proletarian Picture Book"; and Marshall's novel, *How Beautiful Are Thy Feet*, originally entitled *Factory*, is the most remarkable local adaptation of Dos Passos.[75] Proletarianism, then, could still operate as a sign of the new realism; and formal innovation, not simply a new political content, was still on the agenda. The context could still be thought in terms of urgent contemporaneity. At the same time, except perhaps in Marshall's novel, there is little of what we might call the modernist celebration of modernity or the celebration of immediate revolutionary change, of "destructive and constructive" energy — no sense that the modern everyday world itself might be rendered a work of art. Such gestures are scarcely possible in a context defined in terms of the *defence* of culture, truth and democracy (and, for some, the working-class and the Soviet Union) against fascism. The mainstream literary ethos might still insist on art's separation from or superiority to political concerns — so Nettie Palmer could note with some disquiet that League members wanted "poetry that makes you *do* something"[76] — but even for League members it was not after all a great step from the defence of culture in the name of truth and democracy to the traditional defence of art's autonomy.

Realism, although still linked with "the viewpoint of the working class," comes increasingly to be linked with a more populist notion of democracy. This change, in turn, is linked to the major shift to have occurred in the literary and intellectual field since the early thirties, the articulation of an Australian literary tradition which could be represented as a radical socio-political tradition. This was one

consequence of the involvement of established Australian writers such as the Palmers in the Writers' League, and both cause and effect of an increasing occupational identity among writers (in part as *Australian* writers, with a set of local professional concerns). The communist profile of nationalism had also altered. The Spanish civil war provided a new model of internationalism at the same time as providing a model for *national* defence against fascism from both within and without (White describes opposition to fascism and Franco as the "binding influences for all members of the League"[77]). The *Workers' Voice* also records talks at the Writers' League on P.R. Stephensen's *Foundations of Culture in Australia*, on "Writers and the Eureka Stockade," and on Joseph Furphy.[78] And by 1938 when writers associated with the League published their own journal, *Point*, anti-fascism and an Australian tradition together provide the occasion for its literary coming-into-being:

> [W]e who have interested ourselves in this magazine — a group of writers of various political tendencies, agreeing only in our opposition to Fascism — feel compelled to use our first words for a plain statement which, as far as we know, neither could nor would be published by any other existing Australian journal....
>
> Fascism, which the experience of other countries shows to mean little more than war, misery and the brutal denial of that love of freedom which is the best tradition of the Australian people, has been described as the "wedding of a condition and a myth"....
>
> "Point" makes no apology for concerning itself with this subject. It is concerned primarily with literature and literary values, but it is also deeply concerned with human values, which Fascism sullies and betrays....
>
> "Point" holds high the great democratic tradition of Australia.[79]

It is as if realism no longer needs to be named or foregrounded as a question of technique; and proletarianism has dropped altogether from view. The model of literature as human expression and therefore as the expression of truth and democracy is articulated together with the notion of an Australian democratic tradition. Nationalism is now high on the agenda, and in the same movement "literature" is (back) on the agenda in a way that we have not met before.

The distinctive perception of a literary tradition which this produces will, by the early 1940s, come to be the most powerful determinant for individuals conceiving of themselves, of their writing, their career, in terms of the category of the "Australian" writer. That now becomes possible in new ways. But as certain options open, others are obscured. In the following chapters I will examine some of the ways in which it was possible for a writing career to be conceived and practised in terms of its Australianness from the 1940s to the 1970s. In what ways, for example, was it possible in the field of literature, in the local cultural economy, to be a migrant writer, an Australian Jewish writer or an Australian communist man of letters?

1. Details for the magazines will be found in the text of this chapter; see also Merewether, *Art & Social Commitment: An End to the City of Dreams 1931-1948* (Sydney: Art Gallery of NSW), pp.50-58. For a discussion of the novels by Harcourt, Devanny and Marshall, see David Carter, "Documenting and Criticising Society," in *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia*, ed. Laurie Hergenhan (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1988), pp.374-79 and Chapter 5 below. For references to prose sketches and dramatic scripts printed in the *Communist Review* see David Carter, "Re-Viewing Communism: *Communist Review* (Sydney), 1934-1966: A Checklist of Literary Material," *Australian Literary Studies* 12, 1 (May 1985), pp.93-105.

2. See Carter, "Documenting and Criticising Society," pp.370-74.

3. On 4 May 1930 Waten was suspended from holding any office in the Communist Party for twelve months for leaving Sydney without permission. In Sydney he had been on the Editorial Board of the *Workers' Weekly*. Communist Party of Australia Records, Mitchell Library, ML MSS 5021 (Add on 1936), Box 3.

4. Hugh Ford, *Published in Paris: American and British Writers, Printers, and Publishers in Paris, 1920-1939* (New York: Pushcart Press, 1980), p.311. Waten also appears in Henry Poulaille's proletarian/avant-garde magazine *Nouvel Âge*, published in Paris between January and December 1931. Waten's contribution, translated into French, "Guerre dans le monde," appears in a special anti-war number which also includes Blaise Cendrars, John Dos Passos, Mayakovski, and Ernst Toller: no.11 (November 1931), pp.1006-7. Norman Macleod and V.F. Calverton were involved in both *Front* and *Nouvel Âge*. Waten's piece does not appear to be from *Hunger* although the style is similar.

5. F.J. Hoffman, Charles Allen, and Carolyn F. Ulrich, *The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), p.295.

6. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Manchester: Manchester University Press; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p.72. Waten has spoken of bits of the novel appearing in magazines (plural), but the *Front* excerpt is the only one that research has brought to light.

7. The first quotation is from Judah Waten, "A Writer's Youth," in *Joseph's Coat: An Anthology of Multicultural Writing*, ed. Peter Skrzynecki (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1985), p.206; the second, from Judah Waten, "My Two Literary Careers," *Southerly* 31, 2 (1971), p.83. Waten has also described the novel in similar terms in his interview with Barret Reid, February 1967, held at the State Library of Victoria.

8. Judah Waten, "FOOD! FOOD!" *Front* 4 (June 1931), p.289.

9. A similar paradox is to be discovered in the status of the avant-garde work: "Paradoxically, the avant-gardiste intention to destroy art as an institution is ... realised in the work of art itself. The intention to revolutionise life by returning art to its praxis turns into a revolutionising of art" (Bürger, p.72).

10. Carter, "Documenting and Criticising Society," pp.371-78. R.D. Tate, *The Doughman* (Sydney: Endeavour Press, 1933). See also Chapter 5 below.

11. Guido Barrachi to Nettie Palmer, October 8 1931, Palmer Papers, National Library of Australia, NLA MS 1174/1/3826, Box 6. Baracchi was one-time editor of the communist newspaper the *Proletarian* (1920-1922), too early, despite its title, to be considered a

precursor to Waten's writing. It is interesting to consider whether Baracchi received *Front* in Melbourne or whether Waten had sent the copy to him from Paris. The former possibility would suggest more of a local audience for this kind of material than we might otherwise imagine — he does write of the magazine as if it did not need explanation.

12. Nettie Palmer, *Fourteen Years: Extracts from a Private Journal 1925-1939*: entry for 19 March 1931, reprinted in *Nettie Palmer*, ed. Vivian Smith (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1988), p.67. Nettie Palmer's review of *Axel's Castle* appears in *Stream* 1, 1 (July 1931), pp.39-40.

13. Waten's papers contain numerous copies of *Left Review* from the 1930s, NLA MS 4536, Box 24. For a discussion of English debates of the 1930s concerning these techniques, debates which were available in Australia, see Stuart Laing, "Presenting `Things As They Are': John Sommerfield's *May Day* and Mass Observation," in *Class, Culture and Social Change: A New View of the 1930s*, ed. Frank Gloversmith (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), pp.142-60, which underlines the importance of ideas of technique and audience based on cinema, the newspaper and the concept of the mass. In the Barret Reid interview Waten talks of having known Sommerfield in England, 1931-33. See also Janet Batsleer et al., *Rewriting English: Cultural Politics of Gender and Class* (London: Methuen, 1985), pp.41-69.

14. See: Joseph Freeman, "Let's Laugh," *Workers' Weekly* (*WW*) 1 April 1927, p.3; "Culture and the Workers," *WW* 6 May 1927, p.3; "Art for Workers: A Virile Force," *WW* 2 November 1928, p.4; "Building a Workers' State," *WW* 6 September 1929, p.2. Also "Books for Militants," *WW* 6 May 1927, p.3. A debate under the heading "Art and the Workers" is conducted in the pages of the paper, May to July 1927.

15. For a discussion of the Australian application of the line of the Sixth Comintern Congress see Robin Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists: Communism and the Australian Labour Movement 1920-1955* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1975), pp.20-22.

16. Alan Swingewood, *The Novel and Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1975), pp.91-101. A decade later, and on the other side of socialist realism, Katharine Prichard provides a fascinating retrospective view on Soviet literary politics. Her position is orthodox according to 1941 precepts, but the traces of an avant-garde proletarianism are still striking: "During the first years of Soviet organisation, creative expression in art and literature ran the gamut of all the erratic and ephemeral forms. Futurism, sur-realism, and all manner of extravagances, bidding for acceptance as the art form of the future." These had been revealed as "exotic Bohemianism ... revolutionary in form rather than content." Still the writer she notes as the "first to interpret the spirit of the new age" is Mayakovsky whom she praises for his poster poems and verse about "saboteurs and garbage, lice and traitors." She describes his poems as making "bright *graphs* on the mind" (my emphasis). Prichard, "Literature and Drama," in *Soviet Culture: A Selection of Talks at the Cultural Conference, November 1941* (Sydney: NSW Aid Russia Committee, 1942), pp.80-81.

17. John Sendy, *Melbourne's Radical Bookshops: History, People, Appreciation* (Melbourne: International Bookshop, 1983), p.40. "What's On," *WW* 19 April 1929, p.3. The bulk of the political literature was from Britain or English-language material from the Soviet Union, although there was a significant proportion of American publications as well ("nearly a quarter" Sendy notes of an advertisement for Andrade's: Sendy, p.34). Waten has also spoken of books available in the Communist Party library in the 1920s: Upton Sinclair, Nexo, Dreiser, Anatole France, Dos Passos, Mike Gold, Sinclair Lewis, Barbusse (Barret Reid interview, February 1967). The Jewish immigrant element in *New Masses*, via Mike Gold, Joseph Freeman and others, was possibly also part of its availability as a model for Waten.

18. Works by these writers do, of course, continue to appear in the communist press in advertisements and suggestions to readers. There are also some interesting convergences between the proletarianist project and the aesthetic utopianism of someone like William Morris. For example, from *News from Nowhere*, (1890; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970): "`Books, books! always books, grandfather! When will you understand that after all it is the world we live in which interests us.... Look!' she said, throwing open the casement wider and showing us the moonlit garden, through which ran a little shiver of the summer night-wind, `look! these are our books in these days!'" (p.129). Of course, the view out the window is decidely pre-modernist! See Chapter 7 below for further discussion of utopian models.

19. Daniel Aarons, *Writers on the Left* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp.208-9, paraphrasing and quoting from Mike Gold, "Notes of the Month," *New Masses* 6, 4 (September 1930), pp.4-5. Sharyn Pearce has compared Australian and American proletarian writing in a way that would support my argument, however she does not get far beyond noting a "literary confluence" and blurs the difference between proletarianism and socialist realism: "The Proletarianization of the Novel: The Cult of the Worker in Australian and American Fiction of the Depression," *Southerly* 48, 2 (1988), pp.187-200.

20. Lucien Bonnard [Gino Nibbi], "A Glance at the Melbourne National Gallery," *Stream* 1, 1 (July 1931), p.15.

21. *Stream* I, 1 (inside front cover).

22. *Stream* 1, 2 (August 1931), for example, includes these contents: "Some Modern Masters," by Gino Nibbi; "A Young Soviet Writer" (on Leonid Leonov), trans. from *Le Mois*; "The Confrontation," by Bertram Higgins; "Music and the Social State," by Arthur Hoeree; "Surrealism: A Pre-Novel," by Azorin; "Modern Life and Art," by Fernand Leger; "Luigi Pirandello," by Carmelo Puglionisi; "Baudelaire Psycho-Analysed," by Ernest Harden; and poems with titles such as "Strange Encounter," "Hamlet's Revolt," "Collapse of a Youthful Philospher Dancing," and "Schizophrenic Testament," by Alwyn Lee, Arthur Davies, Edgar Holt and the magazine's editor, C. Alston Pearl (better-known, later, as Cyril Pearl). See also John Tregenza, *Australia's Little Magazine's 1923-1954* (Adelaide: Libraries Board of South Australia, 1964), pp.39-45.

23. The most important "event" in the production of the magazine appears to be the Leonardo Art Shop, run by Gino Nibbi, which opened at 166 Little Collins St in 1930. This was the editorial address of *Stream*. Nibbi stocked "the more important English and American Publications, [and] books and periodicals in almost every tongue — French, German, Russian, Spanish, Italian, Polish, Yiddish." The shop advertised itself as offering "a flavour of Montparnasse ... a sophistication, an atmosphere of modernism, suggestive of some friendly little book-store in the Rue de l'Odeon." See Sendy, pp.95-97. The magazine also includes an advertisment for the Venetian Tower Cafe, "Melbourne's only truly Bohemian resort" (*Stream* 1, 3 [September 1931], p.1). Waten recalls that Nibbi took copies of *Strife* when it was produced (Barret Reid interview). Noel Counihan also recalls that Pearl and artist Dominic Leon advocated Dos Passos. Leon he describes as among the first of the Melbourne artists "to become interested in the aesthetic of modern machinery" (Noel Counihan, interview with Barbara Blackman [Tape 3], May 1986, National Library of Australia).

24. *Stream* 1, 1, p.4.

25. C. [Cyril] Alston Pearl, "La Ligne Générale," *Stream* 1, 1, p.44.

26. Merewether, *Art & Social Commitment*, reproduces this cover (p.58) and includes a biography of Maugham (p.102).

27. "Montages," *Stream* 1, 2, p.4. References to Eisenstein etc. on pp.1-2. Eisenstein is quoted as saying: "The germinal idea of our Russian cinema is the same as that which recently inspired our revolution, i.e., the predominance of the collective over the individual ideal." To put their position crudely, the magazine's writers are pro-cinema but anti-Hollywood.

28. There is a fascinating piece in *Stream* by Fernand Leger, a celebration of "modern life," of speed, objects, technology, cinema, economics and facts!:
Modern life, intense, concentrated, is sensual in the real meaning of the word, for we utilise our senses more than ever.... The passion for speed is a consequence....
Ensembles no longer satisfy us. We wish to grasp their details, *and we perceive that these details, once isolated, have a completely independent life....*
The wide planes of the cinema are a consecration of this new vision.... We have at last discovered objects, fragments of objects ... each has its own beauty, individual, intrinsic....
Objects make up the pageant of the street. In shop windows they are isolated and personified. This humble shop-assistant is going to astonish us.... Give him three neckties, two umbrellas, an automobile, twelve silk stockings, four shirts — and he will arrange them, order them, *make them a work of art....*
In our epoch, economic and artistic spheres are closely linked. We create useful things that are beautiful.
.... [N]ew facts, it seems to me, are destined to requicken the spirit of the world. In the order of plastic facts, I will take as an example that of modern architectural and cinegraphic creation, which is a precise fact, realised and achieved.
(Fernand Leger, "Modern Life and Art," *Stream* 1, 2, p.30.)

29. The partial exception is H. Alwyn Lee, "Realtors on Parnassus," *Stream* 1, 2, p.43: "[The American] scene is for us a pastiche of Lewis, Dreiser, Anderson, Hecht and Sinclair, but they have informed the chaotic spectacle with a certain tragedy — a struggle. The stifled genius of America rises to grapple with Mammon. The steel cliffs of America's cities look down on a scene endowed with a perverse vitality."

30. Zinovy Lvovsky, "Soviet Literature," trans. Isabel Renfree, *Stream* 1, 3, pp.13-14. For accounts of Panferov and *Brousski* see Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p.100, and Ermolaev, *Soviet Literary Theories 1917-1934* (New York: Octagon, 1977), pp.105-6, 174-75.

31. "Montages," *Stream* 1, 3, p.46.

32. Wagner becomes a progenitor of the avant-garde, in terms that will be familiar: "These inspired operas are *constructed rather than created*. We must, therefore, construct and destroy relentlessly, break up and pass on, leaving holes and landslides behind which sinister harmonies are broken ... with the artist endeavouring to bring out everything that is living, whole, and human, even at the expense of the grandiose and magnificent monotonousness of the work" (my emphasis). Bruno Bavillii, "Wagner To-day," *Stream* 1, 3, p.12.

33. *Stream* 1, 3 (September 1931), title-page. The magazine also announces for its ill-fated October issue articles on "The New Soviet Theatre," on "American Literature" (by André Maurois), an unpublished fragment by Dostoievsky, and a piece on Mallarmé (by A.R. Chisholm).

34. Communist Party members who appear in the magazine include Ralph Gibson, G.P. O'Day and Guido Barrachi. Judah Waten was overseas until mid-1933 and does not appear in the magazine, but his name is recorded in the Labour Club Minutes Book as a speaker on European literature, July 17 1933 (Melbourne University Archives).

35. Winston Rhodes, "The New Realism," *Proletariat* 1, 1 (April 1932), p.13.

36. Jon Christian Suggs, "The Proletarian Novel," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography Volume 9: American Novelists 1910-1945 Part 3*, ed. James J. Martine (Detroit: Bruccoli Clark, 1981), p.233. In the Australian context, Ian Reid has spoken of the mass perception of history in relation to the rise of the historical novel in the thirties. See his *Fiction and the Great Depression: Australia and New Zealand 1930-1950* (Melbourne: Edward Arnold, 1979); and David Carter, "`History was on Our Side': Memoirs from the Australian Left," *Meanjin* 46, 1 (March 1987), p.111.

37. *Masses and Men* had been produced by the Workers' Art Club in Melbourne in 1932. Angela Hillel, *Against the Stream: Melbourne New Theatre 1936-1986* (Melbourne: New Theatre, 1986), p.6.

38. C.P. [=Cyril Pearl?], "American Scenario," *Proletariat* 2, 1 (February 1933), pp.22-24. The article lists, along with Dos Passos "in the vanguard of the revolutionary movement": Sherwood Anderson, Mike Gold, Charles Yale Harrison, Theodore Dreiser, Edmund Wilson and Waldo Frank.

39. Journalists were Brian Fitzpatrick, Colin Wills and Bernard Burns; commercial artists were Nutter Buzacott, Herbert McClintock, Jimmy Flett, and Mervyn Wallis. Waten at this stage had mostly done journalistic work for the communist press. Two other historical moments that might be used as comparisons: the writing of the Sydney *Bulletin* in the context of *that* new commercial, journalistic venture; the `pop-art'/anti-art of the 1960s (Michael Brown, Colin Lancely) at a period when the commercial gallery scene in Australia was being established.

40. Carter, "`History was on Our Side,'" p.112.

41. Merewether, *Art & Social Commitment*, p.100. Merewether also includes biographies of Nutter Buzacott, Noel Counihan and Jack Maugham pertinent to my argument.

42. The Meldrum circle and their offshoot centred around Justus Jorgensen are described in Betty Roland's memoir, *The Eye of the Beholder* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1984).

43. Raymond Williams, *Culture* (Glasgow: Fontana, 1981), pp.70-71.

44. Michael Juste, "The Dance of the Penny Paper Dolls," *Strife*, pp.11-13. *Masses* includes a critique of the *Argus*: David Lockhart, "`Argus' History," pp.11-12.

45. As suggested earlier, before the mid-thirties there was little sense of a local national literary tradition, that is, one that connected present with past and locale with nation. The *Bulletin* was still there of course, reviewing Australian books, and *All About Books* had carried reviews and notices since 1928. But the *Bulletin* scarcely functioned any longer as a kind of "national literary club" (see Ken Stewart, "Journalism and the World of the Writer: The Production of Australian Literature 1855-1915," in Hergenhan, pp.189 & 191); and perhaps *All About Books* suggests its milieu in the kinds of cultural formations for which it carries notices: not only publishing houses but also such literary societies as the Society of Australian Authors, the Henry Lawson Memorial and Literary Society of Footscray, the Dickens Fellowship, the Melbourne Shakespeare Society etc. (John McLaren, "Publishing in the Twentieth Century," in *The Book in Australia: Essays Towards a Cultural and Social History*, eds D.H. Borchardt and W. Kirsop (Melbourne: Monash University, 1988), pp.73-74.

46. See Merewether, *Art & Social Commitment*, pp.57-58 & 102.

47. Richard Haese gives a sense of this inner urban culture for a slightly later period in the 1930s and 1940s: *Rebels and Precursors: The Revolutionary Years of Australian Art* (London: Allen Lane, 1981), ch.1.

48. Merewether, *Art and Social Commitment*, p.11.

49. Daniel Aaron, *Writers on the Left* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), describes the American experience of the Kharkov conference, pp.219-30.

50. Alwyn Lee also turns up in the *Workers' Weekly* as co-secretary of the Workers' Art Club, defending their performance of Toller's *Masses and Men* from a correspondent who termed it "typically petit bourgeois" and "social fascist." *WW* 16 September 1932, p.2. By the 1960s he is in the USA as a contributing editor to *Time* magazine!

51. Ralph Gibson and H. Alwyn Lee, "Two Sketches: `South Wales, 1928'; `New South Wales, 1932,'" *Masses*, pp.5-6. The *Workers' Weekly* printed some sketches in early 1931, mostly (wholly?) by Jean Devanny. See: unsigned, "The Swagman Who Did Not Scab," 30 January 1931; J.D., "The Electrician: A Story with a Point," 13 February 1931; unsigned, "The Electrician has Further Adventures," 6 March 1931; Jean Devanny, "The Electrician Demonstrates," 20 March 1931. Apart from the use of the brief form, these are technically orthodox.

52. *Masses* 1 (November 1932), p.1.

53. I have in mind developments in the Writers' League (1935-1940 in Melbourne) and the Contemporary Art Society (1939-47). For the former see John White, *Alan Marshall and the Victorian Writers' League* (Kuranda, Qld: Rams Skull Press, 1987), passim. Julie Wells bases her discussion largely on information relating to the Sydney group: "The Writers' League: a Study in Literary and Working-Class Politics," *Meanjin* 46, 4 (December 1987), pp.527-34. For the Contemporary Art Society see Haese (passim) and McQueen, Part 2.

54. On the politicisation and professionalisation of the Fellowship of Australian Writers and other groups see Drusilla Modjeska, *Exiles at Home: Australian Women Writers 1925-1945* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1981), ch.5, and Julie Wells, "Writers and Fascism: The Kisch Case," in *Workers and Intellectuals: Essays on Twentieth Century Australia From Ten Urban Hunters and Gatherers*, eds Richard Nile and Barry York (London: Edward Blackwood, 1992), pp.67-83.

55. Early exhibitions include *The Embryos* (McClintock, Flett, Eric Thake), The Little Gallery, July 1930; *The New Group* (Dalgarno, Flett, Buzacott, Thake, Bill Dolphin and others), Athenaeum Gallery, 1931; and the showing of Jack Maugham's work at the Workers' Art Club, 1932. See Merewether, pp.84-113. Publication was more furtive, apart from the manifestos, essays and poems in the magazines discussed. As indicated above, some prose sketches appeared in the communist press in the early 1930s, a great many more between 1937 and 1940. See Carter, "Reviewing Communism," pp.95 & 99. *Upsurge* was banned after publication. Katharine Susannah Prichard described it as "Australia's first truly proletarian novel": see Carter, "Documenting and Criticising Society," pp.377-78, and the introduction by Richard Nile to the 1986 reprint of the novel (University of Western Australia Press); also Peter Cowan, "J.M. Harcourt and the Nineteen-Thirties," *Westerly* 29, 2 (July 1984), pp.93-100.

56. Waten discusses the period in Paris most fully in his interview with Barret Reid, February 1967 (State Library of Victoria). The detail about his partner is based on unreliable evidence, Waten's story/memoir "With Uncle Jacob and Auntie Malka in Paris," *Southerly* 43, 2 (1983), p.123.

57. The Poulaille archives also contain three letters from Waten to Poulaille (editor of *Nouvel Âge*), from London, October 1931, suggesting that Waten had established quite close contacts with the group around Poulaille's magazine.

58. His address on arrest in 1932 is given as Frederick St, Grays Inn Road. This is walking distance from the then headquarters of the League Against Imperialism and the National Unemployed Workers' Movement. Waten was involved in both.

59. *Unemployed Special* (July-October 1932); becomes the *Unemployed Leader* from November, 1932. Waten's arrest is recorded in the latter edition, p.2. The British Library, Newspaper Library (Colindale).

60. *Workers' Voice* 12 July 1935, p.4. Jack Beasley gives a sympathetic account of Waten's life at this time in his *Red Letter Days: Notes from Inside an Era* (Sydney: Australasian Book Society, 1979), p.104.

61. Noel Counihan, interview with Mark Cranfield (9 July 1981), National Library of Australia, Tape no.1059.

62. Wells, "The Writers' League," p.532; White, p.21; A.F. Howells, *Against the Stream: The Memories of a Philosophical Anarchist 1927-1939* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1983), p.119. The first meeting of the Melbourne Writers' League was held on 8 March 1935. The first National Conference was held in Sydney on 13 April 1935. The *Workers' Weekly* reports that the conference: "stressed the broad and non-sectarian nature of the W.I. [the Writers' International of which the League was the Australian Section]; traced the influence of the great Soviet writers on modern literature, dealt with the degeneration of culture, art and literature under the influence of Fascism and concluded on the optimistic note of the great work confronting the WI in connection with the orientation of the literature of the radical and groping social-political writers." (Jean Devanny, "Writers' League: First National Conference," *WW* 19 April 1935, p.6.)

63. Waten has spoken of being present on the wharf when Kisch made his spectacular arrival in Melbourne (review of Kisch's *Australian Landfall*, *Age* 27 September 1969, p.15), and a letter from Kisch to Bertha Laidler suggests that he had a little to do with Kisch during the latter's visit: "...I can hope that you one day will run away from Australia and visit me in Paris. Bring Juda Watton (sic) with you, and when all is allright in Germany I go with him to Bavaria and we will have a good time and you will have the pleasure to carry us home"! (Kisch, aboard SS Orford to Bertha Laidler, 19 March 1935: Bertha Walker Papers, Box 1, State Library of Victoria). For details of Kisch's visit see Wells, "Writers and Fascism" and "Kisch Speaks to Australian Writers," *WW* 18 January 1935, p.6 (the same page reports Kisch addressing the Jewish-Communist group, the Gezerd, denying Soviet anti-Semiticism).

64. Peter Monteath, "The Kisch Visit Revisited," *Journal of Australian Studies* 34 (September 1992), p.69.

65. White, pp.21-23.

66. White, p.29.

67. Wells, "The Writers' League," p.530. The term "socialist realism" appears in a reprinted Soviet article in the *Workers' Weekly* in 1933: "The Cultural Revolution in the Soviet Union," *WW* 27 January 1933, p.3. The First All-Union Congress is also reported, with quotations from Gorky's speech: "Soviet Writers in Congress," *WW* 5 October 1934, p.4.

68. For discussions of socialist realism in Australia see Beasley, *Red Letter Days*, pp.169-88; Carter, "Documenting and Criticising Society," pp.378ff (and Chapters 4 & 5 below); Bernard Smith, "Reds and Other Colors," *Age Monthly Review* 1, 6 (October 1981), pp.7-8; plus essays by Patrick Buckridge and Carole Ferrier in *Gender, Politics and Fiction: Twentieth-Century Australian Women's Novels*, ed. Carole Ferrier (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1985). For an extremely hostile account see Patrick O'Brien, *The Saviours: An Intellectual History of the Left in Australia* (Richmond, Vic.: Drummond, 1977), pp.35-63.

69. "Writers' League," *WW* 14 June 1935, p.5.

70. "Writers' International," *WW* 25 January 1935, p.6.

71. Julian Smith, *Newspaper Reporting and Modern Reportage* (Sydney: Writers' League, 1935), p.1.

72. See "Writers' International," *WW* 25 January 1935, p.6; "Writers' League," *WW* 8 February 1935, p.2; "Writers' League," *WW* 12 April 1935, p.6; and "American Writers: Lecture by C. Hartley Grattan," *WW* 12 February 1937, p.2. For Melbourne see *Workers' Voice* 5 June 1936, p.6.

73. White, p.28.

74. Julian Smith, *Newspaper Reporting and Modern Reportage*, pp.4-5, 10-13. This document also includes the "Report of the First National Australian Writers' League Conference with Statement of Principles and Terms of Novel Competition." The document is advertised on its first page as "the first exposition in this country of Reportage — that combination of art and social realism which is the most modern form of describing the world and its events." Wells identifies Julian Smith as Sydney journalist Tom Fitzgerald ("The Writers' League," p.531).

75. Some of Marshall's sketches are reprinted in *Alan Marshall's Battlers* (Sydney: Pan, 1984). They originally appeared in the *Workers' Voice* November 1937-July 1938, *Left Review* November-December 1937, and *Communist Review* December 1937-January 1939 (the latter includes excerpts from the novel *Factory*, finished in 1937 but not published until 1949, under its new title, *How Beautiful are Thy Feet*).

76. From her diary, quoted in Wells, "The Writers' League," p.531.

77. White, p.27.

78. *Workers' Voice* July-September 1936.

79. "Editorial," *Point* 1, 1 (Autumn 1938), pp.1-2. The journal includes stories by Alan Marshall, Ilya Ehrenburg and Robert Close; criticism by Mike Gold and Vance Palmer; and verse by A.R. McClintock and Frederico Garcia Lorca.

3

Before the Migrant Writer: The Writing of *Alien Son*

... a collection of stories, a novel without architecture, a novel without a plot, a group of stories about the same subject, about the same characters, principally a father, mother and son.
(Judah Waten, Interview with Hazel De Berg, 1960)

The stories that comprise Judah Waten's *Alien Son* were written and revised over a period extending from the mid-1940s to the early 1950s. The first to be published was "To a Country Town," in M. Barnard Eldershaw's 1946 edition of the annual short story anthology *Coast to Coast*. Over the next six years further stories appeared in *Coast to Coast* (1948-52), *Meanjin* (1948-50) and the *Bulletin* (1950-52).[1] The collection itself, Waten's first published book, was released by Angus and Robertson in July 1952.

In the context of my discussion in the previous two chapters the question that arises is how the proletarian avant-garde writer who "disappeared" in the mid-1930s could re-emerge a decade or so later as the author of *Alien Son*. The main purpose of the present chapter will be to address this question, not through a directly biographical study of the changes in Waten's mentality, political beliefs or social circumstances in the intervening years, but through an analysis of the book's literary occasion. My focus will be on the writing of *Alien Son*, by which I mean both the institutional circumstances of the process of composition and the narrative "circumstances" of the composed text. By its literary occasion I mean the moment of the writing defined in terms of a network of ideas or styles, alliances or cultural formations and publishing or career possibilities, all of which work to determine what literary options are open to a writer at a given time and in a given place — to Judah Waten, in Melbourne, in the 1940s and early 1950s.

Such an understanding of the literary occasion, already at play in my opening chapters, can be suggested here by a series of "simple" questions (which I hope to illustrate are far from naively empirical in their consequences). What sorts of fiction were being written and read in Australia in the late 1940s? What specific value among genres did the short story have (and for whom, under what conditions)? What groupings of writers existed? (Who knew whom; who read whom?) What kind of audience could a writer suppose? (For whom did you write?) What kinds of literary or writing careers were available, both practically (getting published and getting paid)

and conceptually (how could a literary career be conceived)? With each question focused on the writing of *Alien Son* I want to trace the formation of Judah Waten's writing career, and in particular to locate it in a period "before" the migrant writer.

By this final phrase I am not referring to a period before there were in fact "migrant writers" in Australia. Whether we understand by the term writers born elsewhere, writers whose first language is other than English or writers whose acculturation was other than Anglo-Celtic, it is doubtful if there was ever a time "before" the migrant writer in Australia. Instead I want to describe a period before the concept of the migrant writer existed locally, before it was available to the writer in Australia as a category through which a literary career could be conceived or as a speaking position from which a writer could intervene in a contemporary cultural economy. This last formulation entails — for the 1940s and 1950s — an examination of the process whereby the category of migrant writer becomes possible *within* Australian literature.

Because of my focus on the immediate post-war period, I will use the term "migrant writer" in this chapter despite its limitations as analysed in more recent criticism, and despite the range of over-lapping but non-identical terms which have been proposed: ethnic writer, multicultural writer, non-Anglo-Celtic writer.[2] The term itself was not yet in common circulation, but "migrant writer" was the only available conceptual space before multiculturalism, subsuming the category of the "Jewish writer" for example, and the period I will be discussing is still to be found under the sign of assimilation. Indeed the period of post-war immigration is one of emergent (even rampant) assimilationism, a development itself significant for the shapes a writing career, a career as a migrant writer, could then take. Certainly Waten's writings in the 1950s and 1960s were received in terms of migration and the passage towards assimilation, rather than in terms of ethnicity: he "records the path of assimilation trod and being trodden by thousands of tomorrow's Australians"; "... the arrival and adjustment, more or less, of New Australians to old Australia."[3]

Alien Son has secured a permanent if minor place in most versions of Australian literary history as the first significant work to take as its subject "foreign" or non-English-speaking migrants in Australia. There is often a form of assimilationism at work in this history, whereby Waten is gathered up as evidence of the broadening stream of national/literary development. When ethnic difference is recognised it is often by way of demarcation: Waten is limited to minority status as a *migrant* (or Jewish) writer even as this supplies the terms for his recognition within the Australian literary tradition.[4] Although Waten's place within the canon is almost wholly on the grounds of *Alien Son* (indeed *because* this is so) his status as a migrant/Jewish writer

has largely been taken for granted, taken as self-evident. My discussion of Waten's earlier attempts at a writing career, however, will already have suggested that there could be nothing immediate or inevitable about the author's "re-invention" of his writerly self, even as a writer of "autobiographical sketches."

Although a number of Waten's associates in the late-1920s and the 1930s were Jewish and immigrant, the prevailing discourses as we have seen were not those of ethnicity or nation. They were internationalist: the internationalism of the avant-garde, of the proletariat or, as in Waten's case, a combination of the two. If there was an ethnicity that figured locally in bohemian and radical circles, it was Irish-Australian. Although ethnist and nationalist, this oppositional Irish-Australian discourse could be figured as a kind of proletarian (and anti-imperialist) internationalism; as indeed could the international Jewish diaspora of the early decades of the century.

But neither the avant-garde nor the proletarian inflections of this discourse could provide sustaining models of a *literary* career; at best they offered anti-models or perhaps models for an *anti*-career. Waten himself has characterised the post-war period as the beginning of a "second literary career,"[5] and the phrase serves to remind us that any such beginning is a structured process. The forms of a career are shaped within a specific "field of possibility," a set of options and constraints which operate intellectually, publicly and textually. To conceive of oneself as a writer or "man" of letters is to take a position within a contemporary economy of notions of the writer, novelist, journalist, intellectual, Australian writer, communist writer, Jewish writer, migrant writer and so on. The positions are never equal, never equally available, and in the mid-1940s the category of migrant or Jewish writer was scarcely visible on the horizon of Australian literature.

At the same time, Australian literature itself could be perceived as a minority discourse. To Vance Palmer, for example, it formed a continuous popular tradition but one neglected and disparaged by the most powerful cultural institutions and even by the populace at large.[6] The figure of the radical democratic *Australian* writer is in this sense an ambiguous one, both marginal and mainstream, and on the grounds of their shared marginality the categories of migrant writer and Australian writer could be conceived as complementary rather than contradictory, with the former as a unique kind of qualification for entry into the latter. The Palmers were not just supportive of the immigrant Jewish writers in Australia but engaged with them as allies in a common cause.

Significantly, Judah Waten's second attempt at a literary career appears to depend upon an increasing investment in both modern Jewish and Yiddish culture and in the forms of a local national culture — an Australian literary tradition. This dual

investment in a democratic Australian tradition and in contemporary Jewish culture can readily be understood in the context of the "anti-fascist" war, for alongside its anti-semitism, fascism was perceived as a general threat to democracy, culture and independent nationalities. But what does the intensification of both interests *simultaneously* mean for the formation of a literary career? What space was available for the Jewish-Australian or Australian-Jewish writer?

In the mid-forties we can find evidence of Waten's involvement in a range of writing, editing and publishing activities which reveal a literary career in the process of formation across both Jewish and Australian cultural fields. In 1945 he published an essay called "Reflections on Literature and Painting" and a (pseudonymous) story in *Southern Stories*, an anthology edited by nationalist historian, civil libertarian and former collaborator on *Strife*, Brian Fitzpatrick.[7] Waten's essay situates itself in the moment of the anti-fascist struggle as it examines the role of the artist "in rousing the people of all freedom-loving nations against the barbarism of the enemy, and in expressing the deepest feelings and desires of those taking part" (52). A wide range of artists is argued into an heroic, anti-fascist tradition, from Picasso and Chagall, Sholokov and Ehrenburg, to the Yiddish writer Sholem Asch and even J.B. Priestley. Fascism, these artists realised in common was a "deadly menace to civilisation" (52); it had meant "a systematic attempt to destroy the culture of every person enslaved by the Nazis" (53).

The main theme of the essay is to argue that the path of the future is that indicated "by the great realists of our epoch" (53). Further, the "history of art reveals a continuous tradition of realism" engaged in "a ceaseless struggle" against the "flight from reality" — against "an art completely subjective and often meaningless ... completely divorced from the people" (54). Lawrence, Pound, Céline, Wyndham Lewis, Roy Campbell and T.S. Eliot are exposed as enemy agents.

Waten's essay argues for a "*new* realism" (55) which is also a militant, democratic *tradition* of western art (and which incidentally gathers proletarianism into its advancing ranks[8]). Most importantly, in the conclusion to his argument, contemporary Australian art is aligned with this historical development. A contemporary "artistic upsurge" is discovered in the writings of Prichard, Davison, Marshall, Casey, Palmer and Morrison and in the paintings of O'Connor, Counihan, Drysdale, Bergner and McClintock. It is both representative of a "new humanism" and "based on the realistic tradition which is the dominant feature of Australian art" (57).

Southern Stories printed contemporary Australian and New Zealand material, not least an introductory essay by Fitzpatrick entitled, momentously, "The Australian Tradition." An essay under this title still had to take the form of an argument that there

was such a tradition, embodied in "Australian attitudes which have been given form in literature": "It is this body of tradition, still fluid or malleable, that occupies writers and painters who are interested in Australia, `Australia' meaning the Australian people and their environment and heritage" (5). Fitzpatrick's argument can now be recognised as a classic "radical nationalist" social history of Australian literature. Lawson, Furphy, Paterson and Richardson mark the period of national emergence. But for the present discussion the most interesting aspect is that Fitzpatrick's sense of the "Australian tradition" is broad enough, and as it were *contemporary* enough, to encompass "three New Zealand writers and four Polish Jews" (16).[9] Fitzpatrick explains the common denominator of the publication:

> This denominator is a lively sense that contemporary art and letters are functions of democracy. We all feel part of a tradition which can fairly be described as Australian.... [Australian and New Zealand writers] are not divided by any but a geographical or legal line. And as for the alien-born among our number, their home for many years has been Australia, and in my opinion they already share and contribute to our local cultural movement.... The basis of it is the sharing of a common heritage. (16-17)

Southern Stories was the first product of Dolphin Publications, an enterprise established by Waten and Vic O'Connor to publish the anthology and then cheap editions of Australian works past and present. Waten and O'Connor together edited Dolphin's second publication, *Twenty Great Australian Stories*, an anthology of short fiction from Marcus Clarke to Alan Marshall.[10] Future Dolphin publications would include a re-issue of Carboni's *The Eureka Stockade* and the first collection of John Morrison's short stories, *Sailors Belong Ships*, both in 1947. Critical in all of this work is the sense of an Australian literary tradition, above all, a literary tradition felt as a contemporary and political force. It was *the* literary tradition for any writer wanting to address (and to politicise) a contemporary Australian audience. The publications are arguments for such a tradition, arguing it into being in the process of arguing that it already exists.

At the same time *Southern Stories* contained two fictional pieces translated by Waten from Yiddish into English, by the immigrant Polish-Jewish writers Pinchas Goldhar and Herz Bergner.[11] In addition, in 1946, Dolphin published Waten's translation of Bergner's novel, *Between Sky and Sea*, graced with an Introduction by Vance Palmer. (In the following year Nettie Palmer would write an obituary tribute to Goldhar for *Meanjin*.[12]) Excerpts from Bergner's novel also appeared during 1946 in a magazine called *Jewish Youth*, published by the Kadimah cultural group.[13] Waten was a member of the journal's editorial board, and by 1947 he was also working for the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, for many years post-war the most important Jewish community organisation in Melbourne.[14] A little later, in 1948

and 1949, he published two essays in Jewish periodicals arguing the case for the existence of Yiddish and Jewish literatures in Australia, and indeed within Australian literature.[15]

What should be clear from this brief account of the network of cultural activities in which Waten was involved is the relative complexity of the literary occasion for the writing of *Alien Son*. Waten was already consciously a writer and cultural activist, indeed an entrepreneur, and his literary career was, if marginal, already diverse, public and addressed to a mainstream. His writing was neither isolated nor unstructured, nor simply the result of direct experience (the "migrant experience") as later criticism would have it. It was an activity shaped within a specific formation or set of institutions: not only those in which Waten found himself but also those which he helped invent, especially those sites where the Australian and the Yiddish-Jewish intersected. At the simplest level there were fellow writers, artists and editors, and a delimited publishing economy for "serious" fiction. The places where Waten published his stories — *Meanjin*, the *Bulletin*, *Coast to Coast* (and Dolphin Publications) — virtually exhaust the field for local fiction publication at this time. Despite their different editors it is not misleading to see them all sharing a preference for the well-made realist story tending to anecdote and yarn rather than complex plot.

More acutely we can find evidence of two sets of influences or models available to Judah Waten in the mid-1940s, models both for writing and for a literary career. Of course there were other exemplary figures — the short stories of Chekhov and Tolstoy, in particular, representing a modernising Russian heritage that could become for Waten part of personal and family history, and thus of a career trajectory.[16] Still, we can identify two primary contexts. On one side, there was the influence of the Yiddish writers Goldhar and Herz Bergner (and the painter Yosl Bergner). On the other, the influence of a group of "Australian" writers in Melbourne: the Palmers, Davison, Marshall and Fitzpatrick (and painters, O'Connor and Counihan). Through the former we can describe the active presence of a Yiddish-Jewish literary tradition, not as a matter of nostalgia or cultural birthright but as an immediate and political presence. In *Alien Son* we find mention of Hayyim Bialik, Yiddish and Hebrew writer, and the Yiddish short story writer Sholem Aleichem, and the magazine *Jewish Youth* suggests Waten's familiarity with a wide range of modern Yiddish writing.

Waten also repeatedly told the story of how it was Goldhar who suggested that he write stories about his own Russian-Jewish immigrant experience rather than the stories about Aussie battlers and Aborigines which he had been attempting.[17]

"Inspector Ryan," in *Southern Stories*, is one of these earlier attempts. Set in an Australian country town just before and after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union and interesting at least for this precise "dating" in the local setting, it is a lively, unsubtle tale in which the local communist, an irrepressibly cheerful and boyish worker, bests the new, fanatically anti-communist police inspector. Another early story, "Young Combo's Day," won Waten £20 in the *Sydney Morning Herald* short story competition for 1946. The story, reminiscent of some of Alan Marshall's work, centres on an Aboriginal side-show boxer and his one, pyrrhic moment of triumph when he fights his planted white opponent in earnest. As the competition judges remarked, the story's main theme is frustration and impotence: "the frustrated aborigine at odds with life among the whites who deride and exploit him." His "impotence and bewildered resentment," they add, "are simply and ably treated."[18] Aboriginal characters also appear in one story in *Alien Son*, "Black Girl," and perhaps via the theme of displacement it is possible to link some of the earlier "Australian" stories with the published "Jewish" stories. We might also suggest links between these stories and Yosl Bergner's paintings from the forties which represent urban Aborigines as figures parallel to the dispossesed Jews of Europe.[19]

Through the second group of fellow writers and artists in post-war Melbourne we can descibe the presence for Waten of a nationalist Australian literary tradition; again, crucially, a tradition present as an immediate and political force, a contemporary intervention not merely an inheritance. As can be suggested by the involvement of the Palmers with Bergner and Goldhar, as well as by the imbrecation of themes in Waten's own early stories, the two sources of potential influence could be mutually reinforcing as well as disparate. The Palmers' nationalism was also a cosmopolitanism. They welcomed migrant writers as evidence of "national" and democratic cultural activity all over the world, even as they welcomed them also as part of the developing project of Australian literature.[20]

The *Alien Son* stories can be seen, not simply as the sum or product of these influences, but as a series of innovations within the field they describe. In this sense the concept of models is more useful than that of influences in that it suggests more readily the way a writer positions his or her work in relation to a contemporary field of writing. From both sets of models, then, there was a certain pressure towards the short story. Vance Palmer, Marshall and Davison, Waten's closest contacts, all wrote realist stories with identifiably Australian settings. The first-person narrative voice is common, ranging from a limited psychological focus to the anecdotal yarn; and the stories, while clearly literary, are also popular in address.

What of the Yiddish writers? The modern European and American Yiddish writers such as Sholem Aleichem wrote stories which can be understood in part as literary imitations of the traditional folk tale, but with an ironic edge hovering between comedy and pathos. (In a later essay, Waten would describe Aleichem as the "funniest and saddest" of the Yiddish writers.[21]) Their literary trick is to recreate a strong sense of *orality*, of oral narratives produced and received communally, but also, with their irony, to give their stories a modern, literary doubleness (and interpretability). The products of a self-conscious literary milieu, the stories create the illusion of orality and community even as the literary *performance* of that community (and of the story-telling) is held up for appreciation. They often make use of the techniques of an anecdotal or "talkative" narration, and often that of a child-within-the-family. These aspects can be made to bear on our reading of *Alien Son*.

The Yiddish writers in Melbourne gave more emphasis to the contemporary experiences of migration and displacement. If their stories still create a sense of community, the primary communal experience is now that of dispossession or alienation. In *Alien Son* migration is also a central theme — the stories are full of journeys and dreams of journeys — and one of the main ways in which characters are differentiated is through contrasts in their attitudes towards staying on or moving on in their new country (Mother and Father, Hirsh and Mr Sussman and, most poignantly, Mother and Mrs Hankin at the conclusion of "Looking for a Husband"). The book's title also alerts us to the theme of alienation. Yet the interesting point is Waten's difference from these immigrant Yiddish writers, writers whose works he was in the process of translating even as he was writing *Alien Son*. The position of immigrant Yiddish writer was not available to Waten or, rather, not attractive as a cultural politics. This is not just because of his different experience of migration but, more importantly, because of his different relation to the community of Australian literature. If there is a sense in which Waten wants to speak from a position within the Jewish immigrant community, the stories also suggest he wants to speak *to* an Australian literary community — and through it to an *Australian* public.

It might thus be argued that the stories themselves are written under the sign of assimilation, their modest realism and accessibility enacting a process of "merging into the life of this country" (to paraphrase Vance Palmer's review of *Alien Son*).[22] But I would also want to argue that the position of mediation Waten discovers, both as a cultural activist and in the narration of his stories, is precisely what defines the effective cultural intervention of *Alien Son*. Waten situates his text, the writing situates itself, both inside and outside the Jewish-migrant community — and therefore both inside and to one side of "Australian literature." The position of the narrator is

suggested by the book's perfectly-judged title: the son/narrator shares the alienation of his parents but is also alien to them. On the larger scale, it is this doubleness which "invents" a position for the migrant writer within, or at least provisionally within, the field of Australian literature.

To put this another way, what enables *Alien Son* to get written, and what has kept it in print ever since, is not so much its discovery of original subject-matter as its discovery of a *point of view*. In some ways the stories hark back to the European rather than the local Yiddish writers, as Waten discovers his own means of imitating the oral and communal tale but with a distanced, ironic or comic edge.

The language is frequently proverbial in quality, both in dialogue and in narration, as the story-telling voice takes on the phrasings of other voices: "`The devil take horses and men with good legs'" (69); "He smiled back at them like a deaf and dumb uncle" (7); or again,

> It so happened that on a number of occasions someone Father trusted acted on the plans he had talked about so freely before he even had time to leave the tea-house. Then there were fiery scenes with his faithless friends. But Father's rage passed away quickly and he would often laugh and make jokes over the table about it the very same day....
>
> "How should I know that people have such long memories for hate? I've only a cat's memory," he would explain innocently.
>
> "If you spit upwards, you're bound to get it back in the face," Mother irritably upbraided him. (176-77)

There are also many stories embedded within the stories which resemble folk tales, at times in the manner of Isaac Babel; for example, in miniature, the story of Hirsh's sacks: "On one of the lower layers of bags nearest to the door old Hirsh had made his bed. Later I was to discover that his bed went up and down in the most remarkable fashion. Sometimes he slept on the ground and at other times almost touching the ceiling" (12).

But it is just as significant that this proverbial speech is not the main kind of language in the stories. The proverbial qualities are worked into a stricter, less idiomatic discourse of literary realism. Thus, importantly, the stories in *Alien Son* are not folksy or vernacular and, even more remarkably, they are not nostalgic. They are more about alienation than authenticity, and as much about asymmetry as adaptation. The asymetries in what I called above their position of mediation are caught in the double negatives of the difficult final sentence of "Neighbours": "... we did not speak to one another as we walked on, but neither of us knew that there could be no reconciliation with the ways of our fathers" (132); and again in the final sentence of "Looking for a Husband" which allows no resolution: "Tomorrow morning we would land and go on for ever our different ways — Mother to beat her wings against an

enclosing wall and Mrs Hankin to go on relentlessly upholding the old ways in the new land" (58).

The "simplicity" of *Alien Son*, a quality on which all the critics comment, is rather the effect of a complex manipulation of distancing in the stories, of a point of view that enacts distance and intimacy together. The following small paragraph is typical of the book's shifts of language and focalisation:

> All this was in the early days of their marriage. But soon Mother was filled with misgivings. Father's world, the world of commerce and speculation, of the buying and selling of goods neither seen nor touched, was repugnant and frightening to her. It lacked stability, it was devoid of ideals, it was fraught with ruin. Father was a trader in air, as the saying went. (176)

This is the simplicity of Waten's style in *Alien Son*, a literary effect of choices made about diction and perspective (surprisingly often for a first-person narrative it produces effects resembling those of free indirect discourse). There is a distance between the story-telling voice and the child character no less than between the narrator and other characters, a distance which is modulated, shortened or lengthened, throughout the narrative.

The proverbial touches and the apparent simplicity (of communication or memory) together suggest bonds of language and culture which create the sense of a community. These effects of orality and intimacy are reinforced by the impression the stories give of being shaped by the patterns of recall rather than of artful plotting. Similarly, their focus on and through the child-within-the-family creates a "society" of intimacy and community. But the child is also distanced from the Mother and Father, the distance, as well as their generational and communal identities, being represented by the way the words are thus capitalised — we never learn their names or indeed the narrator's. The child, and no less the reader, is distanced from any simple, sympathetic entry into the parent's already tenuous community.

The composite child-narrator figure is discovered throughout the stories as both observer and observed, both innocent and implicated, and both inside and outside any possible community. This is nicely suggested throughout "Uncle Isaac," through the child's position at the centre of a "strange" household, and in an episode in the opening story, "To a Country Town". Playing with a group of Australian boys — their Australianness is underlined as he takes off his shoes and socks to join them — the child sees and is seen by an old Jewish man. They recognise each other's foreignness (and Jewishness); and the narrator comments, "It was as though he had caught me out" (8).

This touches on a central point, for it seems to me that what *Alien Son* discovers as central to the — to *this* — experience of migration and alienation is the

experience of *self-consciousness*. The stories are full of moments of embarrassment, of being caught out in public or in private as hypocritical or ridiculous; or moments of shame and guilt (often incommensurate with their cause). Again the position of the child as observer and observed is critical. We are most conscious of him when he is being looked at or is caught out looking, as in the very first sentence of "Mother" or at the very end of "Black Girl." The writing is especially revealing of the subtleties of the Father's self-conscious self-deceptions. Even the horses have a role to play in the narrative, their innocence counterpointing the child's perspective: "... as soon as he ran out of the house he began shouting ugly and hateful words at the inoffensive horses who looked at him with grateful eyes" (93). Or again when Father strikes one of the horses with his fist:

> Father looked round at me, his face twisted sheepishly.
>
> "What did I have to do that for?" he asked in a regretful voice, more to himself than to me. "He's just like a human being, only he's dumb. Why should he know what to do in a bottle-oh's cart? Did I know what to do when I started? He's a gentleman come down in the world. He's not used to earning his living the hard way." (104-105)

Waten reveals a genius for horses in *Alien Son*, not least as they become profoundly symptomatic of their owners and of their awkward self-consciousness in the face of a stubbornly alien world.

Against self-consciousness is posed self-possession, the Mother's characteristic attitude as opposed to the Father's. And yet the Mother's strength is based largely on a refusal while the weakness of the Father is the other side of his openness. Both attitudes are impossible for the son. Such contrasts between Mother and Father, and between Mother, Father and child, form the organising centre of *Alien Son*. But the emphasis falls less on personality than on attitude and situation, although the book is full of memorable characters. Indeed many of the characters are truly "characters" — Hirsh, Mr Segal, Mrs Hankin, Mr Frumkin, the Sisters, the midwives, Uncle Isaac and so on. There is a theatricality in many of the stories, also a quality of the European Yiddish writers, which is linked to their intimations of orality and community/audience and to the recurrent scene of self-consciousness. There is a sense of performance among the characters themselves — of over-acting, self-dramatisation or speechifying — and the stories are structured around significant "theatrical" vignettes or exchanges, in small details or in a single action that sums up a state of mind (and a state of migration) such as with Mr Hankin:

> He shrugged his shoulders and made a remark that he was often to repeat as one after another of his pupils left him, "It's the Australian sky; it draws my pupils away from the ancient learning. Somehow it is a different sky from the gentle one we left behind." (42)

Or there are extended theatrical episodes such as the party in "To a Country Town" and, in subsequent stories, the visit to the theatre, Mother and Mrs Hankin on board ship, Father and his horses, Father and the three Sisters, Uncle Isaac and the midwives.

Above all, the characters are memorable for their *talk*: they are overflowing with talk in contrast to the spare realist style of the writing which "contains" them. The way the characters tell stories, and the kinds of stories they tell or to which they prefer to listen, distinguishes them one from the other and governs how we "read" personality and attitude (and again this is centrally true of Mother and Father). The "migrant story" here is full of other stories: tales of promise and regret, stories relating the past or future in another place, stories explaining change and conflict. It is full of misreadings too, both within and beyond the community, full of missed signs and inappropriate or conflicting responses — this provides one source of the book's comedy, a quality sometimes overlooked. Although it has not been much noticed by critics or anthologists, the book's second story, "The Theatre," is one of its keynotes, for it links all these themes around the central "scene" of theatrical performance itself.

In stories such as "Sisters" and "Uncle Isaac" we see story-telling or performance with another function, creating a kind of solidarity among women. Although the scenes are often comic the book's sensitivity here is another of its unusual achievements, unusual certainly in the masculinist context of certain of Waten's closest literary contacts. Unusual too is the poignancy, but lack of sentimentality, in "Mother" — its intimacy and distance. Perhaps a different socialisation as well as a more diverse set of literary reference-points affects Waten's writing.[23]

In *Alien Son*, we might say, the migrant story comes to us as *story*. The different modes of story-telling and performance which it contains establish both an intertextual and specular framework for our reading of the text as a whole. Different models of story-telling and of art are contrasted: the Mother's sense of the seriousness and nobility of art (from Biblical stories to Aleichem, to Tolstoy, Gorky and Beethoven) is posed against the Father's love of entertainment and pleasure (the music hall!); Hirsh's "long stories of the past" (10) against Mr Osipov's "different stories — of strikes and battles against our great oppressor, the Czar" (17). Or there are the different songs and poems performed at the party in "To a Country Town" — from folk song to "La Donna e Mobile" to "Auld Lang Syne" — each of which is carefully placed in terms of the effects it produces. There is no single model which emerges without qualification, although there are clear evaluations; even the Father's "vulgar" responses at the theatre have their point despite the embarrassment they produce.

The overall effect of these contrasts and evaluations can be understood in the way that they bring to bear on each other aspects of the folk tale or popular art and aspects of a "high" culture tradition. Both are appropriate references for our reading of *Alien Son*; in their very different ways, both give to art a serious communal or social role. Together they also suggest something of the work's own blend of styles, which refers us both to orality and to literary realism, both to traditional story-telling and to ironic literary art. They suggest how the work thus positions itself in a literary field and how it asks to be read.

Since being reissued in 1965 *Alien Son* has never been out of print. It has sold over half a million copies and has been, as they say, both a popular favourite and a classic. Recently it featured as one of "Australia's Greatest Books" in Geoffrey Dutton's *The Australian Collection* and in Manning Clark's list of "books every civilised Australian should read."[24] It might seem surprising, then, that it has in fact received very little sustained attention from literary critics and commentators. As indicated earlier, the book is mentioned in numerous critical surveys and literary histories but typically the remarks comprise only a few sentences of praise or description, perhaps with some biographical details about Judah Waten or a brief placing of the book as the first of its kind, dealing with the experiences of non-English-speaking migrants to Australia. The remarks are nearly always positive but also nearly always brief.

This is not a case of "scandalous neglect." The writers of the surveys and histories have their eyes on larger horizons than Judah Waten or his short stories. Nevertheless the comments they do make about *Alien Son* can help us to explain the absence of detailed and extended writing about the book, and such an explanation in turn can feed into my own argument towards new ways of reading its stories.

The critical reception of *Alien Son* exemplifies an ideological process noted by Sneja Gunew whereby migrant writers have been accommodated within the literary regime through the manner in which their texts are read as directly autobiographical or as so many documentary repetitions of "the migrant story."[25] Certainly, apart from sympathetic appreciations of his "rare gift of characterisation,"[26] Waten's stories have been read by and large as the straightforward expression of the author's own childhood experiences, understood in terms either of the individual or of the migrant group.

Both these readings are arguably demanded by the stories themselves. The retrospective first-person narrator, for example, combined with the plotlessness of the narratives, certainly invites autobiographical (or at least "experiential") readings; and in their range of characters and situations, their self-effacing narrator and "oral" language uses, the stories work to evoke a migrant community, as we have seen. The

stories are *designed* to appeal to us with the veracity of autobiography or rather of actual experiences recalled (for the autobiographical self becomes the centre of attention only briefly). Equally, this veracity of individual experience is designed to be understood in a more general way, as communal and generational, for despite the idiosyncracies of the central family we are not to read their experiences as a *migrant* family as merely idiosyncratic. The stories are full of other striking characters caught in the diverse stages of migration. These embedded stories set up an array of "migrant" perspectives which frame the central story.

It is revealing that commentators have often failed to notice that these are stories of recall — that the narrator is not in fact a child — and have thus missed the effects of distancing and dual perspective this produces. In one sense the very success of the stories in establishing their veracity, their illusion of simple recall, has been the source of the critical silence, for their art has been mistaken as artlessness. Reading *Alien Son* as the expression or reflection of Waten's own experience means that the critics can find very little to say about it (thus the rapid shift into biography or "sociology" in the commentaries). The distinctive qualities of the stories, their "flavour" and "taste" as one critic puts it,[27] can only be ascribed to the "experience" or "background" which preceded them rather than to the stories themselves: to qualities embodied in the author rather than to disembodied writing. But even when we know, as the author often said and as can be readily established, that the stories were indeed prompted by the experiences of his own migrant childhood — or more precisely by the *recall* of those experiences, their recall for the purposes of writing fiction — we do not yet know much about how the stories got to be written and how they might now be read.

Because of its blurring of life and text, criticism of *Alien Son* has made its way through a procession of phrases such as "unforced simplicity," "observed life," "an easy style," "simple flat recounting," "unvarnished social realism," "a straightforward writer" whose "*instinct* is for the brief unstructured sketch" (my emphasis).[28] It is as if all Judah Waten had to do was open his mouth.... My argument, by contrast, is that the voice or point of view that Waten discovers in these stories is indeed a "discovery": an innovation and intervention in the overlapping fields which describe its literary occasion. The literary occasion shapes what counts as significant experience (or recall) and what counts as its significant literary expression (in the text and in the project of a literary career). In *Alien Son*, Waten finds a speaking position which invites readings and so claims significance in terms of autobiography and the migrant story and yet which refuses to be contained wholly and simply within these terms. In this sense the narrator in the text is emblematic of the text and its author in the world, positioned

both inside and outside the immigrant Jewish cultural sphere and both inside and outside the field of Australian literature as then constituted. More than one of the book's early reviewers expressed surprise at finding *Alien Son*, as it were, already inside Australian literature.[29] To put it another way the position of migrant writer in this first post-war decade, if it were not to be perpetually in translation, perpetually foreign, was only possible via an accommodation within that Australian literary field.

We can draw these points together by examining the question of audience or address. The *Alien Son* stories do ask to be read in part as "Jewish" stories, for example via the range of references they contain to Jewish writers, songs and folk tales, and the proverbial patterns of speech and narration noted earlier. But their address is not primarily to a Jewish or migrant community of readers but to a broader "Australian" readership which might indeed *assimilate* the Jewish/migrant communities. For the stories also ask to be read in the light of literary realism and local traditions of the short story: that is, as *Australian* stories. Their intimate sense of audience is less the product of a limited address to a Jewish/migrant community than something Waten shares with and has learnt from the community of his fellow writers such as Vance Palmer and Alan Marshall (and given the institutional position of Australian writing at this time, this might also have been an intimacy within marginality).

The migrant writer is not born but made, and made within a specific and uneven cultural economy. The shape of Waten's literary career is thus less a product of the "migrant experience" than of the particular field of possibility that was Australian literature. In this light I find it useful to understand Waten's position through the concept of a "minor literature" as described by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. By a "minor literature" they mean a literature "which a minority constructs within a major language."[30] Their subject is Franz Kafka, a Czech Jew writing in German in Prague. There are some unexpected and illuminating parallels with Judah Waten, a Russian Jew writing in English in Melbourne, although the point of the comparison must also be that the differences are equally illuminating.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that the primary characteristic of a minor literature is "linguistic deterritorialisation," both in relation to the vernacular language (Czech or Yiddish for Kafka's society) and the dominant bureaucratic and high cultural language (German). The conditions of this deterritorialisation produce two further defining characteristics of minor literatures: first that "everything in them is political," second, that "everything takes on a collective value" (17). As to the former, the "cramped space" of a minor literature

> forces each intrigue to connect immediately to politics. The individual concern thus becomes all the more necessary, indispensable, magnified, because a whole other story is vibrating within it. In this way, the family triangle connects to other triangles — commercial, economic, bureaucratic, juridical — that determine its values. (17)

But as the very example of Kafka indicates, this minority politics is not a matter of adequate representativeness or accurate representation. More at issue are questions of voice and positionality within language and literary traditions.

Each individual or family story becomes the story of a community or culture (of its marginalisation). Enunciation is thus inescapably always collective enunciation:

> because talent isn't abundant ... there are no possibilities for an individuated enunciation that would belong to this or that "master" and that could be separated from a collective enunciation.... [W]hat each author says individually already constitutes a common action, and what he or she says or does is necessarily political, even if others aren't in agreement. The political domain has contaminated every statement (*énoncé*).... [I]f the writer is in the margins or completely outside his or her fragile community, this situation allows the writer all the more the possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility. (17)

Kafka, according to Deleuze and Guattari, chose not the high road of "symbolic reterritorialisation" but the low road "always further in the direction of deterritorialisation ... sobriety ... a purely intensive usage of language" (19). Instead of mastering the master language by investing it with symbolic or mythic significance he hollows out a (minor) space within it, a space that resists incorporation.

As Sneja Gunew has noted, Deleuze and Guattari have "been accused of indulging in first-world theoretical tourism of the margins"[31] and certainly there is a liberationist (indeed theological) excess in their arguments in which "minor" seems to disappear into "revolutionary" or "avant-garde." What can be redeemed is not their sense of liberation but their articulation of limits, of the cramped field of possibility of a minor literature *within* a major language.[32]

In what ways can we discover *Alien Son* in this account of a minor literature? Waten's cultural engagements, as described earlier, suggest that he is actively taking on the conditions of minority status in ways that had not been the case in his earlier attempts at a writing career (avant-gardism, in this comparison, depends after all upon its insidership to the major language). There is a set of problems and possibilities in the "Jewish" stories that do not exist for his other writing, precisely as they come to occupy the position of a minor literature within a major language — problems that mean the stories stake everything on voice and point of view. There is a cultural politics as well as a family history involved, not least because Waten remains "in the margins .. of his fragile community." The individual enunciation of the text in *Alien Son* is also a collective enunciation, across a diversity of voices and in the strange anonymity of its very personal, intimate narrator. To paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari,

here too each individual story has a whole other story vibrating within it, for attitudes and speech, however idiosyncratic, are never just personality traits; and the family triangle at the centre of these stories is always and, it feels, inevitably connected to larger cultural and political "triangles."

Since its first appearance critics have been struck by the apparent paradox of the book's modesty and yet its cultural significance: on the one hand a collection of simple, unassuming autobiographical sketches, on the other its irresistible collective, national and therefore *political* meanings. As Ian Mair put it: "[Waten] is not yet primarily a writer" and yet "The parents are, in small scale, two permanent additions to the short list of characters in Australian fiction who deserve to have permanent life in our imaginations." Or Vance Palmer:

> there is an engaging quality in its style, which is simple and yet capable of subtlety. *Alien Son* is more than a collection of short stories and yet not quite a novel.... Perhaps consideration of the exact pigeon-hole into which it should be fitted is irrelevant....
>
> *Alien Son* is bound to have an effect as an inside picture of a foreign group gradually beginning to merge into the life of this country. We have had no such book before.[33]

To read the book (as an *Australian* reader and critic) was to find that Australian "life" no longer looked quite the same. Yet it was difficult to say just how this was effected by such a slight work which was not quite fiction, not quite documentary or memoir, and which hovered uncertainly somewhere between the sketch, the short story and the novel. Such a response is still where our interest in the text begins.

Deleuze and Guattari locate Kafka in relation to four levels of language: the vernacular, the vehicular (bureaucratic/commercial), the cultural and the mythic. For Kafka's society of Prague Jews the first was represented by the repressed or forgotten languages of Czech and Yiddish; the second and third languages were represented by German; the fourth perhaps by Hebrew. "What is complicated," they remark,

> is Kafka's relation to Yiddish: he sees it less as a sort of linguistic territoriality for the Jews than as a nomadic movement of deterritorialisation that reworks German language. What fascinates him in Yiddish is less a language of a religious community than that of a popular theatre. (25)

One thinks immediately of "The Theatre" in *Alien Son*. There are parallels between Kafka's relation to Yiddish and Waten's subtle reworking of English through Yiddish phrasing, as well as his sense of Yiddish as a *contemporary* secular force (albeit in the process of dying out).[34] For Waten the vernacular language, via his parents, was Yiddish, although he spoke English before school-age; the vehicular and cultural language was English, although his parents spoke Russian between themselves (their vehicular and one possible cultural language); and although Waten had learnt some Hebrew as a child this was scarcely available or desired as a mythic language —

English would dominate here too. But however complete Waten's assimilation into English, his "deterritorialisation" from both Yiddish and English still leaves its subtle traces. His relation to language, at least when writing as a "migrant" writer, would still be constrained by the unusual situation of Yiddish within Australian English within English. Waten was not an active Yiddish speaker although, his texts suggest, he had a memory full of Yiddish; he could follow spoken Yiddish and could translate with the assistance of the Yiddish authors. He could not but write in English, "his" language after all, and yet more than once there is a sense that the language is (also) another's.[35]

I think this situation within language produces the "simplicity" and understatement of *Alien Son*, its formal irresolution, and the double perspective of its narration — intimate/ironic, personal/collective, inside/outside. The modesty of the text might be compared with Kafka's "new sobriety, a new expressivity, a new flexibility, a new intensity" (23). Waten's narrative voice hollows out a *minor* space for itself which it continues to occupy and which remains the source of its meaning and value, its power, within Australian literature. It will still not sit comfortably as a "major" work in the canon.

But despite being able to take the argument to this point, any closer parallels between Waten and Kafka would be far-fetched. The divergences between them, between, say, Kafka's extreme "intensiveness" and Waten's confident referentiality and recall, are no less illuminating. The rhetorics of marginality are much less extreme in Waten's writing, the sense of an audience more immediate, his relationship to English less fraught than Kafka's to German. There is still faith in the ability of language to communicate transparently and to reach its addressee. Only occasionally are we reminded that for the most part the characters we hear are speaking Yiddish, Russian or heavily-accented English (although the occasions are always telling).

In Waten's case the sense of belonging to a minority is tempered by the sense of also belonging to a local literary tradition, to a national community, and to the larger traditions of European realism. As well, the majority language is available to him in the form of a vernacular, a distinct, popular, local language. Further, Waten is never far from at least one possible universal or mythic language: humanism and more specifically communism. Unlike Kafka, according to Deleuze and Guattari, Waten certainly is interested in "styles, genres or literary movements [which want] to assume a major function in language, to offer themselves as a sort of state language, an official language" (27). In the light of his earlier and later careers, perhaps it is the *absence* of these desires in *Alien Son* that is worth remarking.

During the 1940s and 1950s there was, in the literary culture in which Judah Waten was involved (and in Melbourne above all), a vast investment of signifying

activity going into the business of creating something to belong to, a tradition that was always and already there. Waten's own cultural entrepreneurship simultaneously on behalf of both Jewish and Australian nationalist writing was part of this activity. Nevertheless, or rather *therefore*, the conditions of a minority literature leave their imprint on the text of *Alien Son* in the "quiet" ways already indicated: in point of view and language and in the overall structure of the book as a series of short stories, often sketchlike and seemingly insufficient in themselves, the whole adding up to what Waten called "a novel without architecture."[36]

From the perspective of the narrator's recall in *Alien Son* Australia is no longer a foreign place. And yet the stories are still pervaded by an apprehension that, in Waten's own phrase, "in the twentieth century the Jewish migrant has been the symbol of the oppressed and the migratory person."[37] Far from being nostalgic recollection or quaint family anecdote, I think this political and symbolic dimension is why *Alien Son* can still seem to be the text that separates us off from the time "before the migrant writer." And in more than one sense it is the text that makes Judah Waten's literary career possible.

1. Judah Waten, *Alien Son* (1952; Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1990). Publications prior to the appearance of the volume as follows, in order of their final appearance in the book: "To A Country Town," *Coast to Coast: Australian Stories 1946*, ed. M. Barnard Eldershaw (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1947), pp.86-108; "Uncle Isaac," *Bulletin* 18 October 1950, pp.20 & 32 (also in *Coast to Coast 1951-52*, ed. Ken Levis, pp.59-71); "Father's Horses," *Meanjin* 8, 4 (1949), pp.193-200; "Neighbours," *Coast to Coast 1948*, ed. Brian Elliott; "Black Girl in the Street," ["Black Girl"] *Meanjin* 7, 3 (1948), pp.147-53; "Making a Living," *Bulletin* 30 January 1952, pp.16-17; "The Mother," ["Mother"] *Meanjin* 9, 2 (1950), pp.81-92 (also in *Coast to Coast 1949-50*, ed. Nettie Palmer, pp.105-22).

2. For discussion of the different terms see David Carter, "The Natives are Getting Restless: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migrant Writing," *Island* 25 & 26 (1986), pp.3-8; Jacques Delaruelle, "Multiculturalism," in *Writing in Multicultural Australia*, eds Jacques Delaruelle, Alexandra Karakostas-S_dá and Anna Ward (Sydney: Australia Council, 1985), pp.50-53; Sneja Gunew, "PMT (Post Modernist Tensions): Reading for (Multi)Cultural Difference," in *Striking Chords: Multicultural Literary Interpretations*, eds Sneja Gunew and Kateryna O. Longley (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992), p.43.

3. Quotations from reviews of *Alien Son*: *Sydney Jewish News* 15 August 1952, p.25 and Ian Mair, "New Australians Forty Years Ago," *Age* 9 August 1952, p.15. See also J.K. Ewers, *Creative Writing in Australia* (Melbourne: Georgian House, 1966), p.170.

4. See, for example, Cecil Hadgraft, *Australian Literature: A Critical Account to 1955* (London: Heinemann, 1960), p.267: "If the choice [of subject] is an unusual group of people, then a writer has a certain advantage. This has been the case with Judah Waten, who has written racy and penetrating and flavoured stories of a Jewish immigrant group."

5. Judah Waten, "My Two Literary Careers," *Southerly* 31, 2 (1971), p.87.

6. See, for example, Palmer's "Battle," *Meanjin* 1, 8 (1942), pp.5-6.

7. Waten, "Reflections on Literature and Painting," in *Southern Stories*, ed. Brian Fitzpatrick (Melbourne: Dolphin Publications, n.d. [1945?]), pp.52-58 (further references will appear in the text). Waten's story in the same publication, "Inspector Ryan," is printed under the name Matt Turner, pp.88-102. Two possible models for *Southern Stories* are *Australian New Writing*, edited in Sydney and appearing annually from 1943 to 1946 (eds, Katharine Susannah Prichard, George Farwell, Bernard Smith, Ken Levis [3-4]); and the New Zealand magazine *Tomorrow* (1934-1940) which Waten would have known in New Zealand 1939-40. Nettie Palmer wrote an "Australian Notebook" in the journal from July 1937 to May 1939. See Rachel Barrowman, *A Popular Vision: The Arts and the Left in New Zealand 1930-1950* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1991), pp.27-60. Waten was in contact with Frank Sargeson in the 1940s and later with R.A.K. Mason, Judah Waten Papers, National Library of Australia, NLA MS 4536/2/12-15 & 490-91.

8. The essay defends, but moves beyond, proletarian art. Proletarian novels are brought forward as evidence of the new realism of "real active struggle" and "historical humanism" (56). The term is defended against the strictures of David Daiches, quoted by Frank Dalby Davison in his Introduction to the 1943 *Coast to Coast* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1944), who had argued that the proletarian novel will have a chance of producing good literature "only when it is the natural reflex of an existing culture, not a deliberate attempt to point forward to a new one" (56). Waten defends the latter project but argues nevertheless that "the term `proletarian

novel' is in itself inadequate to describe this new trend in art, for the proletarian novel was only a phase in its development, with its parallel in Soviet literature" (57).

9. Contributors to the magazine besides Fitzpatrick and Waten were Alan Marshall, Pinchas Goldhar, R.A.K. Mason, Gavin Casey, Gordon Watson (posthumous), Hertz (sic) Bergner, Frank Sargeson, Garry Lyle, Joseph [Yosl] Birstein, Vic O'Connor, Noel Counihan and Yosl Bergner.

10. *Twenty Great Australian Stories*, eds Judah Waten and V.G. O'Connor (Melbourne: Dolphin Publications, 1946). Writers included in the anthology are: Marcus Clarke, Joseph Furphy, Price Warung, Barbara Baynton, Dowell O'Reilly, Henry Lawson, Albert Dorrington, Lance Skuthorpe, Katharine Prichard, Vance Palmer, Frank Dalby Davison, Gavin Casey, Alan Marshall. A second volume of *Southern Stories* was also planned featuring stories by Palmer, Davison, Marshall, Goldhar and Bergner, plus essays by Fitzpatrick and Counihan and an art supplement.

11. Goldhar, "Cafe in Carlton," *Southern Stories*, pp.29-47; Bergner, "The Boardinghouse," *Southern Stories*, pp.68-76.

12. Herz Bergner, *Between Sky and Sea*, trans. J.L. Waten (Melbourne: Dolphin Publications, 1946). Nettie Palmer, "Tribute to Pincus(sic) Goldhar," *Meanjin* 6, 1 (1947), p.50. Vance Palmer also selected a story by Goldhar, "The Funeral," in his edition of *Coast to Coast: Australian Stories 1944* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1945), pp.15-26.

13. *Jewish Youth* ("Organ of Kadimah Youth Organisation") serialised the novel over its first issues, from July 1946. The magazine also reprinted stories by the Yiddish writers Peretz, Sholem Asch and Aleichem. The older Australian Jewish writer, Nathan Spielvogel, appears in the October 1946 issue, one imagines through Waten's initiatives. On the Kadimah itself see Hilary L. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Victoria 1835-1985* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986), pp.155-57.

14. On the Jewish Council, see Philip Mendes, "The Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism: An Historical Re-Appraisal," *Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society* 10, 6 (1989), pp.524-41.

15. Waten, "Yiddish Literature in Australia," *Unity* 1, 1 (July-August 1948), pp.4-5 and "Contemporary Jewish Literature in Australia," *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 3 (1949), pp.92-97. See Chapter 8 below for further discussion. Waten also publishes an obituary for Goldhar in *Voice* (February 1947), p.13.

16. See Waten, *From Odessa to Odessa: The Journey of an Australian Writer* (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1969), pp.1-8; "A Writer's Youth," in *Joseph's Coat: An Anthology of Multicultural Writing*, ed. Peter Skrzynecki (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1985), pp.198-99; "Books that Influenced Me Deeply," *Educational Magazine* 36, 3 (1979), p.32.

17. Waten, "My Two Literary Careers," p.87.

18. *Sydney Morning Herald* 8 March 1947, p.10. No first or second prizes were given because the judges deemed the standard not sufficiently high, but ten £20 prizes were awarded. Waten's story is described first. His pseudonym for the competition was "J. Newcombe," suggesting a modest sense of himself as a newcomer to the literary scene. Two versions of the story survive in Waten's papers (NLA, MS 4536, Box 16): the first, apparently the competition entry, much longer and with literary flourishes ("a golden hue"); the second pared down to about a third the length and focused more tightly on the central character's perspective. About

the same time Waten also completed a play script, *The Loser is Black*, concerning inner-urban Aborigines (NLA MS 4536/3/77).

19. See the Exhibition Catalogue, *Yosl Bergner: A Retrospective Exhibition* (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1985), pp.9-14 & 32-33.

20. I thank Ivor Indyk for the point about the Palmers' cosmopolitanism. It can be seen throughout Nettie's *Fourteen Years: Extracts From a Private Journal 1925-1939* (1948; repr. in *Nettie Palmer*, ed. Vivian Smith, [St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1988], pp.2-205).

21. Waten, "A Writers' Youth," p.198; see also Helena Frank, ed., *Yiddish Tales* (1912, Jewish Public Society of America; repr. New York: Arno Press, 1975).

22. Vance Palmer's review of *Alien Son* makes the point about the "assimilation" of Waten's writings into a national project: "*Alien Son* is bound to have an effect as an inside picture of a foreign group gradually beginning to merge into the life of this country" ("Two Australian Novels," *Voice* [October 1952], p.25). The present essay could be read as an extended unravelling of all that is implied in this statement of Palmer's, and an analysis of the ways in which Palmer has proved to be right.

23. See Chapter 9, below, which reconsiders *Alien Son* from the perspectives of autobiographical writing.

24. Geoffrey Dutton, *The Australian Collection: Australia's Greatest Books* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1985), pp.207-10; Manning Clark and Donald Horne, "The Essential Library," *Australian Magazine* 25-26 February 1989, p.44. *Alien Son* also appeared as an "Australian Classic" in the series published by Lloyd O'Neil (Hawthorn, Vic., 1974) and as an Inprint "Classic" in the new series from Collins/Angus & Robertson (1990).

25. Sneja Gunew, "Framing Marginality: Distinguishing the Textual Politics of the Marginal Voice," *Southern Review* 18, 2 (July 1985), pp.148-49.

26. Ewers, p.170.

27. Hadgraft, p.267, talks of "racy and penetrating and flavoured stories of a Jewish immigrant group. The stories have a taste all their own. This background of belief and attitude gives Waten an unfair start, as it were...."

28. Little more has been said since Vance Palmer's early review cited above or those of Ian Mair, "New Australians Forty Years Ago" and a version of this given as a Radio Australia overseas broadcast, 28 & 29 August 1952. The quotations are, in order, from: David Martin, "Three Realists in Search of Reality," *Meanjin* 18, 3 (1959), p.118; Harry Heseltine, "Australian Fiction since 1920," in *The Literature of Australia*, ed. Geoffrey Dutton (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p.234; Ewers, p.170; Bruce Bennett, "The Short Story," in *The Literature of Western Australia*, ed. Bruce Bennett (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1979), p.124; Ken Goodwin, *A History of Australian Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1986), p.165 (two phrases quoted); Adrian Mitchell, "Fiction," in *The Oxford History of Australian LIterature*, ed. Leonie Kramer (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1981), p.130.

29. For example, Ian Mair, review broadcast by Australian Broadcasting Commission (Radio Australia): "The `feel' of Australia in `Alien Son' is remarkably keen"; and Anon. [Vance Palmer?], in a local ABC broadcast: "though it deals with a foreign family, it touches much more intimately than the other [book reviewed] on the nerves of our national life." Copies of both scripts are among Waten's papers, NLA MS 4536, Series 5.

30. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minority Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (1975; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p.16. Further references will appear in the text.

31. Sneja Gunew, "PMT," p.38.

32. I'm thinking for example of their account of Kafka's relation to Yiddish "beside" German: Deleuze and Guaratti, p.25. See also Ross Chambers *Room for Maneuver: Reading (the) Oppositional (in) Narrative* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), especially pp.144-45, where he extends their points to read the Quebecois writer Hubert Aquin in a situation where within a major language (French) there is a "(re-)minoritization" of language, "*one's own* language as the site of *otherness*."

33. Palmer, "Two Australian Novels," p.25.

34. For a more extended discussion of Waten's attitude to Yiddish see Chapter 8 below.

35. Waten, "Writers From Two Cultures," *Aspect* 5, 1-2 (1980), p.50: "The idea of writing in Yiddish or any other language other than English did not and could not occur to me.... English was the only possible means of communication with foreigners as well as Australians." The points regarding Waten's use of language are from interviews conducted by the author with Judah and Hyrell Waten, Fanny Waten and Mena Werder, in the author's possession. Cf Deleuze and Guattari on Kafka: "... the impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing in German, the impossibility of writing otherwise" (16).

36. Interview with Hazel De Berg, 13 March 1960. National Library of Australia, De Berg MS 888, p.985.

37. From a 1966 interview on ABC television with Tony Morphett: "Spectrum: Judah Waten on Commitment," 18 December 1966. The comment recalls that by Abdul R. JanMohamed and David Lloyd responding to the minority literature argument of Deleuze and Guattari: "the collective nature of *all* minority discourse also derives from the fact that minority individuals are always treated and forced to experience themselves generically." "Introduction: Minority Discourse — What is to be Done?" *Cultural Critique* 7 (Spring 1987), p.10.

4

Undoing *The Unbending*: Criticism and a Cold War Novel

1. "The True Position of this Gentleman"

On 23 June 1954 an editorial appeared in the Sydney *Daily Mirror* under the heading "Taxpayers' Money to Help the Reds." Its occasion was the publication of Judah Waten's first novel, *The Unbending*; its target was the Commonwealth Literary Fund (CLF):

> The purpose of the Commonwealth Literary Fund is to help Australian writers. In fact, it is being used to subsidise Communist propaganda.
>
> This is clearly shown in the case of the grant which was made in 1952 to Mr Judah Waten. In that year he was given about £600 to enable him to write a novel....
>
> Mr Waten spent it on writing a book called "The Unbending", which is the story of the revolutionary IWW during the First World War....
>
> The taxpayers are entitled to ask for something better than giving a blank cheque to an author to write something which will be used by a party whose chief aim is the overthrow of the Commonwealth in favour of an alien ideology.[1]

This was not an isolated attack. Another journalist, writing in his own newsletter, charged that *The Unbending* was "straight-out communist propaganda" while the CLF was "straight out of the Soviet text book" with "a stable of tame writers to plug a certain line." Yet another, writing in *Intelligence Survey*, the journal of League of Rights director Eric Butler, used *The Unbending* as an occasion for that coldest of cold war themes: that "the fellow-travellers are even more dangerous than the communists themselves." This time the novel "reeks of Communist propaganda."[2]

Hearing of these and similar remarks the editor of *Meanjin*, Clem Christesen, feared the beginnings of a concerted campaign, perhaps a repeat of the 1952 attack on the CLF in Federal Parliament. He smelt a conspiracy, "a form of indirect intimidation," aimed at individual writers, the CLF and *Meanjin*, indeed all public places where culture regularly consorted with liberal and democratic ideas. In May 1954, the Royal Commission prompted by the Petrov affair had already had its first sitting.[3] Christesen wrote to the CLF Secretary expressing his alarm at the attacks on Waten's novel and the Fund, and mentioned a rumour that two Melbourne newspapers had "diced" reviews and substituted others: "If there are renewed attacks in the House, the whole structure and future of the CLF might be threatened. It might also affect *Meanjin*, for I might have to decide not to accept any more CLF aid."[4] To support the novel's claim to seriousness as a literary work and not mere propaganda, as well as to

defend his own "liberal line" in the magazine, Christesen organised a symposium on *The Unbending* with contributions from Vance Palmer, Katharine Susannah Prichard, Brian Fitzpatrick and A.R. Chisholm (who did not like the book's politics much at all). The symposium appeared in *Meanjin*'s third number of 1954.[5]

On the occasion of the Parliamentary attacks two years earlier, Standish Keon (Labor), quickly supported by Liberals H.B. Gullett and W.C. Wentworth, led a well-prepared attack on the CLF, on the chairman of its advisory board, Vance Palmer, and board member Flora Eldershaw, and on many of the writers who had been supported by the Fund.[6] Keon's charge was that the Fund was being administered to the benefit of a small group of communists and communist sympathisers and so to promote communist propaganda:

> there has been an obvious and consistent pattern in the granting of recent awards. A certain group, and that group only, has benefited from the fund.... I have no desire to see literature put into a strait-jacket. I suppose that its proper function is to hold up a mirror to life and describe it as truly and faithfully as possible, having regard to ordinary decency and morality. But members of this Parliament and also the general public are entitled to ask what type of people have received this money....
>
> I consider that the social revolt should be written about as much as any other subject, but I object to any plan to confine these awards to people who are either known Communists or active workers for the Communist Party....
>
> I also believe that Australian literature will not receive any benefit in any way at all by the works of people who are avowed supporters of the Communist party policy, and who advance the Communist cause in the works they produce.[7]

The attacks mounted by Keon and Wentworth took place against the local background of the Lowe Royal Commission in Victoria (1949-50), the Communist Party Dissolution Bill (1950), the subsequent Referendum (1951), the celebrated Frank Hardy trial (1951) and most recently the affair of the "nest of traitors" in the federal Public Service (1952).[8] Their attack was a characteristic piece of cold war conservatism in that it indiscriminately, or quite deliberately, targeted liberal intellectuals as well as declared communists (and the Australian National University as well as the CLF). It was, as Allan Ashbolt has suggested, "systematically indiscriminate"; not an isolated act but "part of a thicker, more complex plot."[9] Wentworth focussed particularly on Eldershaw and Palmer, "neither of whom may be a member of the Communist party but both of whom have been associated with organizations in which Communists were prominent and which follow the Communist line. Both ... have done considerable service for the Communist party."[10] Despite Menzies' defence of his Board, Palmer soon resigned as chairman and a more conservative Board was installed.[11]

Keon's first exemplary target in 1952 was Judah Waten. Someone had been doing their homework, for his main piece of damning evidence, rescued from the obscurity of 1930, was material from *Strife* — which thus entered the political if not

yet the literary archive. As a "known" communist, though not in fact a Party member at this time, Waten was bound to become involved. In November 1951 he had been awarded a grant of £600 to write what became *The Unbending*, a novel "designed to show the integration of a Jewish migrant family with the Australian community and the resultant conflict in the family."[12] *Alien Son* had appeared in July 1952, also the product of a CLF grant in the form of a publishing subsidy to Angus and Robertson. All this seems to have been too much for Mr Keon, who launched himself in August and then again in September:

> I shall consider first Judah Waten. This man is a Russian who has received two grants from the Commonwealth Literary Fund, one to write a book and one to publish it.... Dozens of instances of Mr Waten's activities are outlined in the Communist party newspapers. There cannot be the slightest doubt in the mind of any reasonable person concerning the true position of this gentleman.[13]

In both 1952 and 1954 communists and non-communist liberals organised together as writers in defence of their professional interests, civil liberties and literature.[14] But the defence of literature from politics — or was it the defence of political literature? — would produce some unexpected alliances and antagonisms.

These political manoeuvres might all seem to belong in the footnotes of literary history. But perhaps we can say, with Derrida, that footnotes (or supplements) point to a lack in the original plenitude — in this case, in the writing of Australian literary history.[15] We can indeed follow this politics on its adventures in the world until we find it right inside our literary texts. The attacks on writers and intellectuals served to highlight and to intensify the *already* politicised nature of the cultural sphere, at the centre of which was literature. There were few literary activities or literary artefacts in the fifties untouched by cold war politics; it was likely to affect both what was written and how it was read, what was published and where.

The cold war rhetoric from which I have quoted was by no means outside mainstream political discourse. Moreover it was spoken in the name of liberal principles and literature itself. The occasions of the attacks on the CLF were extreme, but the terms of the debate resemble those that Menzies himself used on numerous occasions.[16] Already in February 1952 a security check on Waten had been initiated on the Prime Minister's behalf by the CLF secretary, and the advice had been that despite his earlier expulsion from the Party Waten was "still regarded as a Communist at heart." Menzies had written on the bottom of the secretary's report, "In future all names put forward should be investigated by Security. This case is scandalous and embarrassing."[17] In this sense he was already well in advance of Keon and Wentworth. Further, Menzies seems to have misled Parliament in subsequently claiming that it was "not our role [his Committee's] to conduct an investigation into

the political ideas of the persons concerned. It is a literary matter."[18] Waten's initial grant became the basis for security checks on CLF applicants which continued until 1970.[19]

As already noted, 1954 was the year of Petrov and less than three years since the Government's Referendum to have the constitutional power to ban the Communist Party. In this cold war atmosphere *The Unbending* was a scandal waiting to happen. The novel was published in March 1954; the Petrov defection was announced in April; the Royal Commission on Espionage first sat in May. Reviews of *The Unbending* first appeared in late May-early June. At such a time a novel by a Russian-born Jewish communist about Russian and Jewish immigrants, security police and subversion trials, a controversial referendum (the 1916-17 conscription issue) and a revolutionary political group (the International Workers of the World or IWW) could scarcely have been read in a political vacuum — at least it would have taken an act of determined critical will to do so. It is difficult now not to read the novel as both allegorical and prophetic, and I will be doing both.

In slightly different terms, *The Unbending* can be seen as an active participant in a contemporary debate — or a less dignified staking out of positions — on the meanings of literature, liberalism, democracy, communism and Australian traditions. It can be seen to anticipate the political readings it would receive. In the process of writing during 1952, Waten's planned focus for the novel shifted from the between wars period to that of the First World War, the conscription issue and the IWW. Although it is unlikely he was responding directly to contemporary political events, the shift of focus offered Waten a means of intervening in the politics of the present through his story of the past.

By the middle of 1954, especially after the reviews and editorials on *The Unbending* had begun to appear, the members of the CLF Board were themselves becoming anxious about the possibility of another bout of Parliamentary and press attacks. Correspondence began to fly between Board members and the CLF secretary, and thence to the Prime Minister, concerning Waten's communism, the nature of the Fund's support, the newspaper reactions and the novel itself (which A.R. Chisholm feared "leaves itself open to an accusation of Communist propaganda").[20] However, while appropriately concerned to defend itself against charges of communist influence, the CLF could only do so by dissociating itself from the novel and, in effect, accepting the political grounds of the charges made against it.

The CLF Board made no attempt to defend the book on literary grounds or to defend their own administrative position of political disinterest. The former task as we have seen was left to Clem Christesen and the contributors to the *Meanjin* symposium

— including Chisholm, a current Board member, who declared his profound lack of sympathy with the book on the grounds of its slanted representation of the distribution of "moral courage" in Australia during the First World War. The CLF instead took the extraordinary step of writing to Angus and Robertson to ask for their Readers' Reports on the manuscript. In complying, Beatrice Davis wrote that the novel's length had made it unpublishable, but that the "quality of the work was very good — when it was not dealing with sociological or political matters.... The novel is certainly leftist ... but it is no more `communist' than dozens of novels ... that have been published and favourably accepted." George Ferguson of Angus and Robertson was blunter: the novel was refused as "too long and too political."[21] On 18 July, Chisholm wrote to Christesen:

> I think Waten has done the Board a real disservice, and in fact may have imperilled its existence, if some people in Parliament, as you and I both fear, make a fuss about it. My own view, which I am sure is shared by other members, is that a book should be assessed by the Board exclusively on its literary value. But literary value has surely to be kept clear of political *propaganda* (which does not of course rule out political *background*), which necessarily prevents it from being purely creative literature. And I am afraid that any normal reader would see propaganda in *The Unbending*.... I frankly think Waten is in the wrong....
>
> I am quite convinced ... that other Board members share my view that a man's political affiliations are irrelevant. But it is up to the individual writer to reciprocate by keeping all traces of propaganda out of a work submitted. Moreover it is certain that *The Unbending* deals with a different period from the one specified when W. (sic) applied to the former Board for a fellowship, so that his original contract has not been carried out.[22]

Last but not least, and continuing the theme of Chisholm's final remark, the CLF secretary wrote to Waten on 24 June, the day after the *Daily Mirror* editorial appeared, charging that the book Waten had written was "apparently not the novel for which you were granted the Fellowship." As Waten pointed out in his reply, the Board had had his manuscript for fifteen months without raising a query until the newspaper commentaries had begun. He also pointed out that his novel was still the story of a Jewish migrant family as initially indicated.[23]

The CLF finally "cleared" itself with the thinnest of administrative defences by passing a resolution to the effect that, although the writing of the manuscript had been done with its financial assistance, the Fund had had "nothing whatever" to do with publishing the book. Board chairman, A. Grenfell Price, wrote to the secretary that the novel "would savour of naked propaganda if [it] dealt with present day events." Moreover:

> This shows our wisdom in dissociating ourselves from any future writing that might be really dangerous if it interprets current events for a similar viewpoint. As things are I hope we are safeguarded by the fact that "The Unbending" deals with a period thirty years back, and by the fact that the Jewish family depicted were harmless

> people who were to some extent accidently involved in the activities of disloyalists.[24]

2. "A Really Smart Bit of Business"

This is a good point at which to turn more directly to the literary sphere. For arguably such *political* readings of *The Unbending* as implied in Grenfell Price's words, although influenced by contemporary anti-communist rhetoric, are in certain ways more appropriate than those of its defenders who look to the novel's political "innocence," which they take to be guaranteed by its *literary* qualities.

One of the key issues in literary debates throughout the fifties was the relation between literature and politics or between art and propaganda (the adjective "communist" seemed almost automatically to attach itself to the latter term). In many ways this was the issue that determined the reading — and writing — of *The Unbending*. The positions ranged from those who claimed that art could have nothing to do with propaganda to those who claimed that all art was political. However this opposition could be more apparent than real, and individuals often managed to hold both views at once, for those who held the latter position would also tend to hold that the politics needed to be concealed or embodied, to be propaganda no longer. As Geoffrey Hutton wrote in his review of *The Unbending* for the *Argus*: "Propaganda can never be banned from the novel, but in the best novels it is so completely assimilated into the human picture that it no longer appears as propaganda."[25] More accurately, the positions were divided between those who believed, with Mr Keon, that the proper function of literature was to mirror life, to "describe it as truly and faithfully as possible, having regard to ordinary decency and morality"; and those who believed that the proper mirroring function of literature would have regard to rather different qualities — to democracy, liberalism, nationality, socialism or communism.

Criticism of *The Unbending* as propagandist was not confined to disreputable journalism or the party-political right. It was no less present in the literary mainstream. For example Kenneth Slessor reviewing the novel in the Sydney *Sun* also found it guilty of propaganda: a "too conscious polemic intent."[26] More significant still, the same charge was upheld by Waten's immediate critical community, those fellow writers to whom he would send drafts and whose advice he would seek: Palmer, Christesen, Frank Dalby Davison, Alan Marshall, Arthur Phillips and Leonard Mann.[27] The novel was praised on nearly all sides for its central characters, the Russian Jewish immigrants Hannah and Solomon Kochansky, but it was just as widely damned for its politics — or for the failure of artistry its politics were seen to produce. Phillips was provoked to the memorable response: "the interesting thing is that so much survives your bloody stupid acceptance of the bloody stupid theories of your bloody stupid clique."[28]

In fact, despite the variously coreographed public controversies surrounding *The Unbending*, what is striking is not the polarisation but the large degree of consensus about the novel's successes and failures. This in turn discloses a large middle ground of opinion shared by writers and commentators of very different political persuasions regarding the proper nature of literature. This was especially the case as far as the novel was concerned — and the novel was the key stake in the literary political game. The orthodox values of realism could tolerate a range of different emphases, from documentary to psychological, as long as these did not violate certain assumptions about "truth to life" and the primacy of character. Moreover, the representation of "life-like" characters and experiences in the novel functioned or was taken to function as the very *opposite* of propaganda.

Beneath the controversy, in another words, there is a common literary discourse at work among the critics which not only produces a large degree of consensus in judgements but can also support quite opposed positions, from Katharine Prichard to A.D. Hope, from the *Daily Mirror* to the *Tribune*, from the CLF to its political opponents. To argue this requires a violent act of interpretative reduction, ignoring differences in the provenance and projects of different arguments. But in the same movement, this reduction can disclose the ways in which political and aesthetic differences are generated, but also constrained, within a single discourse: here on the shared but disputed grounds of the literary. This local struggle was also reproduced on the larger scale in terms of which the cold war in Australia, in both the political and intellectual spheres, needs to be understood as a struggle on the shared but disputed grounds of liberalism (it was seldom capitalism versus communism).

The notion of a common literary discourse is able to suggest why literature — the novel — played such a major role in ideological struggles in the fifties and sixties. It can also suggest why the literary left was at once so extreme and so conventional in its realist ambitions (which will be further discussed in the two following chapters). Perhaps it can even show why "radical nationalists" and "new critics" can both be mistaken for Leavisites.[29] The more immediate question, though, is why the divisions among the critics appear to dissolve in the face of this self-divided novel.

The notion of propaganda is always "written over" a particular notion of the literary. The reviewer of *The Unbending* for the *Listener-In* found that the novel had "strong political overtones and to that extent is propaganda." Further, "a literary foundation [the CLF] should be devoted to the promotion of literature and not to the peddling of political views."[30] The literary and the political can readily be produced as opposites; what is more difficult is to see how strange this pure conceptual division is,

and how loaded it becomes when the actual political question of the role of the state is involved.

In relation to the concept of literature, "propaganda" signifies not just the presence of political views (peddling politics) but, more powerfully, a *distortion* of content. The *Listener-In* reviewer concludes: "The book is objectionable in presenting a distorted view of Australian life." But not every expression of a contrary viewpoint qualifies as propaganda or distortion: only those, we might say, where the rhetoric shows. One can speak of virtually anything provided that the same "language" is used (and of course "having regard for ordinary decency and morality"). Differences within the terms of liberal debate, for instance, are not propagandist but rather constitutive of the discourse. Stephen Murray-Smith's protest letter to the *Listener-In*, in response to its review, argues what looks like a weak case until we see it precisely as a strategy for putting *The Unbending* back inside the boundaries of liberal discourse. The novel, he writes, "does not present a `distorted' view of Australian life. It presents a view of two highly important historical events ... from the standpoint of the author."[31]

The notion of propaganda operates to define the limits of discourse, of what can be said within the literary and the political mainstream. In this strongest sense the opposite of propaganda is not just another opinion but what we might call "natural speech," discourse beyond or before rhetoric and ideology. When literature is argued as the opposite of propaganda it thus becomes itself a realm of natural speech: typically, the realm of "life" as opposed to rhetoric. One effect of this opposition, at once literary and political, is a distinctive kind of reactionary nationalism in which propaganda is seen as "foreign" in multiple senses of the term. It is the kind of nationalism which would have liked the chance to express itself in the form of a Committee for the Investigation of Un-Australian Activities but which had to be content with attacking the "un-Australian" activities of the CLF. Prompted by the appearance of *The Unbending*, Kenneth Mackenzie wondered "whether in a post-war, non-Russian community like this country's [Waten's grant] should have been used for the purpose of expounding the author's evident Leftist sympathies."[32] He also gibes that the novel's title "can be taken in more than one way by those to whom English is a native tongue." The *Listener-In*'s reviewer is offended because *The Unbending* criticises "all phases of Australian social and community life excepting members of the anarchical IWW — the precursors ... of Communist disruptionists of today."

In these attacks on the novel and on the CLF it is as if literature as rhetoric remained invisible for the critics, and properly invisible, until it transgressed the bounds of the properly Australian. "Australian life," in the *Daily Mirror*'s words, is opposed to an "alien ideology"; that is to say, "life" is opposed to "ideology" as

"Australian" is opposed to "alien." It is also the case that these critics are again, in one sense, responding appropriately to the novel for the narrative forces the reader to entertain parallels between the two marginal groups within its Australian society — its "aliens" and its "ideologues" or "red-raggers and foreigners" (84) as one character puts it. The two groups are linked throughout, partly for documentary reasons but also as a way of establishing perspectives for the novel's counter-history of Australian "patriotism."

The editors of the Communist Party *Tribune* also saw clearly that the issue did not concern just one book, not just party politics or access to funding, but the ideology of national identity. In response to the *Mirror* editorial, the *Tribune* published an article drawing readers' attention to a cheap thriller — entitled *Whose Grave Next, Honey?* — which was part of a series published by the *Mirror*'s owners. "Most Australians," the *Tribune* concluded, "think it's just cheap filth, that should be sent back to the American war profiteers from whom it originates."[33]

In the face of a "systematically indiscriminate" cold war rhetoric, both communists and non-communist liberals such as Christesen and Palmer could regard a commitment to "Australian literary values"[34] as itself a guarantee against the ideological excesses of the period. The year of Petrov was also the year of *Overland*'s first issue and the publication of *The Legend of the Nineties*.[35] Here too the notion of literature was inseparable from notions of democracy, liberalism and the nation. So Waten's defenders, no less than his accusers, made links between *The Unbending* and "patriotism." Gavin Casey found that the novel's critics, not its author, had been "un-Australian."[36] *The Unbending* was "a reminder of times and events that helped to mould our national character." Casey adds: "Waten is a Jew ... but he is as Australian as I am, and I like to think that I'm pretty much that way." Ian Mair praised "a breadth of feeling for Australian life greater than that of the creator of Mahoney," and Brian Fitzpatrick defended the novel by granting it significance through association with national historical significance: "I daresay the main nation-building force in Australia in those years [1916-17] was the anti-conscription spirit."[37]

The Unbending was fixed by its friends as well as its enemies in the funny mirrors of national identity. This crossing of literature and nationalist categories was also what made the CLF an inevitable rather than an accidental political target, for its own brief crossed the "innocent" category of literature with the highly-charged category of Australian. The charge of communist bias against Palmer's CLF was clearly absurd; a charge of "nationalist" or even "radical nationalist" bias would have been much more interesting, possibly exposing a set of cultural-political assumptions underlying the Fund's operation (in all innocence).[38] In 1953, looking back on the

events of the previous year, Palmer remarked: "As a matter of fact most writers whose work came up for consideration had been associated with the Left; such associations were so traditional in the Australian literary world that they were taken for granted."[39]

Literature becomes the object of political attention precisely because of its apparent innocence as mere reflection; again, within the broad embrace of realism, such a view could sit comfortably beside what might otherwise look like its opposite, the notion of literature as an active force for democracy and "national life." Literature was disputed territory because of its ability as a "reflection of reality" thus to naturalise selective images of society and nationality.

The notion of literature underlying these positions is at once *mimetic* and *expressive*. Keon made the first point in 1952, as we have seen, by supposing that literature's proper function was "to hold up a mirror to life and describe it as truly and faithfully as possible, having regard to ordinary decency and morality." Forgetting for a moment the sting in the tail, literature is thus defined as either faithful mirroring or distortion, accurate or inaccurate description: in short, either truth or propaganda. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the editorial attacking *The Unbending* appeared in a text claiming to be the "daily *mirror*" (accurate reflection plus ordinary, daily morality). *Tribune* suggests a quite different rhetorical mode.

The second point, connecting the mimetic to the expressive, is made by the *Bulletin* reviewer of *The Unbending*. On the basis perhaps of the assilimationist reception of *Alien Son*, this anonymous critic had looked forward to "a study of the Australian life of the race that gave us Isaacs and Monash." How disappointing to such realist and patriotic expectations to find instead a tendentious novel about immigrant Jews, Russians, Irish rebels and anti-war Wobblies! The key point, though, is in the review's final sentence as it shifts "naturally" from *historical distortion* to *authorial duplicity*:

> If Mr Waten had written this novel under his own steam, it might have been dismissed as a piece of political propaganda with a few touches of artistry; but to have done it on Commonwealth grant (sic), under a Liberal Government, elevates it to a really smart bit of business.[40]

Mimetic distortion thus becomes expressive of personal and politically-motivated duplicity on the part of the author: the novel was not just history "from the standpoint of the author," in Murray-Smith's terms, but calculated deception, deviousness, dishonesty. This language of "ordinary morality" described what was typical of communism (and communists): a subversive political programme and an immoral philosophy which were embodied in the duplicitous individual. There is an extreme form of authorial criticism at work in such metonymic connections. Keon was less

worried about the type of books being written under CLF funding than the "type of people" being funded.

In 1952 Wentworth had employed one of the great lines of conspiracy theory in arguing that "respectability is no guarantee that a man is not a Communist."[41] Just so, in 1954, *The Unbending*'s "respectable" story of a migrant family was no guarantee that it was not communist propaganda. What pretended to be a novel — or, worse, history — was really a political tract, a "devious defence of the IWW."[42] This sense of duplicity, of calculated deception, is only a short step from the suggestion of political subversion. As we have seen, Menzies had already ordered security investigations of all names put forward by the CLF Board; the CLF secretary had sought a security summary on Waten (which was updated after *The Unbending* was published); and Waten had been accused of acting duplicitously in writing a novel different from the story of "the integration of a Jewish migrant family" which he had originally described to the Fund.[43] Even in his defence of the literary principles of the CLF's operation, Menzies had made it clear that no "subversive agent" would be given a grant.[44]

Offenses against mimetic and historical representation lead to charges of authorial duplicity, which in turn become matters of political subversion. On the other side of the cultural-political fence we also find a mimetic and expressive notion of literature, this time defending Waten's novel as true to life, as historically representative (and "largely unpolitical"), as "Australian" or, at the very least, as "honest."[45] What's missing is a militant defence of the novel as indeed subversive (which is not to deny the political astuteness of its defenders' arguments). The Melbourne communist paper, the *Guardian*, claimed that the novel had been attacked because it was "too Australian" for people brought up on Micky Spillane, and "too realistic, too true to life" for "intellectual dope peddlers." It "recreates the historical past, with all its topical lessons, more vividly than, unfortunately, is the rule in Australian fiction." Len Fox, in *Tribune*, found that Waten belongs to the progressive school of writers sharing "a belief in the ordinary Australian people." The novel "effectively portrays the IWW"; it is "an honest and sensitive novel, with a clear depiction of the class forces in a small Australian town, and the lives of the common people in wartime." When the novel is criticised it is not for distortion but for giving a less than "comprehensive" picture.[46]

The commonsense assumptions about language and literature shared by left and right are those which Catherine Belsey has labelled "expressive realist" (an inadequate term as a description of realist fiction, but useful in defining a critical orthodoxy).[47] If there seems to be a contradiction or gap between the two aspects of language defined by her term, the expressive and the mimetic, then, Belsey argues,

this is precisely the contradiction that expressive realism suppresses discursively (and ideologically). As we have seen, even Mr Keon sensed that the mirrors of art could be deceptive unless "having regard to ordinary decency and morality." In fact, in adding this coda, Keon is only doing less subtly what literary critics have always done — managing rhetorically the gap between, say, mimesis and message, in this case by welding ordinary morality to ordinary reality and hence to realism. *Socialist* realism is just one more attempt to weld together a theory at once mimetic and exemplary.

The notion of literature which underwrites the propaganda charge is also that which privileges the "classic realist" novel. My own later argument will work, in part, as a means of undoing this concept which has probably passed its critical moment; but it is still useful as a way of suggesting an object within expressive realist discourse, a notion of the novel governing both writing and reading. It is in the space of the classic realist text, where the expressive and the mimetic coincide, that the two apparently contradictory attitudes towards art and propaganda can, as we have seen, merge into one. Propaganda might or might not be present, but in any case it is to be completely assimilated into the "human picture."[48] In these terms we can even find A.D. Hope embracing Marx (although he should mean Engels): "it may even be true, as Karl Marx observed ... that the most effective social propaganda is to show things exactly as they are and to leave the reader to draw his own conclusions."[49] The same relation of art to politics and literature to propaganda is at the centre of letters to Waten from Palmer, Phillips and Davison, his democratic-realist muses. All three are sympathetic and encouraging but extremely hostile to what they see as Waten's *betrayal*, by "bloody stupid theories," of his talent and instinct, of truth and experience, of art itself.[50] The foregrounding of the ethical realm of the author's sensibility or morality — no less present in the rhetoric of Keon or Wentworth — is the reverse side of the same liberal coin that gives value to character or "individual experience" in the text.

Expressive realist discourse centralises character as the touchstone of truth-to-life, thus privileging the "intimate story" of *The Unbending*, in Kenneth Mackenzie's terms, over its "political background." Such an ordering of the novel is not surprising given the narrative's structure in which the political story is framed internally by the story of the Kochansky family. Moreover, it is Waten's own defence of the book. In a letter to the *Daily Mirror* which they declined to publish he wrote:

> My novel is the story of a migrant family in Western Australia in the years between 1910 and 1918. Some members of the IWW make their appearance in the novel.... They are a necessary part of a truthful picture of those years which form the background of my story. So are the Laborites and conscriptionists who appear in my pages. All of my characters speak as they would in real life from which I drew my material. All the political views arise from the characters.... The writer, to render the

> truth of life, must of necessity render accurately the views of his characters no matter how unorthodox.[51]

The literary work is argued as a guarantee of political innocence on the grounds of the *author*'s disinterestedness and the *novel*'s "truth to life" (both defences are necessary); these are guaranteed in turn by the novel's historical fidelity and primary focus on character. Waten does not proclaim or defend the politics of his novel. This is strategic in the circumstances, but it should also be taken seriously as an expression of his aesthetic ideals. On the other hand, although this ordering of character and rhetoric, literature and politics, is the novelist's and the novel's own, it is neither inevitable nor self-evident. It is not the only thing that can be said about the text, although it is virtually the only thing that can be said in the language of expressive realism.

The Unbending has always had its supporters, including such influential figures as A.D. Hope and Geoffrey Dutton,[52] but its uncomfortable mix of literature and politics has meant that for a variety of reasons the novel has largely disappeared from the literary annals. Both its publishing history and critical history have been affected. Subsequent appreciations of the work, beyond the initial reviews, have with good reason focussed on its very moving portrayal of the central characters, Hannah and Solomon Kochansky: Hannah's irony, integrity and idealism; Solomon's vulnerability and seductive self-deception; their inevitable growing apart in which love is subtly replaced by pity and dependence; their unspoken "struggle for the souls" of their children. The characterisation is such that like Susan McKernan (and the *Guardian* reviewer) we might feel compelled to draw comparisons with Henry Handel Richardson — Martin Boyd also comes to mind.[53] With A.D. Hope we might even think of Tolstoy.

These readings are all to the point, and it is impossible to resist the pleasure of accepting *The Unbending*'s invitation to become a faithful or a "classic" realist reader. But the novel also asks us to take on a political and historical framework for its reading, and to do so is likely to alter the emphasis we give to its story of individuals and their relationships. To emphasise the strengths of characterisation too exclusively is to risk leaving other dimensions of the novel out of account or rendering them "unreadable." Indeed this has largely been its fate.

The same issues have determined the novel's publishing history. The manuscript was first submitted to Angus and Robertson, the publishers of *Alien Son*, with whom Waten had an agreement regarding first option on his subsequent book. The text was returned to Waten with suggestions for extensive cuts which were not a matter of crude political censorship but which were based nevertheless on the sense of a proper relationship between art, character and politics. Beatrice Davis wrote:

> The Kochanskys, particularly Hannah and Solomon, are superbly drawn, and the pathos of her declining respect for him has the quality of genuine tragedy. This is the crux and meaning of the book as a novel — and for this alone it ought to be published. The Australia to which they come ... [is] vividly presented, too; and the political themes are admirably used to give atmosphere and express character — though they take up far too much space and time. (It rather weakens this aspect of the book, by the way, that all the Australians who are not unsuccessful "workers' or members of the IWW are either cravens or "baddies" ... a common type of fault in sociological novels of the kind KSP [sic] and Dymphna Cusack have been writing).[54]

The novel was eventually published, largely uncut, as one of the first original works of fiction produced by the Australasian Book Society (ABS), a company with left-wing and trade union links established to issue Australian works with a nationalist and progressive interest. *The Unbending* thus marks an important shift in the alignment of Waten's literary career, from the major Australian commercial publisher to a new, politically-engaged "minor" publishing group. *The Unbending*, precisely because of its major literary ambitions combined with what we might call its minority politics, was proclaimed by the ABS as just the sort of thing it was after.[55] The novel's only subsequent edition was a shoddy and textually unreliable reprint in 1972 by another minor firm, Gold Star Publications in Melbourne.[56]

The critical emphasis on character is complemented by an equal and often simultaneous emphasis on (auto)biography, not just as raw material but as a source of authenticity. Kenneth Mackenzie writes that the major characters and their relationships are "all done firmly with the unstrained conviction of personal experience." The *Australian Jewish News*, no friend to Mackenzie because of the alleged anti-semiticism of his novel *The Refuge*, nevertheless agrees: "there is no doubt ... that the boy is Judah Waten.... There is no doubt that she [the mother] is modelled on the real flesh and blood of his own mother."[57] Phillips and Davison are on similar ground when they criticise Waten for disobeying his instincts. In one sense, it is as if Waten was condemned by the success of his "largely autobiographical" *Alien Son* — or perhaps we should say, by its largely autobiographical success. It was certainly the case that the "career capital" gained through the earlier work was reinvested in a different kind of operation in *The Unbending*, an attempt to "bend" together quite different stories and quite different notions of the writer's task which thus involved major political (and career) risks.

The widely-shared double emphasis on character and "life" — and hence autobiography — tends, as Belsey and others have shown, to privilege certain kinds of representation: individual experience rendered "immediately" rather than an emphasis on the medium itself or the more abstract languages of, say, political theory (politics as a set of ideas not just a set of events). *The Unbending*, I would argue, is indeed a

"novel of ideas" although in many ways it does its best to conceal this aspect of its own rhetoric.

In the twining together of expressive and mimetic notions, character thus comes to signify that which is prior to or beyond politics, theories, ideologies and rhetoric. Davison writes to Waten: "Can't you see that you are letting your concern for political tactics betray your gift for more permanent things?" — the more permanent things marked by the presence of characters who "come alive!"[58] Character is the embodiment of "natural speech" or simply "life." The Melbourne *Herald* review of *The Unbending* is entitled "Its Propaganda Kills It": "Mr Waten's central figures lose their human existence in the turgid old-hat propaganda of the novel."[59]

At the level of ideology what the critics want mirrored in the text is the authenticity of individual experience and the unmediated experience of individuality. At the level of form the critics also want natural speech, an organic rather than an artificial structure: "Mr Waten can create a fresh world without being seen too visibly pottering about the bricks and mortar of the construction."[60] Phillips, Palmer and Davison express the conviction that experience or truth or life *will* find its natural form so long as theories or rhetorical bricks and mortar do not get in the way. Armed with these impossible expectations, many of its readers have found, with Phillips, that *The Unbending* is really "two books sewn together with stitches six inches long"[61] as their own reading practice splits the novel apart.

Perhaps the last item in the sequence of commentaries prompted by the book's initial appearance is A.D. Hope's essay "The Sty of Circe," originally a CLF lecture at the University of Sydney in 1957.[62] This lecture was written not long after the seminal essay "Standards in Australian Literature" in which Hope had described "a lack of comparative standards" in Australian criticism and a lack of works "of undoubted and recognizable genius" on which standards could be based; the essay makes an intervention in contemporary concerns about the place of Australian literature in the academy.[63] Hope discovers, in Australian writing, an "obsession with the scene rather than the individual, with what is typical rather than with what is distinctive, and with what is specifically Australian rather than what is specifically human" (7). He turns to *The Unbending*, in the later essay, as a work which promises to make the break "from the world of values which are relative into the world in which values are absolute, from the historical to the timeless" ("Standards," 13).

"The Sty of Circe" is a fascinating repetition of the themes already noted. Hope distances himself from earlier political interests in the novel; he is *dis*interested in the name of literature itself. Great novels, he argues, might or might not be propagandist; but "movements such as social realism tend to divert the novel from its

main dramatic function ... not because the writer is in fact tendentious but because he sees his characters as representatives of a class or a movement and not primarily as individuals" (277). This point, as just suggested, has its particular historical moment in the history of Australian criticism: seeing "the individual as such" is opposed to "the native Australian writer['s] ... obsession with the typically Australian and with an accurate rendering of the Australian scene" (280). Waten, by contrast with the norm, "is by *instinct* and preference a classical novelist in the sense that his work is *instinctively* based in the individual situation" (278, my emphasis).

Waten is valued, then, because of his difference. But the language in which Hope articulates this difference discloses the sameness of his critical discourse. His category of "the individual" repeats other critics' notions of character or life, generating oppositions between experience and ideology, truth and distortion, art and politics. Again there is a powerful sense of the story developing its own natural form until "the novel of social purpose" takes over "about half-way through" (287) — an arbitrary but symptomatic division. Hope's desire for organic form comes out in his praise of the book's sense of Jewishness which barely avoids racial stereotyping. Waten, he writes, "has the Jewish depth and readiness of emotion and faith from which he can naturally and simply draw effects" (281). Hannah Kochansky has "the devotion and steadfastness of Ruth, the command of Miriam, the integrity and heroism of Judith" (285).

The Unbending is compared not only to Old Testament legend but also to Greek tragedy, Icelandic saga and "classical" European realism. Hope argues, interestingly, that "for the first time the European as opposed to the Anglo-Saxon and American tradition appears in Australian writing" (279). But if Hope praises the novel in terms of other literature he dispraises it, after all, in terms of life:

> Waten gives a fair enough picture of the first referendum on conscription. But he is plainly a partisan of the IWW and the anti-conscription labour men. On the other side he sees nothing but tub-thumpers, profiteers, cartoon-type capitalists and corrupt politicians. I remember those days myself. I remember the bitterness common among middle-class people.... They were grotesquely wrong, yet they were for the most part decent, kindly, honest and humane people. Waten, I feel, has fallen into the familiar trap that social realism offers the novelist: the trap of giving us a doctrinaire cartoon of a social situation rather than a picture of things as they are.... [T]he whole picture would have been more effective for the end he had in view if he had been able to rise, as an artist, above his political convictions. (286-87)

Again, all at once, Waten has betrayed his instinct, art, "things as they are" — and the critic's memories. Hope is reproducing, indeed, at this point in time, *capturing*, an "expressive realist" orthodoxy.

3. Propaganda and Seduction

I want now to turn to the text of *The Unbending*, not to defend it in liberal terms as literature rather than propaganda, or to re-argue its "unity," but to ask what the novel itself has to say about the relation between the two modes, the aesthetic (novelistic) and the propagandist. In terms of the literary discourse in operation, to say that the novel is propaganda and therefore not literature is equivalent to saying that it is literature and therefore not propaganda. In a sense I want to re-claim the novel as propaganda by considering how the narrative itself mediates, by textual means, between competing aesthetic and political discourses. *The Unbending* is indeed "full" of propaganda, full of quotations from pro- and anti-war songs, patriotic speeches, IWW pamphlets, religious and revolutionary slogans, moral maxims and so on. This process of quotation could just be documentary literal-mindedness or politics smuggled in under the guise of objectivity. But there are further questions to be posed: how does the novel establish the conditions for its own reading as realism, documentary or propaganda? What relations does it set up between representation and rhetoric? What do its divisions signify?

Propaganda in the novel functions not just as the recording of historic political positions but as a "way of saying": a narrative or rhetorical mode with its own powers of representation and persuasion. In this sense propagandist rhetoric as incorporated into the narrative presents possible models for the text's own rhetorical performance, models which, having once released their disruptive potential, it must somehow manage. We can draw here on the arguments of Ross Chambers in which he elaborates the notion of "narrative self-situation."[64] Chambers has argued that the readerly text, which category can describe *The Unbending*, establishes by textual means the conditions of its own readability, producing its own narrative situation and "point" by internal "repetition, reflection, and mirroring" (28). Each text includes more or less implicit models and *anti-models* for its own rhetorical performance, models such as intertextual references, internal narratives and story-telling situations, and figures, in the sense both of characters and tropes, which represent artistic processes, artefacts or narrative exchange. Intertextuality in this sense is more precise and more motivated than the rather loose notion of a text's (inevitable) allusions to other texts. The concept describes one of the specific means whereby the narrative (inevitably) attempts to situate itself, and thus to situate its reading, among a network of possible genres and readings (as this *kind* of text or bit of text, to be read thus and not otherwise). Intertextuality thus "works through devices by which a text signals how its very structure of meanings depends on both similarity to and difference from certain other types of text, involving a transposition of one sign system (or more than one) into another."[65]

The process of self-situation through narrative and figural "embedding" is, as Chambers argues, "the central device by which the `readability' of the `readerly' text is produced" (35). We have already seen this process at work in *Alien Son* in its juxtapostion of "high" and popular art forms. Perhaps there is more at stake, or at least the stakes are more politically charged, in the case of *The Unbending*. But in every case self-situation involves an institutional as well as textual dimension as the narrative makes it claim for a place within a specific ordering of genres and audiences, in a given cultural economy, as well perhaps as in some ideal order of genres.

Propaganda in *The Unbending* is both model and anti-model — not just something the text "fails to avoid." As A.D. Hope saw, the work aspires to all the power and persuasiveness of the "classical" novel with its techniques for moral scrutiny and social density; this ambition sets it apart from some of the humbler realisms of Waten's contemporaries. The narrative needs therefore to distance itself from any form of propaganda in order to establish its credentials as "natural" realist discourse. At the same time, the text cannot rest content with the achievements of "bourgeois realism." The Kochansky's are only part of the story, part of an anti-bourgeois revolutionary history that the novel also relates. For *this* story the text needs to co-opt nothing less than the rhetorical excess and violence of revolutionary propaganda in order to establish its difference from bourgeois realism and bourgeois history. It needs to be excessive, even "crude," precisely because of the absolute claims bourgeois realism has on natural discourse, as the critics show.

The text has both to ally itself with the great realist tradition and differentiate itself as telling a new kind of story. This is the problem the narrative sets itself: how to write a "complete" realist novel which is also something more. Thus we have the Kochansky story framed by the political story, but also the reverse, the political story framed by the Kochansky story with which the novel begins and ends. The novel's structure both centralises and disperses the "intimate" family story, on the one hand marginalising IWW and revolutionary rhetoric, while on the other signalling its need of that rhetoric for the story to be complete. The narrative is framed and moved onward by the chronology of the Kochansky story but this continuous plot is fragmented "intratextually" into four parts and seventy-four different sections, some as short as half a page.

The Unbending in this reading needs to figure revolution and the history of the working class becoming a class-for-itself, but it must do so other than in the figures and rhetoric of propaganda or utopianism alone. After all, the novel (this novel) makes claims on history. It must naturalise the figures of revolution or class-consciousness, even as the critics suggest, but do so without losing the marks, including the violence,

of their difference. This task adds a further twist to the already duplicitous role of realism (not of the author), its need both to conceal and reveal its art. As Chambers suggests, realist texts are "so successful in imitating `natural' discourse that they must leave clues if they are to be deciphered as art ... and thus benefit from artistic authority. Such texts rely for narratorial effectiveness on a kind of internal inconsistency, the penetrability of their disguise" (63).

How to be art, history and politics all at once and still be all art? We might see this as a traditional problem for the realist novel but one posed in a new way for the mid-twentieth century "communist" novelist in Australia. *The Unbending* suggests both the desire to write according to the sheer life-likeness of characters and event *and* the desire to (re)write a political history. Waten's choice of subject-matter, the conscription fights of 1916-17, could scarcely have been better chosen as a way of throwing his novel headlong into the politicised discourses of literature and nationalism in the early fifties (but to do so "in disguise"). To make its mark and claim authority as serious literature *The Unbending* would have to conceal its political argument; but to make its political and historical point this argument would have to be recoverable or decipherable for the reader. This internally inconsistent task is borne by the novel's juxtaposition of different kinds of aesthetic and political language and different character types.

To go straight to the centre of the paradox, in its own text *The Unbending* reveals a profound scepticism towards rhetoric, indeed towards art. The prose is strict, spare and self-denying, earnest rather than enchanting, and in a revealing stutter even the mildest trope is likely to carry an "as it were" ("cut off from the world as it were," 208). At the level of character, the reticence of militant worker George Feathers and Hannah's broken English are preferred to local politician Johnson's urging rhetoric and to Solomon's indulgent eloquence. In rhetorical figures and in human figures the novel is suspicious of adornment, sensuality and utopianism which it links — characteristically in a single unobtrusive sentence: "`I have been given a *grand idea*,' [Solomon] said impressively, *stroking his golden moustache*" (54, my emphasis).

Characters, their modes of speech and the tropes and stories which surround them can all be understood in terms of particular rhetorical models; and in these terms the Kochansky story and the "political" story can be shuffled back into each other. Solomon becomes central in this reading of character for he is, above all, a story-teller; and, like Satan, that other great story-teller, he is also a great seducer. In his analysis of nineteenth and early twentieth century stories, Chambers focuses on the scene of seduction as the primary trope through which narrative self-situation and "narratorial authority" (51) is accomplished. *The Unbending* can be understood as a story of anti-

seduction, resisting or absorbing a range of seductive scenes and rhetorics, and in this it conforms to one of the strong, recurring themes in Chambers' analysis: "the seductive power inherent in the device of denying seduction" (216).

We first meet Solomon on the ship telling stories of Australia, the promised land or Golden Kingdom (although we meet him only after meeting Hannah and her "humorous and ironical speech" in the novel's opening sentence). Solomon's talk initiates recurrent themes: the image of the promised land, for example, links the hopes of the immigrants with the political desires of the working class, with the rhetoric of official politics and with myths of the working-man's paradise. *Gold* is a connecting figure in these themes and throughout the novel, from Solomon's moustache to the fool's gold discovered by Moses, the eldest son, in his passion for sudden wealth (65-69); from utopian stories of the golden future, which might be worthy or foolish, to the sordid reality of money with which they are contrasted. Solomon's golden dreams turn to scrap metal and then, very nearly, to old bones; the novel quietly produces these powerful symbols.

Early in the novel we also see Hannah's seduction by Solomon, above all by his golden talk:

> He was a large, handsome man with a silky golden moustache, gentle and humorous. He was a fluent talker.... He had an innate ardour, an imaginative flight, so that even his most commonplace experience assumed more than life-like proportions; they were always larger....
>
> Hannah had listened to him fascinated.... He was unlike any other man she had ever met; he was from another world, an opulent, velvety world. She overlooked his lack of ideals and convictions ... and took him at his word. (14)

Solomon is a romancer: the "ardour" of his words invite empathy and excite the passions, not least his own ("His careful descriptions of the dishes inflamed his appetite," 55). He is also a kind of aesthete, willing to lose all in the golden dreams of art: "`What is greater than beauty?' he asked himself almost rhapsodically" (42). For these very reasons his rhetoric *is* powerful. For Moses, "[h]is father fired his imagination and stood for a kind of *freedom*" (56, my emphasis). Solomon must be both model and anti-model for the narrative, for his power looks very much like the power of art itself.

The novel shows Hannah's ironical and reticent speech resisting and then overpowering Solomon's seductive, utopian eloquence. Realism, we might say, overcomes romance. Hannah is both lover and ironical reader of Solomon. At one point she observes him at the synagogue as he intones the Kaddish for her parents:

> Hannah watched him with curious eyes ... his pale, serious face, his movements assured, almost graceful when he recited the blessing....
>
> Later, when he intoned the Kaddish ... his face shone with a pleasurable melancholy and his mellow voice was sweet and musical.

> Hannah was not pleased that he could show himself off so effectively at such a time. (176)

Religion emerges as just another form of utopian romance and aestheticism (complicating Hope's praise of the novel's sense of "the religious ethos of the Jewish people"[66]). The affective power of Solomon's sensuality and artfulness is overtaken by Hannah's "artless" and ironic speech which emerges from her broken English as frank and aggressive, "peculiarly strong, yet passionate and soft" (209). More than once her "foreign" English enables her to break the rules, to say what can't be said. She can proclaim, when forced, "I not want to be decent" (sic, 159).

Hannah's relationship to Solomon is a story of disillusionment; stylistically and structurally the narrative is shaped to disillusion rather than entrance. On one side, as I have argued, the novel lays claim to the accumulated authority of a realist tradition and thus to the truths of an art, which, like Hannah, combines "life, harmony and beauty" (310). On the other side however, but still like Hannah, the novel has to be willing to sacrifice artifice, seductiveness and decorum for what *is* greater than beauty, for the "truths" of its larger story (beyond art).

The Unbending needs both to draw on the rhetorical and affective power of propaganda but also to absorb and qualify it. It must split propaganda, dividing the rhetoric that seduces from that which clarifies and distinguishing the fool's gold of patriotism from the real wealth of revolutionary working-class solidarity. Patriotic propaganda is shown as yet another type of romance ("Foreign travel! New lands! Alluring women!" 81) or of the sentimental tale ("We don't want to lose you/But we think you ought to go," 197). The novel's own realism is defined by its internal critique of these two alternative modes whose power to seduce is also their power to blind an audience to their rhetorical exclusions. Waten can manage this critique with subtlety. In setting the scene for a school patriotic concert the narrator notes a First Aid sign bearing the legend "Foreign Bodies in the Eye." The school sings "God Save the King" (196), but Moses is refused permission to recite "My Country" (199-200). Patriotic and religious discourse mutually define the foreign bodies.

By contrast the IWW propaganda is shown as having a "truth" or at least a (seductive) power beyond even the wisdom of Hannah, an effect due precisely to its rhetorical excess, its ability to break through, to say what classic realism could not say:

> [Feathers] stared at the front page, unable to take his eyes away from the flamboyant language....
>
> *War What For? For the workers and their dependents: Death, Starvation, Poverty and Untold misery. For the capitalist class: Gold, Stained with the Blood of Millions, Riotous Luxury, Banquets of Jubilation Over the Graves of Their Dupes and Slaves. War is Hell! Send the Capitalists to hell and Wars are Impossible....*
>
> *Workers of the World Unite! Don't become Hired Murderers!* (96)

Here as elsewhere the narrative has a more than documentary interest in the texts it quotes. The quotation comes from the IWW paper, *Direct Action*; but *The Unbending*, as classic realism, must work as indirect action or in Chambers' term "deferred communication" (25). So the IWW propaganda is placed and displaced. The novel registers its force by the way it overcomes Feathers' reticence and Hannah's irony (210). But it is also (dis)placed by the IWW's actual political failure, a failure which is revealed symptomatically in the excesses of their propaganda. The IWW is also criticised by Killeen, a strong character in the novel, an Irish socialist who sees the IWW as utopian (although Killeen himself is characterised as sectarian).

Waten is at some pains to incorporate diverse political perspectives through Feathers, Killeen, Fomin, Jones, Williams and others. The effect is not to produce a mere balance or range but to mark out the steps of a political education for the reader. As Beatrice Davis suggests there is not much subtlety in the story in the way it divides up the political "goodies" and "baddies," but there is a range of positions among the former at least: the revolutionary utopianism of the IWW, Killeen's Irish rebelliousness, the quieter worker solidarity of Feathers, the Laborism of Williams. These are juxtaposed and weighed up against each other in a way that requires the reader to engage with the novel as indeed a novel (or a history) of ideas.

The split in Labor and the disintegration of the IWW as a political force prefigures the "historical need" for a communist movement. The Russian revolution, "the greatest thing in history" (297), is discussed by Feathers and Hannah in the book's final pages ("`Very big thing true,'" Hannah agrees). This final resolution must remain off-stage, however, and for narrative as well as historical reasons. Instead the novel enacts a process whereby the IWW's rhetoric is dissolved figuratively back into the working class, the people, the marginalised "red raggers and foreigners," where it awaits transformation by communism. The IWW's violent, excessive revolutionary utopianism is dispersed but also embodied, rewritten.

Few readers, I suspect, would fail to find *The Unbending* fairly crudely partisan at one point or another. We need to be wary of blaming this too readily on Waten's communism or taking it as the specific instance of a general law that politics and art do not mix. (At the same time, as I have shown, we won't get far by trying to argue that *The Unbending* is not political after all.) When we do feel the novel to be heavy-handed the problem is not "politics" *tout court* but rather a simplistic application of realism's golden rule that political attitudes need to be embodied. This produces a crude, moralising equation between, say, reactionary politics and personal ambition or cowardice. Elsewhere the novel seems to be caught between two modes, what we might call the Tolstoyan or classic realist for its central characters but

something closer to Dickens for minor characters such as Grogan and O'Handy (even the signifying role of the names seems to alter). But it is not necessarily a sign of Waten's artlessness when he says of the "watery, red-rimmed eyes" of the headmaster Mr Grogan, one of the caricatures for which he is condemned, that they "seemed to say like the Dickens character that boys were a bad lot" (75). Neither is it accidental that when police raid the Kochanskys they seize books by Tolstoy and Zola — "Foreign writers" and "Anarchists" reckons the detective (254-57). Dickens, Tolstoy and Zola are models, but also anti-models, for *The Unbending*'s own readability.

Similarly, the characters' physical appearance and speech represent not just personalities or platforms but also narrative and rhetorical modes. Killeen, the outsider with inside knowledge, is like a revolutionary text or a figure of revolution itself:

> The half-ironical smile on his long face, the axe-like nose, the burning eyes, produced the strongest effect on the onlookers. Those who believed evil of him saw in his face something frightening and unpleasant. But to those ... who did not believe the current gossip, there was something noble and heroic, something uncommon in this tall, gaunt figure. (148)

As rhetorical rather than human figures the characters act in the way of mediating between competing narrative models. These in turn call forth competing, juxtaposed discourses, from the sentimental to the agitational, from the "half-ironical" to the "noble and heroic," including those which produce "the strongest effect" on readers. Stories and modes of speech become ways of relating histories and projecting alternative histories. Thus the process of narrative self-situation in the text is also a means of political-historical situation.

The Unbending is concerned to rewrite history and in order to do so it must establish its own authority to narrate by this double process of self-situation. The novel is repeatedly bringing excluded histories into its narrative, bringing them in to show that they were always and already there. It brings in the figure of revolution, for example, through the IWW, Killeen, and Fomin, an exiled Russian Social Democrat. The "foreign" histories each character trails behind him or her are thus discovered inside the novel's local, Australian history. The Kochanskys themselves bring not only their old world luggage (the stories on their Russian bedstead, "pictures in red and gold of courtiers and fair ladies with wigs after a painting by Watteau," 24), but also the revolutionary history of 1905. There are embedded textual models too — for example, references to books on radical economic and political theory — which repeat the pattern of introducing, and naturalising, alternative narratives (here the narrative of class history). Marginal or excluded positions whether at the level of language, politics or nationality are argued into the mainstream, thereby transforming it.

Given the embattled position of the Communist Party in the early fifties, the end-of-ideology climate, and the institutional constraints on publication and publicity, perhaps *The Unbending* itself can be seen as a covert way of taking a marginal position: a position which must be disguised, but whose disguise must be penetrable. It is in this sense truly a cold war novel, and the "kind of internal inconsistency" upon which its artistic authority depends is doubled, as it were, by its political context (which becomes, in the novel, intertextual). The novel tells a revolutionary history that prefigures communism; it tells us, at the same time, that this revolutionary history is "simply" history, a simple story of characters in their time and place.

I have already noted parallels between the period of the novel's setting and the occasion of its writing, parallels not only summoned but in a sense anticipated by *The Unbending* in its representations of heightened political rhetoric, a referendum which splits the nation and the Labor Party, a "crisis reading" of contemporary history and patriotism, and the suppression of a revolutionary minority. From Waten's perspective in the crisis-filled fifties, 1916 (the defeat of conscription) not 1915 (the landing at Gallipoli) is read backwards as the initiating moment of a modern national history. The workers and the Wobblies replace the Anzacs, a coming to class-consciousness replaces a coming of age.

The novel rewrites national history as class history (so the workers' Railway Hotel competes with the Commercial and the Golden Crown!). Further, 1916, the year that split the nation, is made to anticipate 1917 and the ten days that split the world. This revolutionary history also threatens some golden Australian legends. Killeen says of the IWW:

> "It's the first revolutionary movement in this country. But it's not the last. Australia's history's just begun. Before — I know about Eureka and the shearers — the capitalists had everything in the grip of their palms. They'll not be as almighty after this struggle." (99)

Len Fox, in his *Tribune* review, picks out another passage which makes this same point and argues instead for a longer Australian militant tradition. Already in the early fifties communism itself was drawn in contradictory directions, between revolutionary vanguardism and populist nationalism. Nowhere was this more so than in the literary sphere as the progess of *Overland* would soon show.[67] In the cultural as well as political realms there were tensions between marginal and mainstream positions; and for left-wing writers these could be expressed as tensions between possible literary modes and models from Zhdanov to Dad and Dave via Dickens, Tolstoy, Gorky.... As Ian Turner asked, did socialist realism "imply a positive revolutionary message, or merely a realistic account of working-class life?"[68]

These tensions, at once literary and political, are inscribed in *The Unbending* in its contradictory aspirations to be both modestly documentary and radically utopian; and to be both artless and artful, claiming the authority of classic realism but, as very late in the tradition, necessarily in some ironic relation to it. The novel is not only divided, but must in some way foreground its divisions, its violations of classic realist decorum. If the contradictions do prove too violent for the novel itself this is due not to the sheer incompatibility of literature and politics or art and ideology, but to contradictions within the literary discourse which the novel largely shares (but disputes) with its critics: to the gap between "natural speech" and rhetoric lodged within the discourse of expressive realism. By the same token, while the critics have brought *The Unbending* undone, exposing its gaps and contradictions, the novel in turn has proved the critics' undoing, exposing the irresolutions in their own attempts to "complete" the text in interpretation.

Perhaps *The Unbending* itself best describes the self-divided nature of its narrative when it describes a minor but valued character as "beautifully ugly" (185). That might also stand as a figure of revolution. The narrative is attracted to the oxymoron (and seems to attract them to itself, with its "awkward fluency," in Kenneth Mackenzie's phrase). The novel's political aspirations, we might say, are openly concealed in the text, hidden for all to see. So much so that it is unclear whether Waten would have been dismayed or delighted when the *Australian Journal* commented: "there is nothing to terrify even the most conservative in *The Unbending*."[69]

1. "Taxpayers' Money to Help the Reds," editorial, *Daily Mirror* 23 June 1954, p.3. Judah Waten, *The Unbending* (Melbourne: Australasian Book Society, 1954). Further references to the novel will appear in the text.

2. Frank Browne, "Communist Propaganda and the Public Purse," *Things I Hear* (June 1954), p.1; "Does Mr Menzies Really Understand Communism?" *Intelligence Survey* (June 1954), pp.9, 12. The latter described itself as "A Special Intelligence Service for Australian Patriots." Eric Butler was thought to have been responsible for the circulation of the anti-semitic *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in Australia: although I have not emphasised it here, in the context of debates about "patriotism" anti-semitism is a theme that keeps turning up in the material under discussion.

3. Nicholas Whitlam and John Stubbs, *Nest of Traitors: The Petrov Affair* (Milton, Qld: Jacaranda, 1974), p.104 and passim. The Christesens were interviewed by Security in November 1954 and summoned to appear before the Commission in January 1955 (Lynne Strahan, *Just City and the Mirrors:* Meanjin Quarterly *and the Intellectual Front, 1940-1965* [Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1984], pp.161-69).

4. Quotations in this paragraph from C.B. Christesen, letter to H.S. Temby, Secretary CLF, 25 June 1954, Australian Archives (ACT): AA CRS A463, (1956-); 1969/2107; Judah Waten-Commonwealth Literary Fund, 1954-1971. See also correspondence in the *Meanjin* Archives, Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne: Christesen to A.R. Chisholm (a CLF Board member), 13 July 1954: "[following the appearance of Frank Browne's newsletter] the *Daily Mirror* published an editorial attacking the novel and the CLF; then the *Bulletin* review appeared (written, I'm told, by Malcolm Ellis), then the Melbourne *Herald* review by Tebbutt — all in part using certain phraseology similar to Browne in his newsletter. I'm told that Osmar White actually wrote a favourable review of the novel but it was diced and Tebbutt's substituted.... Some years ago I was told that Wentworth supplies Browne with a great deal of his information.... Further, it is likely that Wentworth and/or Keon had already complained to Temby.... Also, there just might be some anti-Semitic spite behind the press (and parliamentary) attacks; for Wentworth is a well-known Jew-baiter as well as Red-baiter."

5. Vance Palmer et al., "Comments on *The Unbending*," *Meanjin* 13, 3 (Winter 1954), pp.456-60. See also Strahan, *Just City and the Mirrors*, pp.147-52; and *Meanjin* Archives, letters between Christesen and Prichard, A.A. Phillips, Chisholm, Palmer, Fitzpatrick, June-July 1954. Prichard writes that she is "not very enthusiastic" about the book; Phillips, "I don't think much of the book ... Waten's politico-literary theory has led him on a false trial"; Chisholm, "His book is much more propagandist than I have said in my review."

6. See Allan Ashbolt, "The Great Literary Witch-Hunt of 1952," in *Australia's First Cold War 1945-1953: Volume 1: Society, Communism and Culture*, eds Ann Curthoys and John Merritt (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1984), pp.153-82. The full parliamentary debates can be read in *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates* (*Hansard*) (*CPD*), 218 (1952), pp.717-29 & 1031-41. Writers named include Vance Palmer, Flora Eldershaw, Dymphna Cusack, Kylie Tennant, John Morrison, Eric Lambert, Alan Marshall, Brian Fitzpatrick — and Judah Waten.

7. *CPD* 218 (1952), pp.717-18: 28 August 1952. The date follows closely on the publication of Waten's *Alien Son* and the appearance of reviews of the book. This appears to have been the catalyst (or perhaps the final straw!) producing Keon's speeches.

8. Frank Cain and Frank Farrell, "Menzies' War on the Communist Party, 1949-1951," in Curthoys and Merritt, pp.109-34; Ashbolt, pp.154-55.

9. Ashbolt, pp.158 & 163.

10. *CPD* 218 (1952), p.727.

11. Ashbolt, pp.178-82. The Advisory Board in 1952 comprised Palmer, chairman, Flora Eldershaw, Tom Inglis Moore, R.G. Howarth and Kenneth Binns. The Board in 1954 comprised Prof. A. Grenfell Price, chairman, Kenneth Slessor, Prof. A.R. Chisholm, Inglis Moore, and Howarth. Grenfell had published a "propagandist booklet denouncing communism" in 1931 (Ashbolt, p.180).

12. W.R. Cumming, Acting Secretary CLF, letter to Judah Waten, 20 November 1951. AA: CRS A463, (1956-); 1969/2107.

13. *CPD* 218 (1952), p.1033-34: 4 September 1952.

14. The *Guardian*, the Melbourne Communist Party paper, reports a "mass meeting" in Richmond to hear Eric Lambert, John Morrison and Waten defend themselves (9 October 1952), and Brian Fitzpatrick used his radio program on 3XY to analyse the speeches, 6 September 1952 (typescript in Judah Waten Papers, National Library of Australia, NLA MS 4536, Series 5). Waten's CLF file includes letters to the CLF Secretary protesting the events of 1954 from Vic Williams, Secretary, WA Realist Writers; Lance Loughrey (member of the Melbourne Realist Writers); Ian Turner, as Manager of the Australasian Book Society; and John Morrison, as Secretary of the Victorian Fellowship of Australian Writers.

15. See Sneja Gunew, "Migrant Women Writers: Who's on Whose Margins?" in *Gender, Politics and Fiction: Twentieth Century Australian Women's Novels*, ed. Carole Ferrier (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1985), p.164, drawing on the arguments of Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp.141-64.

16. Cain and Farrell, pp.112-13, 115.

17. AA: CRS A463, (1956-); 1969/2107. Report dated 18 February 1952, Menzies' note dated 21 February. In a departmental minute on the same date Menzies repeats exactly the same message but adds that the case "does not add to my somewhat meagre confidence in the Advisory Committee." Minute reproduced in Richard Hall, "Menzies' Literary Lie," *Age Monthly Review* 3, 9 (January 1984), p.3.

18. *CPD* 218 (1952), p.724.

19. For a discussion of this incident see Hall, pp.3-4 and a follow-up piece, "Authors and ASIO (cont.)," *Age Monthly Review* 3, 10 (February 1984), pp.5-6.

20. AA: CRS A463, (1956-); 1969/2107. Letters/minutes from Chisholm to Temby, 5 June; Temby to Grenfell Price, 21 June; Temby to the PM, 22 & 29 June; Temby to Grenfell Price, 29 June; Grenfell Price to Temby, 29 July; Temby to Grenfell Price, 6 August; Chisholm to Temby, 24 August.

21. AA: CRS A463, (1956-); 1969/2107. Davis to Temby, 25 June; Temby to PM, 29 June.

22. Chisholm, letter to Christesen, 18 July 1954 (and Christesen's reply, 26 July). *Meanjin* Archive.

23. AA: CRS A463, (1956-); 1969/2107. Waten forwards the manuscript on 16 February 1953; Waten's reply to Temby, the CLF Secretary, is dated 28 June 1954.

24. A. Grenfell Price, letter to Temby, 29 July 1954. The Board's resolution is contained in a departmental minute [n.d., 29 July?]. AA: CRS A463, (1956-); 1969/2107.

25. Geoffrey Hutton, "Novels," *Argus* 29 May 1954, p.10.

26. Kenneth Slessor, "Books of the World and the Week," *Sun* (Sydney) 31 July 1954, p.5.

27. See letters to Waten from Palmer (15 February 1953), Phillips (1 June 1954), Mann (21 June 1954), Dalby Davison (1 July 1954). Waten Papers, NLA MS 4536, Series 2. Mann comments: "... one-sidedness and caricaturing may be all right for politics, though I'm inclined to think it is wrong and weak in effect, even for that ... but it's no good for a work of letters, for a work of art which otherwise your book is," (NLA MS 4536/2/137).

28. Phillips, letter to Judah Waten, 1 June 1954, NLA MS 4536/2/133: "Even the propaganda suffers. You have got to weave the political influence in because you *want* it to be an influence (you criminal — a novelist making what he wants happen, happen — that puts you on the level of the commercial, even if your motives are better).... But it isn't novelist's truth — it doesn't feel inevitable and right.... Trust to it finding its own way of expression.... That's not art for art's sake; it's art for Life's sake, the only sort worth having."

29. The terms are John Docker's, from his *In a Critical Condition: Reading Australian Literature* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1984), chs 1-5. A critique which suggests another reading of the influence of Leavis is Andrew Milner, "The `English' Ideology: Literary Criticism in England and Australia," *Thesis Eleven* 12 (1985), pp.121-25. See also Patrick Buckridge, "Intellectual Authority and Critical Traditions in Australian Literature 1945 to 1975," in *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society*, eds Brian Head and James Walter (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp.188-213.

30. "Book of the Week," *Listener-In* 31 July-6 August 1954, p.24.

31. Stephen Murray-Smith, letter, *Listener-In* 14-20 August 1954, p.21.

32. [Kenneth] Seaforth [Mackenzie], "Fellowship and Quality," *Sydney Morning Herald* 14 August 1954, p.15.

33. *Tribune* 30 June 1954, p.5.

34. [Editorial], "Tradition and Today," *Overland* 9 (April 1957), p.2.

35. Vance Palmer, *The Legend of the Nineties* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1954). For *Overland* see David Carter, "Coming Home After the Party: *Overland*'s First Decade," *Meanjin* 44, 4 (December 1985), pp.462-76.

36. Gavin Casey, "An Important Australian Novel That's Been Misjudged," *A.M.* 27 July 1954, p.45.

37. I.M. [Ian Mair], "New Australians 1910-1917," *Age* 5 June 1954, p.15; Brian Fitzpatrick, [Comment on *The Unbending*], *Meanjin* 13, 3 (Winter 1954), p.459. See also his article on the novel and civil liberties issues in the first *Overland*: "The Writer at Bay," *Overland* 1 (Spring 1954), p.3.

38. For a list of CLF grant recipients see Thomas Shapcott, *The Literature Board: A Brief History* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1988), pp.24-28.

39. Palmer in *Landfall* 28 (1953), pp.279-82, quoted in Ashbolt, p.181.

40. [Malcolm Ellis?], "Waten Novel," *Bulletin* 16 June 1954, p.2.

41. *CPD* 218 (1952), p.728.

42. Geoffrey Tebbutt, "Speaking of Books," *Digest of World Reading* (October 1954), p.122.

43. Waten's quarterly reports to the CLF throughout 1952 suggest that the first draft of the novel was a much longer work, following the lives of the two children into a later period. There is no mention of the book's "political" content, but the reports supply appropriate accounts of the progress of the writing. AA: CRS A463, (1956-); 1969/2107. Christesen did some thorough research into the matter and satisfied himself that the changes Waten made were for good literary and imaginative reasons and that the Board had been kept well-informed. He correctly anticipates the line of attack, via the notion that Waten "has pulled a fast one": letter to Chisholm, 13 July 1954. *Meanjin* Archive.

44. I should say, "*more or less* clear." Menzies' double negatives are a little confusing: "I am not going to say that if, at the time, we were told that the person concerned was a subversive agent, we would not have given him a Commonwealth grant. We would not have done so." *CPD* (218) 1952, p.724.

45. The phrase "largely unpolitical" comes from Fitzpatrick's "The Writer at Bay." See also "Australian Realism on the March," *Guardian* 1 July 1954, p.4; L.F. [Len Fox?], "*The Unbending* is Interesting First Novel," *Tribune* 23 June 1954, p.8; Donald Cameron, "*The Unbending*," *Overland* 1 (Spring 1954), p.12. The review of the novel in *Common Cause*, the Miners' Federation paper, was entitled "*The Unbending* Makes History," (August 1954). Reviews collected in Waten's papers, NLA MS 4536/5/1.

46. From the *Guardian* and *Tribune* reviews cited above.

47. Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (London and New York: Methuen, 1980), pp.1-36.

48. Hutton, p.10.

49. A.D. Hope, "The Sty of Circe: Judah Waten's *The Unbending*," in his *Native Companions: Essays and Comments on Australian Literature, 1936-1966* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1974), p.277. Further references appear in the text. For correspondence from the time Hope was preparing the CLF lecture (ironically enough) which eventually became this essay, see Waten Papers, NLA MS 4536/2/191, 197-98 (April 1957).

50. Letters to Waten from Palmer, 15 February 1953 (NLA MS 4536/2/107-8); Phillips, 1 June 1954 (2/133-34); Dalby Davison, 1 July 1954 (2/141-48).

51. Waten sent a copy of this letter to Menzies as well (25 June 1954) with a covering note and a copy of the novel. AA: CRS A463, (1956-); 1969/2107.

52. Hope in "The Sty of Circe"; Dutton in his *Snow on the Saltbush: The Australian Literary Experience* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin/Viking, 1984), pp.175-76. Dutton repeats Hope's complaint (see below) that "*about halfway through* ... the author abandons his art in favour of his politics" (my emphasis).

53. Susan McKernan, *A Question of Commitment: Australian Literature in the Twenty Years After the War* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), pp.40-41. Another positive reader is D.R. Burns: as well as praising the characterisation he argues that in the political material "the recountal is not propagandist in any debasing way" (*The Directions of Australian Fiction 1920-1974* [Melbourne: Cassell, 1974], p.109.)

54. Beatrice Davis (Angus & Robertson), letter to Waten, 7 August 1953, NLA MS 4536/2/120-22. A Reader's Report is included.

55. See the *Tribune* review cited above and Jack Beasley, *Red Letter Days: Notes From Inside an Era* (Sydney: Australasian Book Society, 1979), p.140.

56. A new edition is planned for release in September 1993 in the Collins/Angus & Robertson Imprint Classics series.

57. I.M., "*The Unbending*," *Australian Jewish News* 16 July 1954, p.8. For their critique of Mackenzie see "No `Refuge' for Jews!" *Australian Jewish News* 2 April 1954, p.6. See also "Australasian Book Society Claims Attacks on Waten's Book Anti-Semitic," *Australian Jewish Herald* 13 August 1954, p.3. The ABS published a leaflet entitled *Attack on a Novel* (Melbourne: ABS, 1954).

58. Frank Dalby Davison, letter to Waten, 1 July 1954, NLA MS 4536/2/141-48.

59. Geoffrey Tebbutt, "Its Propaganda Kills It," *Herald* (Melbourne) 19 June 1954, p.18.

60. [Vance Palmer?], "Current Books Worth Reading," typescript of ABC Radio broadcast, 23 May 1954. NLA MS 4536, Series 5.

61. Phillips to Waten, 1 June 1954, NLA MS 4536/2/133-34.

62. Hope, letter to Waten, 7 April 1957, NLA MS 4536/2/191.

63. A.D. Hope, "Standards in Australian Literature," in *Australian Literary Criticism*, ed. Grahame Johnston (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp.1-15. Further references appear in the text. The essay first appeared as a *Current Affairs Bulletin* in November 1956.

64. Ross Chambers, *Story and Situation: Narrative Seduction and the Power of Fiction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp.3-48 and passim. Further references appear in the text.

65. Ian Reid, "Reading as Framing, Writing as Reframing," paper presented to International Convention on Reading and Response, University of East Anglia, April 1989, p.5.

66. Hope, "The Sty of Circe," p.285.

67. Carter, "Coming Home After the Party," pp.462-68.

68. Ian Turner, "My Long March," *Overland* 59 (Spring 1974), p.39.

69. R.G.C., "Notable New Novel," *Australian Journal* 2 August 1954, p.80. Does R.G.C. stand for R.G. Casey, then Minister for External Affairs?

5

The Communist Man of Letters

The revival of realism came after the Russian Revolution and the foundation of the Communist Party in Australia.

(Judah Waten, "Socialist Realism," 1960)

1. Communist Fiction to the Cold War

A career as a novelist and a career as a communist novelist might be rather different things, even for the novelist who is also a communist. This was certainly the case for Judah Waten in the late 1950s and early 1960s. *Time of Conflict* (1961), Waten's third novel, is explicitly communist in ways that make it a rare and interesting work. In a narrow or a strict sense it is not only one of the few communist novels written in Australia but one of the few communist novels written by Australian communists, and perhaps the only one by Waten himself.

In this chapter, focussing on the late fifties-early sixties period, I will attempt to describe the occasion of the book's writing through an account of institutional changes in the cultural sphere and of post-war shifts in the discourses of literature, communism and cultural nationalism. In the following chapter I turn to the novel itself in detail in order to show how it manifests both its communism and its "explicitness." What to write, how to write it, who to write it for as a "communist novelist"? What difference did communism make? How did the novelist *make* this difference? These are some of the questions through which the novelist and the communist novelist stand out one from the other.

Like *The Unbending* and Waten's second novel, *Shares in Murder*, *Time of Conflict* was published by the Australasian Book Society (ABS).[1] There is a consistency, then, in institutional terms, in the formation of Waten's career as a novelist to this point. Original publication with the ABS meant an institutional location to one side of the literary mainstream even when the publications were thoroughly national(ist) in address. It meant, in advance as it were, a minority or sectional positioning in terms of readership and constituency (who you wrote *for* in both senses) despite the fact that texts published by the ABS typically aligned themselves with an Australian socio-political or socio-literary tradition. This alignment could be managed through a popular address to "ordinary Australian men and women" or by addressing the working class as an already-constituted readership or potential readership that the text itself was bringing into being.[2] We will need to return to this "other" readership more seriously a little later, for the ABS participated

in the establishment of an alternative reading formation that leaves its traces on Waten's fiction.

At the same time, as we have seen with *The Unbending*, if the fictional text seeks the authority of art it must also align itself — uniquely but familiarly — with a *literary* tradition in the fullest sense, that is, understood in terms of the "autonomous" institution of art. In the case of Waten's and others' "communist" fictions it is in the shifting relations between their appeal to local or "universal" literary traditions on the one hand and, on the other, to sources of authority (and readers) conventionally outside the literary that we can see the difference that communism makes. In terms of Judah Waten's career, we can see both continuities and discontinuities generated by the operation of turning communism into novelistic plot.

This brief description of communist fiction in terms of resemblance and difference recalls definitions of the operation of genre as a system of differences.[3] This is appropriate, for despite realism's implicit claim to escape genre, strongest when the novel also lays claim to history, it is precisely questions of genre that are raised by the "communist novel." The adjective before the noun implies a level of explicitness, a didacticism or doctrinal motivation above the norm (as would the bulk of its paradigmatic substitutes). It implies the possibility at every turn of other didactic genres: exemplum, utopia, satire, fairy tale, allegory, *roman à thèse*. The didactic novel is drawn to "genre," using the term in a limited sense for the moment, even when it resists clear generic marking in the name of realism. Waten's *Shares in Murder* is interesting in this regard, for its didactic element emerges in so far as the novel works as a parody of a clearly "marked" genre, that of crime fiction, at least at the level of the *énoncé* (the climax of the novel is not the revelation of the criminal but his concealment and the "revelation" of the detective as the latter accepts a bribe to keep quiet). Both the didacticism and the "realism" of the novel depend on this generic reversal and thus on a pattern of resemblance and difference.

The genre system is institutional as well as textual. As suggested in the opening sentence of this chapter, I want in the present argument to force a separation between the individual communist's political beliefs and the ways in which institutionally the position of communist novelist could be constructed or occupied at a particular moment. The difference, one difference, between these two ways of locating communism is that the latter formulation allows for the position of communist novelist to be seen as a set of practices occurring in specific places (in reviewing, speaking, novel-writing, conferring) rather than a "state" which occupies or is occupied by the whole person and which then finds expression. Genres or the relations between genres provide one way of mapping this set of practices in the places where they occur — never in a pure form, always as process or performance. In

this first section of the present chapter I focus on shifts in the generic field for communist fiction from the 1930s to the 1960s. In the later sections I describe the institutional shifts that make the position of communist novelist possible (and perhaps impossible) in new ways in the period of the cold war.

I have described elsewhere the major forms of communist or revolutionary fiction-writing in Australia between the wars.[4] The key texts here include J.M. Harcourt's *Upsurge*, Jean Devanny's *Sugar Heaven*, and Katharine Susannah Prichard's *Working Bullocks* and *Intimate Strangers*.[5] Although very different from each other they share significant features, significant in the present context because they are largely absent from the post-war communist novel. First, each text makes explicit use of political discourses, as we might expect, but political discourses which are more or less violently juxtaposed against the novelistic. The clash of discourses becomes a compositional principle, a principle of montage which incorporates modes of documentary or reportage as well. The abstract or agitational rhetorics of political theory and what we might call political desire are incorporated in such a way as to underscore their difference and strangeness — their newness — rather than their "naturalness" in the discourse of the novel. The difference must be relative, of course, for the political rhetoric has to be shown to act on, to be capable of transforming, the social world and language of the novel. They remain realist and readerly texts, but there is a relative explicitness in their embedded narrative models and intertextual references.[6]

Second, in each text political themes are connected — indeed cathected — to the erotic. The story of transformation or revolution is a story of desire managed in the text by a displacement or doubling, as desire on one level (personal, sentimental) is transferred to desire on another (collective, political). This "conversion" of libidinal energy activates the story of political conversion which is the trajectory of each text (religous imagery of conversion is similarly converted). The abstract categories of political rhetoric must become the object of desire for the reader, and the story of bourgeois sentiment, the marriage plot, must be displaced, not so much through the contrast between "romance" and "realism," as through that between sentiment and desire or false romance and true. Thus the political arguments must be managed at every turn in the narrative through the juxtaposition of different generic possibilities, through self-reflection and self-situation. If the texts are sometimes "crude" or excessive this is better seen as a result of their experimentation than of their naivety, as the novels more or less explicitly signal their break with "mere" fiction. Then again, naivety itself might not be altogether out of place, for an important message of revolutionary politics is that in one sense things are indeed *simpler* than they had otherwise appeared.

Some brief examples can illustrate the points just outlined. In *Upsurge* the political story is dispersed among a number of inter-related characters in a fairly elaborate plot. Graham, middle-class and a chemist, embodies the scientific or intellectual appeal of Marxism (although his profession might have a dual significance in the light of the text's frequent images of explosives). By contrast the petit-bourgeois Theodora Luddon is politicised through industrial experience, and Peter Groom, a wealthy "idler" whose speculations fail, is moved from despair to political enthusiasm by the power of agitational rhetoric. The story of transformation is carried by the juxtaposition of Groom's "reckless elation" (262), Graham's larger, abstract perspective, and Theodora's immediate experience. Through Groom and Theodora, the novel enacts the shift from individual to mass consciousness: at a demonstration they are brought together and "borne along by the irresistible current of the crowd" (274). Finally there is the working-class communist Riley. Often a figure of violence, he embodies communism as the force of history, revolutionary "upsurge" itself. His extreme character is a way of representing the violent disruptions to the bourgois order of a "new ideology ... a new consciousness" (69). In addition, the potential erotic relationship between Theodora and Riley which would be the narrative's "natural" conclusion is never consummated, although Theodora does become involved with Groom and Riddle, the magistrate who had originally sentenced her for a breach of "modesty" in the episode with which the novel begins and which initiates the theme of sentiment/convention versus desire/revolution. The relationship between Riley and Theodora is subsumed as part of the novel's unfinished business, which is finally the business of revolution itself as the story is turned back to the reader's world.

Upsurge also provides models for its own readability, part of which involves establishing the language of class as an appropriate reading frame. Revolutionary consciousness is shown to be a characteristic of certain — illegal — texts, texts as it were beyond the law of readability. It is Riddle the magistrate who observes:

> Between novels by Henri Barbusse, Romain Rolland, John Dos Passos, Jack London, Upton Sinclair, were sandwiched such works as the "Capital" of Karl Marx, the "Socialism" of Engels, the "State and Revolution" of Lenin, the "Communist Programme" of Bucharin. The mantel was loaded with the literature of class-war and revolution! (52)

The list provides models against which *Upsurge* can be read, even the sandwiching of revolutionary doctrine between works of fiction. Part of the novel's challenge to the bourgeois order is, and has to be, a challenge to the order of its fiction. Riddle senses that "his poets and philosophers were dead" (12). Later he views a didactic, stylised political play. It is "weird and unreal" (217) but disturbing precisely because of its unreality (and its non-realism): "Was that extraordinary play a true representation of the facts?... His mind was still troubled by the bizarre fantasy he had witnessed" (222). The play models the novel's own departures from illusionism, for the stylisations of propaganda and theory in *its* "bizarre fantasy" of revolutionary upsurge are a "true

representation" of "facts" that could not otherwise be represented.

In *Sugar Heaven* characters are also associated, beyond personality, with juxtaposed, alternative generic and political possibilities. Hefty represents a potentially transformative physical vitality, like "the blood in the stalks" (14) of the sugar cane, but he is "only a militant" (270). Bill is able to talk theoretically, but is less "clean" (a recurrent figure in the novel). Eileen is "militant and clever" (144) but "fluent, without discipline or restraint" (95). She embodies the erotic and political desires, distributed elsewhere throughout the text, whose organisation would have revolutionary potential. It is the communists who provide the necessary figures of discipline and restraint (rather than being "wild revolutionaries"). Hendry, the communist leader, is one of the novel's many figures of transformation: once "rough" he is now "clear and ... philosophical" (134) — and gentle (153). Throughout the narrative there are such dialectical models of transformation — based on oppositions between experience and intellect, emotion and reason, desire and discipline, militancy and philosophy — which repeat and reinforce each other in prefiguring a revolution/resolution.

The central story is Dulcie's transformation from self-consciousness to class-consciousness, enacted through the linking of erotic and political desires. Dulcie's conventional morality entails an "instinctual allegiance to conventional political forms" (55); these are linked in turn to conventional *literary* forms. Dulcie "had fed voraciously on paper-backed editions of the early Victorians" until, significantly, "Crisis conditions had ... dried up the fount of her literary digest" (12). In response to the "exotic infringements" (15) of the physical and political vitality of the canefields, Dulcie's "self-sufficiency" (11) is transformed:

> [S]he became infected with a perverted pleasure in the gross stirrigs of her emotions. Here was drama! Here was colour! The great Painter, Life, was at work upon the hitherto dull canvas of her existence. The colours were impure, the brushstrokes heavy, but like a Goya canvas they projected intense and mordant life. (55)

In the terms of conventional, sentimental morality, Dulcie had kept herself "clean" and "sweet" (also a recurrent figure in this canefields novel as the name "Dulcie" suggests). "Hate and desire" (36) mingle in her subsequent transformation: "She felt herself changing, not subtly nor delicately, but violently, in leaps; a development in keeping with the lush tropical growth" (123). Sexual and political passions are shown to be both cleansed and cleansing: "The strike has washed all sorts of impurities out of me.... I never thought of the relations between working men and women as being beautiful till now" (300). Dulcie's transformation is enacted in the semantic spaces of key words, from "sweet" (sentimental) to "sweet" (pure) for example.

The reference to Goya in the quotation above is also significant, for the images describe one of the novel's own styles, a vitalist mode that links nature, sexual desire — and militancy. The intense, subversive emotions of this mode are juxtaposed with

the reasoned and disciplined discourse of communism. Out of the "impure" rhetorical styles of vitalist desire and "revolutionary hysteria" (227) the narrative attempts its own transformations, at times indeed neither "subtly nor delicately." Beside its documentary modes, the narration rises to an "epic" pitch, in Devanny's term, characteristic of attempts to express "the spirit of the war of the classes...its immensity, its dramatic force, its terrific fervor."[7] At these moments the novel does not so much "lapse" into propaganda as launch into it — in a sense redeeming its own title from irony. The religious and utopian parallels on the theme of conversion are not suppressed. Dulcie's first apprehension of class consciousness is a moment of "sublime reason" born out of "emotional tumult" (140-41), and the utopian moments in the novel are registered in the visionary and *sensuous* language of "spiritual exaltation" (287) and laughter, "expanded joys and vibrant life" (271).

Using one of the infamous phrases of socialist realism, we might indeed call both *Upsurge* and *Sugar Heaven* novels in the mode of "revolutionary romanticism," taking the term to indicate an appropriation of the romance genre. This is clearest though in the two Prichard novels mentioned earlier, partly because *Working Bullocks* and *Intimate Strangers* might be thought of as more orthodox realist texts, more committed to organic form (although this would not adequately account for the extended intimate focalisations in the latter). Nevetheless they share thematic and structural qualities with *Upsurge* and *Sugar Heaven*: the displacement of sentiment by desire, the transformation of self-consciousness into class-consciousness, and mixed rhetorical strategies for incorporating a revolutionary perspective into a "faithful picture" of a non-revolutionary society. Pat Buckridge has demonstrated the juxtaposition in *Working Bullocks* of three narrative options: a folk tradition, romance and "agit-prop."[8] Further, the language of the novel's socialist, Mark Smith, is by turns factual, sensuous, "clean cut and clear" (152), theoretical and agitational. Each mode has its own powers of representation and persuasion yet none is sufficient and the novel proceeds by their juxtaposition. For despite the attraction and authority of Mark Smith's rhetoric, his is marked as an alien discourse ("such talk had never been heard," 204). It is the task of the narrative to establish the *difference* Mark Smith's language makes — to romance and to realism — even as it shows the continuities of the "Marx myth" with what is already known as "experience."[9] His rhetoric is thus represented alternately as common sense and vision, fact and art, knowledge and seduction. Political purpose, as Buckridge argues, is "desseminated through the entire text as a form of *desire*,"[10] a desire which violates the conventional plots of romance (and, again, of realism).

In ways that find some similarities in *Sugar Heaven* and in Waten's *The Unbending*, a number of Prichard's novels use the motif of foreignness. The force of

political discourse and, crucially, the force of passion or desire are represented as "strange" or exotic — and thereby powerful because capable of transforming common sense and sensibility. Jack Lindsay has remarked of *Intimate Strangers*: "we feel the socialist viewpoint as something strange, almost foreign and exotic, set over against normal Australian life."[11] But this is better seen as part of the novel's narrative strategies than as a failure of totalisation (Lindsay's terms are Lukácsian). From its title on, *Intimate Strangers* produces a pattern of associated images of strangeness or foreignness which are all of significance to its political purpose. These include "romantic" figures like Tony Maretti, Guido, Prospero, Jerome, or the central character Elodie herself, who supply the novel's intellectual framework and its critique of bourgeois institutions. They work to open up a necessary distance from the familiar.

The narrative of *Intimate Strangers* does not simply contrast romance with the realities of sexual and economic exploitation. Like *Working Bullocks* (and *Sugar Heaven*) the predominant mode of the novel itself is romantic. Its task, then, is to split romance, to reclaim it (from itself): to separate sentiment from sensuousness, false utopias from true and the false promises of art from its true transformative capacities. In Elodie, Prichard mediates between the (all-too) familiar and the (all-too) foreign. Her music provides the text's self-reflexive models and its erotics: only Beethoven is adequate to her "passion and despair" (98). Moreover, the description of this music, contrasted to "blithe, sentimental ditties" (111) elsewhere, recalls Mark Smith's language in the earlier novel:

> Chords ... crashed with a proud violence. The lyric at its core, rising triumphantly, soared and dominated with its wild sweet song. The dark turbulent floods of destiny might carry it away...but defiant in defeat, it could still sing on, inviolate, immortal. (98)

It also prefigures Tony's central political speech, where the despairing Elodie and the "depressed" working-class audience are together transformed by a "dazzling vision" (294). Again the narrative draws on all the resources of religious and utopian parallels. The "transfiguration" from dejection and despair to "energy and enthusiasm" (294) carries the text's primary political theme (which is the theme of all these communist novels): the difference between the old working class and the new is the difference between hopelessness and optimism, despair and desire, alienation and organisation, experience and vision. This is what class-consciousness means. Finally, the text appropriates for socialism the very imagery of romance that would otherwise seem to belong to its discredited romantic hero, Jerome. The "struggle of the working people" is transformed from a "pitiful, hopeless resistance" to a magnificent adventure, as magnificent ... as the adventure of Columbus embarking to discover a new world" (294-95).

In contrast to these pre-war novels, post-war communist fiction is marked by its embarrassment over "propaganda" or revolutionary romanticism and, more

significantly, by its disarticulation of the political and the erotic. Of course this is a matter of degree: Ralph de Boissiere's *Crown Jewel* is one exception, but perhaps not a significant one given its provenance and hence its relative unavailability as a model. Dorothy Hewett's *Bobbin Up*, though, *is* a significant exception precisely because of the way it thematises desire and indeed restores desire to the text's *énonciation* in its sensuous, rhythmic, slangy language.[12] But the generalisation can stand, if only as a hypothesis against which to read particular works.

What has changed in the period between the thirties novels and, for my purposes, Waten's *Time of Conflict*? A number of points can be sketched in here before a more precise attempt to locate Waten's novel. First, although Party communism was as Soviet-centred as ever, it was less internationalist, certainly in the modernising and modernist sense connecting it to internationalist art movements which has been argued in my opening chapters. Nationalism had a new respectability within communist discourse — the Communist Party announced an "Australian Path to Socialism" in its 1951 policy — and this coincided with a new respectability for cultural nationalism among the Australian intelligentsia.[13] Local nationalism favoured populist modes of historical and literary narrative rather than class analysis, but this populism could also coincide with one rendering of Soviet communism following the "people's war" against fascism.

Cultural nationalism had a curious institutional status into the 1950s, marginal in commercial and academic cultural spheres (theatre, newspapers, universities) but constituting itself as a mainstream among significant groups of fiction writers, publishers, journalists, critics, historians and educationalists in the places where "Australian literature" occurred. Vance Palmer's *Legend of the Nineties* and the magazine *Overland* appeared in 1954, A.A. Phillips's *The Australian Tradition* and Russel Ward's *The Australian Legend* in 1958. *Meanjin* had been established in Melbourne, under the wing of the University, since 1945.

By the fifties, then, cultural nationalism certainly supplied the literary and social traditions against which a local career would be established, even in opposition. Although the modern history of radical nationalism in Australia can be traced back at least to the early thirties, the *newness* of this post-war institutional development must be kept in mind. It meant that the national tradition could appear, most powerfully, not just as a mainstream but as a *vanguard*.[14] Despite the role subsequently accorded to *Working Bullocks*, such a vanguard perspective only came into focus completely in the post-war period.

I have already discussed some of the effects of this cultural nationalism in relation to Waten's *Alien Son* and *The Unbending*. More generally, it meant that politically-conscious writers were now able to position themselves at the centre of a

tradition rather than at the radical margins. As Susan McKernan has written, "Australian [communist] writers felt that a national tradition lay waiting for them to renew in a revolutionary and communist way."[15] This might be a more or less tendentious positioning, of course, as debates over the precise nature of the tradition multiplied. But it did produce changes in how the (communist) novel was conceived. Instead of novels of contemporary life, historical novels came to predominate, novels either of significant moments in the radical past (for example, Eureka in Eric Lambert's *The Five Bright Stars*) or large-scale "epochal" works (Prichard's goldfields trilogy, Hardy's *Power Without Glory*). Waten's *Time of Conflict*, as its title might suggest, can be thought of as an attempt at both kinds of historical novel at once, with its weight falling on the crisis moment of the Depression but its historical scope extending across the modern epoch from the First World War to the present. The national history of the novel, as perceived by cultural nationalism, produced a novelistic history of the nation.

Why was it attractive for communist writers in this period to identify with a national cultural tradition? The answer might seem obvious given the authority and legitimacy that such an identification confers. But identification with a radical (illegitimate) minority advance guard brings its own kinds of authority and motivation, as the art movements show. The authority of announcing a break with history thus competes with the authority of proclaiming historical continuity, producing a tension which marks communism in its concepts of class, nation and people. In Australia it produces a series of novels including *Power Without Glory* and *Time of Conflict* which set out to show why the historical moment of Labor has passed and why minority communism represents the majority future.

We need, then, to identify the particular reasons which made cultural nationalism in this period more like a necessity than a choice. For the communist in the 1950s, and of course not only for the communist, the primary political and cultural reality was the cold war. Cold war politics produced a very different sense of the relationship between communism and history than had been current in the "crisis" years of the 1930s and early 1940s. The dominant motif, we might say, was no longer that of immediate crisis, of living in the moment between the death of the old world and the birth of the new, which could be represented by one form or another of revolutionary transformation. Communists continued, of course, to define the present in terms of crisis and the dramatic polarisation of opposed forces. But the revolution was no longer "new," and the crisis was now produced by the post-war "success" of capitalism rather than its apparent imminent demise. The communist definition of crisis was therefore now a defensive one and, most importantly, could be maintained only by projecting a *long historical perspective*, less apocalyptic than evolutionary.

This is where the history of the nation and the (progressive) traditions of its people played their part as the bearers of this evolutionary progress. The issue was no longer the crisis of modernity but the long-term working out of history's laws. Whereas the former was internationalist, emphasising simultaneity, the latter (being "universal") needed local histories and traditions. It was in the fifties that Australian folk culture became a major public interest for communists, not just for individuals but in the Party press and associated organisations.[16]

The long historical perspective became a necessity to keep communism intact, and cultural nationalism in Australia could be rendered so as to produce just the kind of anti-imperialist, democratic, latently socialist trajectory that such a history needed. The historical novel, then, was one site where this necessary history could be written. At the same time, communism was also on the defensive against cold war charges of being foreign, undemocratic and "ideological" (which could also mean imposed/imported). To address the debate about national traditions was not only to stake a claim to historical legitimacy but also to "naturalise" communist discourse as other than an "alien ideology." Communism would thus appear less as the unprecedented, sensuous vision of a new world — in a new language — than as the calm recognition of what had always already been there in our national history. It was not so much the difference as the sameness of communist discourse that needed to be revealed, and nationalism again provided the terms of articulation. Communism was like a coming to consciousness — class-consciousness, yes, but also the coming into consciousness of national experience. Here too the novel, the realist novel, provided a key site, with its "natural" tendency for naturalising discourses and organising experience.

The points remain general but they do suggest the specific attraction towards cultural nationalism for communism in the fifties, without the need to elaborate in greater detail the effects of local political developments, the Korean war, post-Stalinism, the invasion of Hungary and so forth. In addition they suggest the nature of *new* pressures towards the realist novel but with realism redefined in more orthodox terms: a re-emphasis on organic form, a privileging of "ordinary" experience, a privileging of the omniscient history narrator and the effacement of style or incommensurate discourses (one thinks of Prichard's goldfields trilogy, Hardy's *Power Without Glory* and *The Four Legged-Lottery*, novels by Lambert and Morrison, Waten's *The Unbending* and *Time of Conflict*). This new-old realism meant aligning oneself with tradition, "taking up the never-furled banners of the classical realists and implanting them right before the enemy."[17] It also meant "maturing" beyond the stage of proletarianism or of mere reportage.[18]

The political was to be represented as the *typical* part of social-historical

experience, a proposition that would not be out of place in the pre-war texts. But as the "political" was now understood, this tended to have the effect of rendering the erotic and the unconscious marginal, as merely "subjective." In the long historical perspective politics is a matter of objectivity rather than desire, of common sense and common experience rather than "strange talk." Of course, as the novels by Hardy, Prichard and Waten show, the difference between the earlier and later texts is relative rather than absolute, for the desire to expand the scale of the fiction to invoke mass historical movements, to incorporate local documentary detail or an abstract political interpretive frame, can mean once again a disturbance of the novelistic story or discourse in a way that reasserts for these realist texts the embarrassing question of genre.

The national literary tradition in Australia was generally defined as a realist tradition, as objective, optimistic and democratic. As such nationalism could provide, further, some ways of understanding and applying the communist theory of socialist realism. By the fifties the experimental period in Soviet culture was well and truly finished, the authority of the Party over literature having been reasserted by Zhdanov after the war. Such developments probably had limited direct bearing on the writing of fiction in Australia, although Zhdanov's article was republished almost immediately in the Australian *Communist Review*.[19] As McKernan has suggested, Australian writers developed their own version of socialist realism especially in the historical novels mentioned above.[20] Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that socialist realism achieved a new status among communists in the fifties. Only then did the theory begin to be named and defined consistently, and to receive a full policy weighting.[21] Alongside nationalism, we can take this higher profile of socialist realism as the second major change for communist writers post-war.

Exactly what socialist realism meant in detail for writers, critics and Party spokespersons is a complicated issue — it might be about opening up a dialogue with cultural nationalism, closing off a dialogue with modernism, reinterpreting Marxism or merely asserting the Party's authority over its intellectuals. For present purposes, though, the effects of socialist realism can be described as simple and general. The theory set boundaries, proscribing what it labelled as formalism and subjectivism; and it suggested a general set of realist priorities to do with subject matter, theme, types of character and plot. In so doing it reinforced the dual pressures towards orthodox realism *and* populist nationalism already suggested. Typically, in Jack Beasley's 1957 monograph *Socialism and the Novel* there is no mention of "revolutionary romanticism"; the dominant note is instead "truthful historical interpretation."[22] The Soviet novel now meant Gorky and Sholokhov above all (great "national" writers, realist and epochal).[23]

Socialist realism, then, could lead writers towards the literary themes and treatment identified with national traditions; nationalism in turn could supply a local interpretation of socialist realism, "national in form, socialist in content" as the slogan put it.[24] On the other hand, socialist realism provided the terminology with which communist writers and critics could define their difference *within* nationalism. In an argument increasingly common over the course of the 1950s, a distinct socialist realist tradition was seen to be emerging from within the national tradition. As Judah Waten put it: "Socialist realism in Australia springs naturally from Australian realism, the dominant literary trend in Australian literature, the result of the whole course of Australian historical development."[25]

Such an argument had strong and weak versions depending on how far the communist difference was stressed. Importantly it also had its defensive side: it emerged in its strongest forms at the moment when the radical national traditions seemed most threatened by new and anti-democratic developments both in "elitist" and "mass-commercial" cultural realms, from Patrick White to pulp paperbacks to pornography. Strong or weak, however, this is the space the communist novel and the communist novelist had to occupy, within the national tradition but appropriating it for a more or less explicit communist history, alternative, advance guard and mainstream all at once.

2. Towards a Socialist Realist National Tradition

Discussion in earlier chapters has shown the ways in which, post-war, Judah Waten's literary career was established "outside" communism and the Communist Party. The point concerns the instutional location of that career as articulated in the writing and in the figure of the writer, not the question of personal political beliefs. There is no evidence to suggest that Waten's commitment to Marxism or the Soviet Union was any weaker in this period than either before or after. Further, as I have argued, there are grounds for reading *The Unbending* as a Marxist novel through its rewriting of national history as class history. Yet only in an attenuated sense can this novel be read as written on behalf of or addressed to a communist or "worker" constituency: one sees in some of the book's hostile critics the neurotic effects of the attempt to read it as simply communist in this manner.

As we have seen Waten's closest literary contacts in the early fifties were, as they had been since the war, non-communist liberals such as Alan Marshall, Frank Dalby Davison, Vance and Nettie Palmer, Brian Fitzpatrick and A.A. Phillips. These were the people to whom he sent first drafts of his novels, whose advice he listened to, whose literary and critical practice he could take as models for an Australian writer.[26] As the list of names indicates, the democratic, populist or labour — rather than

communist — rendering of cultural nationalism and nationalist history would play a major role in determining the structures in which Waten's writing had to make its way. Similarly, as suggested earlier, nationalism was one of the pressures towards realism in Waten's writing. This conception of realism within nationalism was certainly political, but it did not depend upon being articulated with any political doctrine at the theoretical level of, say, communism. If anything the reverse held true, as the fiction moved easily between populist and "classical" realist modes.

Waten, it appears, was associated with the Melbourne Realist Writers group in the late forties and early fifties but as something less than a regular, core member. The members of the group — including Frank Hardy, Stephen Murray-Smith, Ian Turner, Robert Close, John Morrison, Eric Lambert and Walter Kaufmann — were mainly communists although it was not a Party or front organisation.[27] However there is little evidence to suggest that Waten's literary aspirations were defined in any significant way by his relations with the "worker writers," the *amateur* writers, around this group or indeed by local communist writers as a distinct body.[28] The author of *Power Without Glory* could be an ally, but scarcely a positive model for the author of *The Unbending*. Further, Waten does not publish in the Melbourne group's journal, *Realist Writer* (1952-54), but he does begin to publish in *Overland* when, in 1954, that magazine emerges out of the Realist Writers' group to seek a place in the same literary-cultural sphere as was already occupied by *Meanjin* (where Waten had been publishing stories since 1948). Waten was not a Party member at this time, having been expelled in 1941,[29] though this is less significant than it might at first appear because he was soon back on good terms with the Party; it becomes significant only in the light of the kinds of professional activities he becomes involved in after he rejoins the Party in 1957.

In the early stages of his (second) literary career, in the decade after the war, Waten's activities were thus located in and addressed to that liberal and nationalist sphere defined by the cultural journals and the writers I have mentioned above. By the late fifties however his career comes to have a very different profile, inextricable from communism in ways that had not been the case earlier. He is published in the communist press and by the Realist Writers, he becomes a functionary of the ABS, and he becomes something like a communist man of letters. There are multiple overlapping reasons for the change, some of which can be read in the general points made about the communist novel above, some of which were no doubt personal and so beyond our view. The enabling conditions of the change can nevertheless be blocked in.

The development of the Australasian Book Society must in itself be considered a major enabling condition. It coincides with the apparent emergence of a

revitalised nationalist and left-wing culture. The sympathetic reader or writer could survey a whole *new* crop of writers — Hardy, Lambert, Morrison, de Boissiere, Vickers, Waten — a new magazine, in *Overland*, and a new theatre (and new folk movement) in *Reedy River*. At the same time, the ABS emerged momentously at what was widely held to be a time of crisis for the national culture in the face of censorship, conservative government, commercialisation and cold war cultural imperialism from America. This is not the place to recount the history of the ABS, although it is an exemplary story of the relations in the period between literature, communism, nationalism (and a great deal else).[30] Nor for present purposes do we need to become involved in any detail with the question of Communist Party control; it is sufficient here to acknowledge that from its inception, formally in 1952, the ABS was seen as an important site of Party activity and scrutiny. For my more limited purposes, the point to be emphasised is Judah Waten's increasing involvement with the Society from its partly "accidental" publication of *The Unbending*, through to *Time of Conflict* which could not have been published anywhere else. By 1958 Waten was also a regular manuscript reader and Melbourne chairman of the ABS after its head office had moved to Sydney. In 1961, when *Time of Conflict* was published, the ABS was at the height of its membership and in fact it published one third of the new fiction titles published in Australia in that year (also, at the end of the previous year, the Realist Writers had formed a National Council).[31]

The ABS was crucial in making a space or structure in which the formation of a literary career could be pursued in a rather particular way. Many of its publishing and other public activities reproduced those of more mainstream publishers, other writers' organisations and journals ("mainstream" that is in the field of *Australian* literature). It co-released a number of publications from established publishers, including A.A. Phillips's *The Australian Tradition*.[32] At the same time, the Society clearly had quite other realms of activity and other purposes, conceived in terms of its constituency of "worker" readers and writers and then, for some, its communist readers and writers. In this respect it published works that were unlikely to be published elsewhere, including Judah Waten's novels as I have said. It was the fluid language of cultural nationalism that allowed the Society to contain its divergent aspirations and to pursue them with some marked degree of success.

In these dual terms the ABS could still be the locus of a "serious" and professional literary career, a career being shaped in the places where Australian literature itself was being shaped. On the other hand — or at the same time *and for the same individual* — it could sustain a career formulated as alternative or oppositional,[33] a career as a working-class writer, a socialist realist writer, a communist writer. Frank Hardy had laid claim to the latter, and his career in the fifties and sixties is largely

defined by its oppositional location. Waten's case was different in so far as he was already in possession of the status of "serious" (literary) author. The capital of being a recognised author, which for Waten still rested largely on *Alien Son*, had as we have seen to be re-invested. *The Unbending* had been an ambiguous success, marking Waten as a political, even sectarian, writer while also making a serious claim to that most important of positions, Australian novelist. What we see from 1955, however, and especially after 1957, is Waten's involvement in a new range of literary activities — on the strength of his authorship, certainly, but activities increasingly concentrated, increasingly invested, in the roles of communist writer and communist man of letters (that this sounds oxymoronic is part of the point). *Shares in Murder*, published in 1957, can be understood in terms of this redirection: it would seem to be a sudden departure from the authorial project signalled by Waten's two earlier books, but as *anti*-crime fiction it finds its place within a contemporary communist, nationalist cultural politics. It is purpose-built and makes no claim to the "expressive" attributes of authorship; it would probably not have found a publisher other than the ABS.

The ABS thus played a key role in making this redirection or redeployment of the writing career not only available but desirable and in determining just how it was possible to be a communist novelist (and this depended on its *not* being simply a communist organisation). We can also chart developments within the Communist Party itself over the course of the 1950s, developments influenced by and in turn influencing the operation of the ABS. First, in the early fifties, there was an increased scrutiny of "cultural matters" in general, and literature in particular, including the newly-weighted emphasis on socialist realism discussed earlier. *Tribune*, for example, began publishing a magazine section in mid-1952 featuring cultural and historical articles plus a literary page in 1955.[34] Second, in the middle to late fifties, there was a new interest in discovering a socialist realist tradition in or *as* the Australian tradition. The argument had been around for some time, but in this period it moves from "fringe" publications such as the Melbourne *Realist Writer*, which was still more likely to talk of *social* realism, to the centre of the Party's gaze, in *Tribune* and the *Communist Review*. Perhaps the most important local event in these developments was the publication of *Power Without Glory* (followed up by the formation of the ABS, then *Overland*). The notorious success of the novel and the story of its publication gave a contemporary point, an immediacy and dynamism, to the otherwise abstract debates about the tasks or techniques of the communist writer. And when, in 1952, Hardy began to publish on "art and culture" in the *Communist Review*, the roles of writer and Party spokesman came together for the first time.[35]

The *Communist Review* of the early 1950s reveals a more intense interest in both literature and national traditions but not yet, not necessarily, at the same time.[36]

The connections are tactical, occasional. For example, J.D. Blake in 1952: "Formalism and all other decadent bourgeois art trends are anti-national by their very nature."[37] In 1953 the journal also reprints Blake's speech to a Conference of Communist Writers, an event significant in itself. This time, although it is not the main burden of his talk (which remains the larger "scientific" project of socialist realism), Blake does make more of a national literary tradition. But it is presented in a very preliminary fashion as a new application of the "old" argument and a task for the future:

> [I]n addition to our literature being national in its form, much of the content of our literature should be concerned with the national principle, with national independence ... if it is to reflect present-day needs, present-day realities....
>
> [I]t is a characteristic feature of our literary tradition that those who have made it have always been directly associated with the toiling people of our country.... It was precisely these writers who, above all, gave expression to the Australian national psychology. This is not accidental, because the carriers or the bearers of the best national features, characteristics and traditions are the toiling masses. These national features and traditions consequently find their best expression in advanced realist art, in revolutionary democratic art.
>
> .... We need a much more careful and systematic study of the Australian literary tradition. Certainly we don't want a blind copying of what is past in our literature. We want to study, understand and master that tradition in order to creatively develop it in our present-day circumstances and conditions.[38]

Blake's essay prefigures themes which recur in the debates of the later fifties and yet its articulation of socialist realism and nationalism is general and relatively modest: it is an argument from socialist realism towards an alliance with the national tradition. The articles which appear later in the decade, by contrast, tend to be presented as arguments from the national tradition towards socialist realism. The hierarchy of discourses has been reversed: socialist realism is seen to emerge naturally out of the national tradition rather than being a tactical application of theory to historical matter.

The most significant publications can be listed to suggest their concentration in a relatively short span of time: Frank Hardy, "Some Ideological Problems of Communist Writers," *Communist Review* (June 1956); Jack Beasley's self-published monograph *Socialism and the Novel* (1957); Paul Mortier, "Socialist Realism and the Australian Tradition," *Communist Review* (February 1958); Judah Waten, "The Australian Tradition and Communism," *Tribune* 22 October 1958; Jack Beasley, "For a Working Class Literature," *Communist Review* (July 1959); Jack Beasley, "Questions of Australian Literature," *Communist Review* (January 1960); Ralph de Boissiere, "On Socialist Realism," *Communist Review* (March 1960); Judah Waten, "Socialist Realism: An Important Trend in Present Day Australian Literature," *Communist Review* (May 1960). Waten, it is important to see, becomes a participant, a militant, in these debates.

Behind the new emphasis on a *socialist realist* national literary tradition lies a complex of causes, increasingly overlaid as the decade proceeds. Post-Stalinism, post-Khrushchev's 1956 speech, it becomes important (again) for communists to stress

work on the "broad front": communism as democratic, popular, non-doctrinaire and non-sectarian. Literature, first, and nationalism, second — the national culture above all — provided the ideal grounds for this broad-front communism in so far as each was already defined as broadly "progressive" and democratic. Hence, Frank Hardy's repeated definition of the ABS, the Realist Writer groups and the literary tradition itself as broad-based, worker-oriented but not Party institutions[39] (hence also the Party's focus on Peace campaigns). Literature was simultaneously the site of broad democratic alliances and the ground that had to be captured for the progressive movement. "Progressive" indeed was a key word, a way of not saying communism but saying more than just "national" or "democratic," in effect giving the national a (communist) direction.

Second, in the discursive regimes of the cold war the most immediate threat to democracy and the working-class, to a democratic culture, was identified primarily in the form of cultural imperialism. From America, above all, came a "continuing flood of publications of the most harmful and degrading kind."[40] The threat of modernist "formalism" retreated in the face of this "mass commercial," cold war flood of comic books, "glossies," Hollywood movies, pornography, and war, crime and science fiction.[41] The success of *Overland* no doubt gave a higher profile to this argument in which the defence of culture, of "national independence" (and writers' freedoms) and of democracy and national traditions became one and the same project.

The argument against formalism was soon rejoined, however, although redefined by the nationalist context. Here it is impossible to overstate the significance of Patrick White's two novels of the fifties: *The Tree of Man* (1955) and *Voss* (1957). With their "Australian" settings and subject-matter but, as it was read, their formalist, subjectivist style and pessimistic, defeatist philosophy, White's novels were felt as a direct challenge to the national culture which the left were in the very process of defining and defending: "White ... develops persistently the idea that all human relationships are false, life being a hopeless burden, hardly worthwhile. It is a bastard literature, which has been left on our doorstep."[42] White was found guilty of obscurantism (versus realism), subjectivism (versus objectivity), elitism (versus popular appeal) and pessimism (versus faith in mankind); all were symptoms of the one capitalist, cold war disease. Not only did White's writing *import* an alien style and attitude into Australian literature (thus buying into the argument over cultural imperialism), worse still, just at the moment when the literary tradition was beginning to be noticed by the critics and the academics it was being hi-jacked by what Beasley described as an "alien literature": the "current escapist fad of `prose-poetry' in the novels of Patrick White and Randolph Stow, with their gloomy misanthropic heroes fleeing from real life into the unknown."[43]

The defence of the national culture and, above all, its clear definition as democratic and working-class becomes an inescapable task for the communist writer and critic. In addition, the realist and communist writers were convinced of the *modernity* of their own project: it was progressive not just in its values but also because it was tied to the future. Thus the "modern school of realist writing"[44] contested the ephemeral modernity of White and Stow and their overseas contemporaries. In the long historical perspective, it was the latter which belonged to the past even if for the moment it looked like the very newest thing.

Whatever else we might want to say, the communist writers were correct to identify the field of the national literary tradition as a major site of cold war struggle. The Australian Association for Cultural Freedom, a branch of the international Congress for Cultural Freedom, had been established in 1954. Its journal *Quadrant* first appeared in 1956 and James McAuley's opening editorial seemed to answer point by point the foundational principles of cultural nationalism — to appropriate the concepts of literature and Australianness, of tradition, democracy, rationality, commitment, liberalism and contemporaneity which the leftish nationalists had claimed as their very own.[45] Further, Patrick White's novels were indeed recruited to play a major role in anti-nationalist arguments, or at least nationalist revisions, and they would make a profound and lasting difference in the way Australian culture could be conceived. Not least, White spoke to those left-wing intellectuals who, post-Stalin and post-Hungary, were looking more and more keenly at the nature of the national culture for evidence of its depth and maturity (beyond mere politics).[46]

This brings us to the last step in the communist discourse on literary nationalism in the period. The strains on the Party caused by the denunciation of Stalin and then the invasion of Hungary reached its (first) climax, at least in the cultural field, with the departure of *Overland* from Party ranks in 1958.[47] Again this is a complex story beyond our scope, for *Overland* continued to have its supporters in the Party and in its own terms it refused to become "anti-communist."[48] What does occur, though, of direct significance for our argument is a new concern in communist discourse with the question of *revisionism* — which was also a question of nationalism. This is perhaps the major issue for communist writers from around 1958. As Beasley wrote:

> A feature of revisionism in contemporary Australian literature is ... the distortion of our national traditions. One method utilised is the attempt to confine our national culture to what we might term the `1890' level and forms. It surely cannot be mere coincidence that the former Party members who succumbed to revisionism have studied and written prolifically on the development of 19th century Australia. For then the 1890 period was the apex of development and they seek to restrict the labour movement and culture accordingly. Their works clearly reveal an overestimation of the achievements of the movement for self-determination.[49]

The concern with revisionism joins with the nationalist defence against formalism and obscurantism. Their combined effects can be traced in a more radically polarised

communist reading of the national literary tradition which emerges in the late 1950s. There were *two* Australian traditions, clearly distinguished and opposed: one anti-realist, bourgeois, decadent, elitist, pessimistic and commercial; the other democratic, working-class, optimistic, realistic and progressive. There was also a national socialist realist tradition, developed out of but also clearly distinguishable from the broad progressive tradition.[50] The concept of two traditions was something always implicit in literary nationalism, for there always had to be a principle of exclusion. But for communists its more radical and tendentious rendering in the late fifties and early sixties entailed an explicit reading against revisionism: do work on the broad front but do not confuse any old nationalism with the principles of a working-class literature; do continue in the realist tradition but do not confuse any old realism with socialist realism. To do so might be to end up in the camp of the reactionaries quicker than you can say Murray-Smith.

The new *Realist Writer* (later the *Realist*) was established in 1958 as the organ of the Sydney and then national Realist Writers. It was an important "non-Party" site for the working out of these elusive lines of demarcation: working-class, democratic, socialist, nationalist, non-sectarian, non-doctrinaire, literary, political. While proclaiming socialist realism, the first *Realist Writer* announced that:

> the future of mankind and, in the final analysis, of literature, lies with the working class and its theories. And, because the future of the nation and the working class are synonymous in this period the Australian Democratic tradition of literature is nowhere more alive than in the Realist Writers Groups.[51]

Worker writers, realist writers of all sorts, were welcome; and yet there was a voice on hand to point out, more or less gently, the limitations of "pre-communist" realism. The Lawson tradition was always there to be celebrated and yet it had to be developed, made contemporary, made to show history's own development. More generally, there was a recurrent call (therefore) for novels of contemporary life and work. The historical novels, even those with a communist perspective, were necessary but not, not quite, sufficient: for the communist critic there was still a lack that only the true socialist realist novel could make good.[52]

3. "The Communist Cultural Commissar Judah Waten"[53]

Judah Waten's career as visible in his literary journalism from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s can be charted in detail against the shifting positions described above. More than that his decision to rejoin the Communist Party in 1957 — post-Stalin but also post-Hungary — makes his case what we might call *ultra*-typical: the decision implies a commitment to the role of communist writer and Party spokesperson against the tide of (literary) intellectuals moving out of the Party. I do not mean by this that he becomes the mere conduit of official policy; rather that he invests the power of his

discourse in an explicitly communist sphere, an investment which carries over into adjacent fields such as his involvement in the ABS. It carries over as well — not least — into novel writing. We should also remember Waten's "local" situation: Frank Hardy had left for Sydney in the early fifties; Eric Lambert had fallen from grace in 1956;[54] the Melbourne-based *Overland* went not long after. There was room for a "new" communist writer to make an intervention, to take centre stage.

In the final section of this chapter I want to trace the steps whereby, in the public sphere of the literary-cultural magazines and newspapers, Waten marks outs the space of the communist writer. This process occurs largely within or adjacent to mainstream cultural nationalism, and yet the difference that communism makes is articulated with increasing confidence — the confidence that comes from an increasingly articulate sense of belonging to a tradition. Waten's new public career as a communist writer can probably be dated from the appearance of his short story, "Bitter Freedom," in the national Party newspaper *Tribune* (28 August 1957).[55] The story intervenes directly in debates about the meaning of the Soviet action in Hungary: it is largely the monologue of a petit-bourgeois Jewish Hungarian immigrant to Australia, a survivor (thanks to the Russians) of the fascist years who flees during the uprising but finds in Australia only a "bitter freedom." He is unemployed, his daughter, a doctor, works in a factory; the uprising is shown to have been anti-semitic. If only they hadn't left.... The authority of literature is brought into play at this moment of crisis in communism to clinch a "truth" about Hungary argued in another rhetoric in the paper's news pages. This is a return to communist publication with a vengeance. Waten's communist literary career, we might say, is launched on the back of "revisionism."

Waten's literary journalism shows a similar intensification of political purpose. The occasional piece written by him for *Overland* or the *Guardian* becomes a regular series, especially in the communist press, from late 1957 through to 1961. As well as further pieces in the *Guardian* and *Overland*, articles appear in *Tribune*, *Communist Review* and the *Realist Writer*. The first *Guardian* piece — significantly tagged with the by-line "Australian author, Judah Waten" — concerns the case of the "literary renegade" Howard Fast: in a word, it concerns revisionism. Fast was a particularly painful case, for he was the author of the influential book *Literature and Reality* and a communist novelist who had not only left the Party but started publishing anti-communist books and essays: "[he] has not only repudiated everything he formerly stood for, but he has turned himself into a propagandist for the Yankee Dollar, a creature of the State Department and the American press."[56] Waten's attack on Fast — which was one way of defining what it is to be a communist novelist — was at the same time a defence of the Soviet Union. A few weeks earlier *Tribune* had published Waten's account of "A Great Literature Created by New Soviet Life" (6 November

1957).

But pro-Sovietism could only ever be half the story, and less than half of its literary meaning. Waten's second piece for the *Guardian* is a short but detailed article on the Eureka incident, "the first great landmark on the road to freedom and Socialism." W.G. Spence, Victor Daley and Henry Lawson are drawn into a socio-literary tradition which has its "emotional and intellectual roots in Eureka."[57] The argument thus locates precursors for the communist writer by underscoring the socialist direction of the national tradition. As I have suggested earlier, with his established literary and intellectual networks Waten had better credentials for taking up this nationalist history, and better literary contacts, than did most of his communist contemporaries. This was indeed the "specialist" authorial responsibility he assumed as an Australian novelist and man of letters writing as a communist.

January 1958 saw an attack on *Quadrant*'s national and democratic credibility, and on M.H. Ellis in particular for his politically-motivated critique of Evatt's *Rum Rebellion*: "*Quadrant* does not stand for cultural freedom, but for cultural extinction."[58] It is even more interesting to find Waten next reviewing A.A. Phillips's *The Australian Tradition*. The piece is worth quoting from at length:

> In dealing with "The Democratic Theme," perhaps the most important essay in the book, Arthur Phillips sees the close connection between the rise of the realistic Australian literature and the democratic strivings of the Australian people, each in turn affecting the other.
>
> The author shows that the same democratic spirit is still strongly felt in the work of a great number of Australian writers.
>
> *I would go even further — the traditional Australian democratic realism is inevitably developing into Socialist realism, a trend which unfortunately the author does not consider.*
>
> If I have any criticism to make of "The Democratic Theme" it is this. The author does not appear to recognise that the democratic spirit is essentially revolutionary.... The history of the Australian people is the history of struggle.
>
> It is perhaps another weakness of the book as a whole, that the examination of literary-cultural problems is divorced from the realities of the development of Australian society with its class antagonisms and social issues.
>
> This kind of treatment, of course, would require from the author a degree of political consciousness which he does not possess.
>
> I believe that since the onset of the world Socialist revolution as the dominant reality of our age, political consciousness, an understanding of Marxism-Leninism, is the indispensable foundation of a full understanding of cultural-literary problems.[59]

The quotation reveals the rhetorical strategies, the "simple" means, by which the communist critic could perform the rather complex task of appropriating an argument about a democratic national cultural tradition for the very different argument about revolutionary socialism. The traditions of the people, democratic by definition as it were, are (merely) taken to their *inevitable* national and then world-historical conclusion, and the national history is gathered up into quite another — and yet the same — historical trajectory. In these terms the argument does what it has to do: it renders communism as simultaneously the same and different, on the one hand just a

matter of seeing clearly what has been there all along, on the other, a matter of seeing something altogether new.

This relationship between nationalism and communism is repeated in the relationship between realism and socialist realism.[60] Perhaps Waten's most outstanding essay from this phase, outstanding in more than one sense, is "The Australian Tradition and Communism" from 1958. The essay appeared in *Tribune*, thus gaining a nation-wide circulation. Waten situates it in the context of discussions prompted by *The Australian Tradition* and the essay draws into a coherent history the key elements of the communist/nationalist argument noted thus far: the *continuities* of the Australian tradition "in life and literature"; its true "democratic *and revolutionary* nature"; and the difference that communism makes: "Communism has become the inheritor of the Australian ideals of the past and has shown *the way to their realisation*"[61]

In some detail for a brief essay, a history is traced from convictism to communism via the influences of the French Revolution, the Chartists, Irish rebels, early socialism, Marxism and then 1917. The arguments are pitched explicitly at two sorts of revisionism: at those claiming a "squatter-gentry" or "religious" version of the tradition (pre-figuring John Docker's account of the "gloom thesis"); and at those promoting a bourgeois version of mateship that denies its basis in class struggle. Against these, the conclusion must be unambiguous: "The present day writers influenced by the ideas of Communism are the successors of Lawson and his contemporaries."[62]

The *Guardian* and *Tribune* articles, across a range of subjects, have a dual task: first, to defend the national culture — and culture itself — against its cold war enemies (both reactionaries and revisionists); second, and in the same process, to define a distinct space for the communist writer and the communist nationalist, not so much against the nationalist or literary mainstream as at the head of its "progressive" tendencies. Here the communist writer and critic can be given an *exclusive* role. A similar if slightly more modest process can be seen in Waten's contributions to *Overland*, interestingly both before and after its break with the Communist Party. In this arena, on nationalism's home ground and in an unambiguously *literary* sphere, Waten writes from a more inclusive position, as if representing a broadly-representative Australian literature. His reviews for *Overland* in this period can almost be read as a series of exercises, position-statements perhaps, towards the writing of *Time of Conflict*.

The first piece is a 1955 review of Alan Marshall's *I Can Jump Puddles* which defines the relation between populism, optimism and a progressive tradition (and between their opposites: individualism, alienation, reaction). The book "is an ode to ...

man's unconquerable spirit" shown in the hero's "optimism":

> It is not however a subjective, egotistical book, a paean of praise for the courageous individual pitted against his fellows and divorced from society. On the contrary [it] reveals the close ties the hero has always had with the ordinary every-day people from whom he himself stemmed. In truth the hero derives his superlative courage from just that association. Alan Marshall draws a whole gallery of types, flesh and blood representatives of the Australian people....
>
> *I Can Jump Puddles* is a people's book. It is full of sayings and humor, the Australian's love of justice and independence.
>
> .... The class realities of Australia are well understood by the author. He is always on the side of the people....
>
> *I Can Jump Puddles* was written to help people. It is a contribution to the struggles of the people for a better life as well as being another landmark in the development of the progressive tradition in Australian literature.[63]

Marshall is thus (excessively) claimed for an "ordinary everyday" populist tradition, and thus re-claimed, as it were, simultaneously for a militant class-conscious tradition. Waten, the man of letters, also draws his reader's attention to commentaries on Marshall in the London *Times* and from Kylie Tennant in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. As with the Realist Writers and the ABS, here too he could take on the role of "link man," mediating between the "workers" (or their literary representatives) and the wider literary world. This double location, claiming full possession simultaneously of majority and minority positions, is characteristic of Waten's career in writing, its very motivation, shaping both his public (re)presentation and the nature and critical destiny of his fiction. It could, as *Time of Conflict* will show, be both enabling and baffling. Waten can exploit the power of the literary regime for his own oppositional purposes, but elsewhere he seems caught in a series of contradictions to which he is blinded (perhaps by some notion of the "people").

Waten's second piece for *Overland* discusses reprints of Prichard's two most significant novels (for the left in this period), *Coonardoo* and *Working Bullocks*.[64] This almost inevitably involves him in the process of defining a precursor. Commentary on the latter work is of particular interest for the novel had by this time been accorded pride of place in the socialist realist national tradition. In Paul Mortier's terms:

> *Working Bullocks* was an artistic response to [the formation of the Communist Party] and marked a new stage in our literary tradition.
>
> In it Katharine discovered the poetry in human labour, bared the cruelty of exploitation and the necessity for the working class to emancipate itself. It was, to my knowledge, the first novel written in Australia from a Marxist viewpoint ... the birth of Socialist realism in Australian literature.

Frank Hardy borrowed the language usually reserved for Gorky in Soviet literary history: "Comrade Prichard straddled like a giant the two modern epochs of Australian literature."[65] For Waten, both novels were among "the first realistic novels written in this country" (which seems at first a ridiculous claim but is accurate, after all, in a quite significant way). *Working Bullocks* is singled out, not only for its "sensitive and

faithful picture ... of the lives of the working people," but more importantly for "the appearance of characters who might be described as *heroes of our time*" (my emphasis). Waten agrees with the critics who have seen in Mark Smith, "for the first time in an Australian novel an authentically drawn revolutionary worker." Here is the start of a tradition.

The plot thickens (let me mean this in a literal way: *Time of Conflict* was being written at the same time as these reviews) with Waten's next two pieces for *Overland* which discuss Vance Palmer's Golconda trilogy.[66] The signficance of these discussions is Palmer's centrality to the nationalist tradition and, with these particular novels in mind, to its historico-political dimensions: Palmer's oeuvre (and reputation) will have to be worked into the socialist realist national tradition as both model and anti-model. Thus, as "humanist and realist" like their author, even more as historical "labour" novels, Palmer's trilogy should be of intense interest to Waten. The reviews are carefully considered and respectful, but unambiguous as to the works' political, and hence artistic, shortcomings.

The sense of being simultaneously marginal and mainstream that nationalism itself generates is nicely expressed in the first review. As to the latter, Palmer is celebrated as "an important link between the realists of the Lawson epoch and the realists of our time." As to the former, Waten begins on a more militant, oppositional note with an ironic description of "the modern masterpiece": "it will most certainly contain all or most of the following ingredients — a reactionary philosophy of life, an illusion of depth, queer and brutal sex, mystical twaddle, a general detestation of life and a swollen, pretentious style." Patrick White, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Lolita*, *Doctor Zhivago* — all these (and their institutional support in the academies and the press) seem to be activated as the situation against which Waten's writing situates itself.

Waten recommends the second novel of Palmer's trilogy, *Seedtime*, to "Australian readers interested in the Labor movement." But it is most telling that what he chooses to highlight is the theme of *reformism*: understood as the inevitable failure of Labor and mere trade unionism, reformism is virtually inevitable as a theme for the communist novelist. In the communist novel — as working-class literature, as historical, as national history — the story of the limits of reformism is what makes the communist difference within the Laborist/socialist national tradition. Reformism thus also finds an echo in revisionism. Palmer, Waten writes, "is really one of the first Australian novelists to deal with this important aspect of our national life" — the other mentioned is Frank Hardy, in *Power Without Glory*.

Waten reads Palmer's story of individual failure as rather a story of historical political failure: "Inevitably there is something forlorn about the chronicle of a Labor

misleader — it is a story devoid of ideals, filled only with personal calculations" (this suggests a moral universe that we will meet again in *Time of Conflict*). Moreover, Palmer's inability to see beyond this historical political failure leads in turn to artistic failure:

> [The] general sense of failure which pervades the novel might have been obviated if the author had deliberately set out to depict the whole of Queensland's labor movement. Then Vance Palmer could not have helped but present other characters, men and women with confidence in themselves and in the future of the working class. He would in fact have introduced a rank and file Laborite of a kind who has recently changed the Labor Party there, and Communists and Communism, *the dominant reality of our time since 1917*, in Queensland no less than in the rest of the world. (my emphasis)

Waten is able to praise the trilogy, for example in his second review, as "of the highest importance in the history of Australian literature.... a serious attempt to deal with the people of the Labor movement." The Labor movement has been "the chief repository of the democratic traditions of this nation, yet it has not found adequate expression in our literature."

Palmer's achievement is thus incorporated into the necessary tradition and argued from a minor to a major position in the canon (it is positioned against the fact that "today the novels which win the widest acclaim are those which are the furthest away from real things and real people, above all from the people of the Labor movement" — again Patrick White stalks the text). But Laborism, nationalism and "pre-socialist" realism cannot supply a sufficient tradition, a tradition adequate either to history or literature:

> It is a pity that Vance Palmer never realised that there was an alternative to all this, in the revolutionary movement, in the new developments in the Labor movement which will inevitably bring an end to the era of the Macy Donovans.... The failure to see the Labor movement in all its complexities is one of the chief weaknesses of the trilogy.[67]

The role of the communist novelist is thus defined in terms of historical adequacy — sheer reflection — rather than in the language of revolutionary fervour or "political consciousness" (let alone desire). Behind this definition, of course, lies the socialist realist category of typicality.[68] As Buckridge has argued, realism within communism was by this time "fundamentally an epistemological category, referring to the knowledge of history available to the revolutionary class or its artistic representatives."[69]

The relevant historical knowledge was nothing less than the "typical" (which is to say *inevitable*) development of the working class, the labour movement, the "ordinary everyday" Australian people, into a revolutionary class, movement and people. One sees the task that the socialist realist novel "of our time" (and place) must set itself: to be at once artistically whole in the great realist tradition, and thus historically "adequate," historically totalising; and then also (therefore) to be revolutionary, class-conscious, a workers' book in the great socialist tradition. As *Time of Conflict* shows, it must seek both "environmental" — local and occasional —

significance, where usefulness or recognition might be more highly valued than interpretability, and also "monumental" significance as a work of art.[70]

Waten's most extended essay in literary history from this period is his "Socialist Realism: An Important Trend in Present Day Australian Literature." Published in May 1960 in *Communist Review*, the Party's national "Organ of Theory and Practice," the date coincides with his completion of a revised final draft of *Time of Conflict*.[71] Waten is writing his novel, we can say, at the moment when he is most acutely involved in articulating the links between socialist realism and the Australian literary tradition (and between socialist realism and everything else that claims a place within that tradition). In his essay socialist realism is defined at a very low theoretical level as "realism combined with belief in, and support for, socialism." This "common sense" definition leaves the literary and the political in quite separate realms but in such a way that their conjunction is unproblematic. Despite its place within the Party's theoretical journal, Waten writes as a "man of letters" rather than a theoretician — unlike Blake, Beasley or even Hardy — and so his implied readership is a "lay" audience, indeed an audience of "readers," socialist perhaps but outside the literary politics of socialist realism. His authority to speak is not and cannot be based solely on his communism but on a broader literary and national historical inwardness.

The essay sets out the achievements of socialist realist writers, their realist allies and their alternative cultural organisations. The threat of "massive American cultural invasion" is reiterated, and therefore the need "to defend our national culture." Worker writers are mentioned alongside what is by now a socialist realist canon — Prichard, Hardy, Morrison, de Boissiere, Hewett. And drawing on his "specialist" knowledge, Waten notes that "there is not a study of modern Australian literature which does not make mention of the work of the socialist realists" and he goes on to quote Tom Inglis Moore. It is again a notable feature of Waten's literary journalism in this period that he displays wide reading in Australian and overseas literary periodicals, quoting from the *Times Literary Supplement*, the review pages of Australian newspapers, the cultural journals, *Meanjin*, *Southerly*, and so forth. He "presents" as a man of letters, as I have emphasised, in a way that is unusual among the communist writers, and he continues to locate his own career quite within the literary sphere even when at the height of his public career as a communist. He reports back to a communist or "worker" audience the progress of "their" writers in the respectable literary world and mediates such literary controversies as that which arose over the banning of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.[72]

The main burden of his essay, thus credentialled, is an extended elaboration of the (socialist realist) national literary history. This is perhaps the most complete such history offered by a communist writer in the period, a strong version of the "two

traditions" argument. So it begins with what it sets out to demonstrate, the claim that "*socialist realism* in Australia springs naturally from Australian realism, the *dominant literary trend* in Australian literature, the result of the whole course of *Australian historical development*" (my emphasis: each step from socialist realism to realism-as-tradition to the national history is crucial and must of course be reversible). The essay draws together the themes of national history, historical inevitability, realist simplicity and cultural political antagonism that have variously marked his earlier "cold war"/"communist" writings.

Waten first calls on a familiar organicist and evolutionary history based on a notion of folk culture, but here it is given a militant edge and an antagonist: "From the very beginning," in bush ballads and yarns, "Australian literature was a realistic literature of the common people filled with a spirit of defiance":

> By contrast ... the authors most admired by the upper classes, the landowners and the colonial governors' circles, modelled themselves on the worst melodramatic English novelists and had nothing but contempt for the Australian reality. *Here was born the second trend, the reactionary trend in Australian writing.*
>
> The upper classes and their newspapers hated the young, realistic, indigenous literature which they first tried to ignore and then later derided as they have never ceased to do.[73]

The "two traditions" argument also generates the subsequent historical stages in Waten's narrative. First, *reformism*. The school of the 1890s, "harbinger of the modern socialist realist school," disintegrates after Federation and a reformist Labor government: "The dream that the Labour Party would usher in the new socialist age dissolved in the face of reality; the Labour governments were busily building Australian capitalism, then rapidly beoming a junior partner of British imperialism." Second, reaction, *fascism* (and perhaps modernism): Brennan, Baylebridge and Norman Lindsay and "their superman ideas, their chauvinism and anti-semitism." They initiate a tendency that continues into the thirties, particularly in New South Wales, "where the ruling class has retained strong authoritarian, anti-democratic ideas tending towards fascism in the modern era."

The opposite trend, the "revival of realism," comes only after the Russian revolution and the formation of the Australian Communist Party, although its first practitioners are not communists — Furnley Maurice, Louis Esson, Vance Palmer, but then Katharine Prichard. *Working Bullocks* can thus emerge as the beginning of "the new school in Australia, the school of socialist realism." And socialist realism and communism can be identified as the essence of the modern era, not just repeating the tradition, but "extending the subject matter of Australian literature that, in the past, tended to deal with the life of the itinerant worker, small settler and drover, rather than the factory worker and city dweller."

Finally, against this progressive modern development (and alongside cultural

imperialism) we have contemporary *revisionism*. This is presented through the cautionary tale of Eric Lambert who had "passed into the reactionary camp, one of the very few writers to succumb to the revisionist onslaught on the socialist realists." Revisionism finds its home among a newly-emergent cold war neo-conservativism:

> Just as the writers of the nineties were inspired by the labour movements of the time, so the modern socialist realists find their inspiration in the Communist Party, the only Party of socialism in Australia.
>
> .... Because of the support for the progressive trend in Australian literature, the ruling classes and their press in recent times have begun to pay more attention to Australian literature. Critics in the daily press and lecturers in literature at the Australian universities, where until recently Australian literature was hardly mentioned, have begun to encourage more vigorously those writers who belong to the reactionary trend, extolling them, awarding them prizes, holding them up as models at the same time launching attacks on the Lawson tradition and the realists.[74]

Waten's essay thus marks out a history and tradition and a contemporary cultural politics for the communist writer. The position of communist writer is virtually complete: as the heir to the true democratic and socialist national tradition; as the embattled defender of the national culture; as the triumphant vanguard of an emergent revolutionary class; as the voice of "art and science"[75]; as the ordinary voice of the ordinary people.

The project of the communist writer might be understood as an attempt to reverse the history that Ross Chambers suggests for the nineteenth and early twentieth century European "art tale" — the increasing "pressure within the readerly texts of the period of a sense of the writerly," the increasing pressure, in other words, of the alienation and autonomy of the literary text which characterises modernity.[76] The socialist realist novel is precisely an attempt to leap backwards over this modernity, to reassert textual authority against its alienation (and thereby to assert cultural authority against cultural political alienation). The paradoxes of socialist realism in practice — but not of socialist realism alone — are those of its belatedness.

History finds its point in the present. Even as Judah Waten announces the triumph of socialist realism as the national literary tradition, his present is inevitably and dramatically a "time of conflict." The confident assumption of a tradition, the "always-already there" of the national culture, had to serve as guarantor for the "always-arriving" future of Australian socialist realism. The totalising epistemological demands of socialist realism meant that every work in the tradition could only ever be a precursor. And what presented itself one moment as a confident, expanding mainstream, presented itself the next as an embattled minority position locked in mortal struggle against the forces of reformism, fascism, formalism, commercialism, revisionism and reaction, so many stages in the one cold war trajectory. But either way, as marginal or mainstream, perhaps this was the very moment to write the great

Australian communist novel.

1. Judah Waten, *The Unbending* (Melbourne: Australasian Book Society, 1954); *Shares in Murder* (Melbourne: Australasian Book Society, 1957); *Time of Conflict* (Sydney: Australasian Book Society, 1961).

2. Works originally published by the ABS to 1961 include: Ralph de Boissiere, *Crown Jewel*; Frank Hardy, *Journey Into the Future* (see chapter 7); *The Tracks We Travel*, ed. Stephen Murray-Smith; Eric Lambert, *The Five Bright Stars*; F.B. Vickers, *The Mirage*; John Morrison, *Black Cargo*; de Boissiere, *Rum and Coca-Cola*; Vickers, *Though Poppies Grow*; Katharine Susannah Prichard, *N'Goola and Other Stories*; Dorothy Hewett, *Bobbin Up*; David Forrest, *The Last Blue Sea*. See Jack Beasley, *Red Letter Days: Notes from Inside an Era* (Sydney: Australasian Book Society, 1979), pp.161-62.

3. See, for example, Anne Freadman, "Anyone for Tennis?" in *The Place of Genre in Learning: Current Debates*, ed. Ian Reid (Deakin University: Centre for Studies in Literary Education, 1987), pp.113-22.

4. David Carter, "Documenting and Criticising Society," in *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia*, ed. Laurie Hergenhan (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1988), pp.370-80. The arguments there are based on the work for the present chapter.

5. J.M. Harcourt, *Upsurge* (1934; Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1986); Jean Devanny, *Sugar Heaven* (1936; Melbourne: Redback Press, 1982); Katharine Susannah Prichard, *Working Bullocks* (1926; Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1972) and *Intimate Strangers* (1937; Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1976). Further references to the novels will appear in the text.

6. I have in mind again Ross Chambers' analysis of different modes of narrative self-situation: Ross Chambers, *Story and Situation: Narrative Seduction and the Power of Fiction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp.28-35. The word "seduction" in his title has its point, too, for my analysis of the erotic in these political novels.

7. Jean Devanny's description of *Sugar Heaven* as "epic" comes from her essay "The Worker's Contribution to Australian Literature" in *Australian Writers Speak* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1942), p.. The quotation on the spirit of the war of the classes is from a review of the novel by L. Harry Gould, *Workers' Weekly* 19 June 1936, p..

8. Pat Buckridge, "Katharine Susannah Prichard and the Literary Dynamics of Political Commitment," in *Gender, Politics and Fiction: Twentieth Century Australian Women's Novels*, ed. Carole Ferrier (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1985), pp.87-93.

9. The liaison Mark Smith/Marx myth belongs to Buckridge, "Katharine Susannah Prichard," p.89.

10. Buckridge, p.97.

11. Jack Lindsay, "The Novels of Katharine Susannah Prichard," in his *Decay and Renewal: Critical Essays on Twentieth Century Writing* (Sydney: Wild & Woolley, 1976), p.323.

12. Reactions to *Bobbin Up* are discussed in Chapter 6 below.

13. See Andrew Wells, "The Old Left Intelligentsia 1930-1960," in *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society*, eds Brian Head and James Walter (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp.222-27 and passim; also A.A. Phillips, "Cultural Nationalism in the 1940s and 1950s: A Personal Account" in the same volume, pp.129-44.

14. See Stephen Murray-Smith, *Indirections: A Literary Biography* (Townsville: James Cook University of North Queensland, 1981), pp.28-29.

15. Susan McKernan, *A Question of Commitment: Australian Literature in the Twenty Years After the War* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), p.25.

16. The great success of Dick Diamond's *Reedy River* performed by the New Theatre was of prime importance. See also J.D. Blake, "Folk Culture and the People's Movement," *Communist Review* 116 (August 1951), pp.872-75; Jack Beasley, *Socialism and the Novel* (Petersham, NSW: published by the author, 1957), pp.1-2; and many of the other communist essays cited in my argument below. Folk culture also becomes significant as it is opposed to American mass culture: see later in this chapter, and Graeme Smith, "Making Folk Music," *Meanjin* 44, 4 (December 1985), pp.479-82.

17. Beasley, *Socialism and the Novel*, p.7. This monograph is reprinted in Beasley's *Journal of an Era* (Earlwood, NSW: Wedgetail Press, 1988), pp.40-65 (including discussion). In this chapter I have quoted from the original 1957 edition. See also Frank Hardy's speech to the Communist Party National Congress reprinted in *Tribune* 16 April 1958, p.7: "our creative position is that of Socialist Realism, the theory of art developed by the working class movement in an *enrichmnent of the old realism* in the period of the overthrow of capitalism and the building of socialism" (my emphasis).

18. Frank Hardy, "Some Ideological Problems of Communist Writers," *Communist Review* 174 (June 1956), p.184: "although the theories of the Proletcult (the proletariat would invent a new art of its own, breaking with the past, etc.) were defeated in the thirties, they left a harmful legacy." Reportage was an accusation made by communist readers during a controversy over the ABS-published novel *Tossed and Blown* by S.F. Bannister (1953): see *Tribune* 19 August 1953, p.8 and J.D. Blake, "*Tribune* Discussion Will Keep ABS on Right Track," *Tribune* 9 September 1953, p.8.

19. A.A. Zhdanov, "Report on the Journals *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*, 1947," reprinted in *Marxists on Literature: An Anthology*, ed. David Craig (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), pp.514-26. The article appeared in the *Communist Review* 66 (February 1947) as "On the Errors of Soviet Literary Journals," pp.421-30.

20. McKernan, p.42

21. See my "Re-Viewing Communism: *Communist Review* (Sydney), 1934-1966," *Australian Literary Studies* 12, 1 (May 1985), pp.93-98; and Beasley, *Red Letter Days*, pp.174-84

22. Beasley, *Socialism and the Novel*, p.11. Interestingly, by 1959 Beasley is dissatisfied with the term "socialist realism" and coins "revolutionary realism": see his comments on

his essay "For A Working Class Literature" (*Communist Review*, July 1959) in *Journal of an Era*, pp.66-75.

23. See, for example, the privileging of these two writers in Judah Waten's "A Great Literature Created by New Soviet Life," *Tribune* 6 November 1957, p.6.

24. Taken from Gorky, the phrase was repeated numerous times in Australian communist arguments. See Frank Hardy, "Some Ideological Problems," p.184; Ian Turner, "My Long March," *Overland* 59 (Spring 1974), p.39.

25. Judah Waten, "Socialist Realism: An Important Trend in Present Day Australian Literature," *Communist Review* 221 (May 1960), p.205. See also Judah Waten, "The Australian Tradition and Communism," *Tribune* 22 October 1958, p.7, an article prompted by discussions of A.A. Phillips's *The Australian Tradition* (see discussion below).

26. Waten's correspondence includes letters from Palmer, Davison, Phillips and Clem Christesen on a range of Waten mss. and other practical writing matters. Judah Waten papers, NLA MS 4536/2, correspondence 1951-57. Waten also becomes a full member of the Fellowship of Australian Writers in 1950, NLA MS 4536/2/53.

27. A Security report also lists as members: Alan Marshall, Vance and Nettie Palmer, Frank Davison, Katharine Prichard, Bernard O'Dowd, Bill Wannan, Clem Christesen and Ralph Gibson. AA: CRS A6122/XR1 [190], p.6 (1952?).

28. See Stephen Murray-Smith, *Indirections*, p.30. David Martin describes Waten's role as "[the Realist Writers'] link with writers who, though not strictly of us, worked in a related tradition — Leonard Mann, Frank Dalby Davison and above all Alan Marshall," *My Strange Friend* (Chippendale, NSW: Pan Macmillan, 1991), p.235. Waten is not mentioned in a Security report on the Realist Writers' group, Australian Archives AA CRS A6122/XR1 [190]. He is mentioned in the "news" columns of the *Realist Writer* (Melbourne) but does not write for the journal, nor is he published in the communist press in this period. My assessment of Waten's literary alliances is also based on interviews with John Morrison and Stephen Murray-Smith.

29. Beasley, *Red Letter Days*, pp.104-105.

30. The best account is still Jack Beasley's in his *Red Letter Days*, pp.131-68. See in particular his account of the early years, pp.137-40. McKernan's version, that the ABS "was set up in 1952 by a group of communists and their friends to publish socialist realist writing" is misleading on a number of counts (*A Question of Commitment*, p.28). An exemplary debate over the role of the ABS, over realism, nationalism, the nature of the Lawson tradition and political direction, is that occasioned by the publication of S.F. Bannister's *Tossed and Blown*: see *Tribune* 3 June-9 September 1953; David Martin, "How Should We Criticise?" *Realist Writer* (Melbourne) 7 (September-October 1953), pp.3-4; E.M.M., "Whither Realist Writers?" in the same issue, p.11; and follow-up articles in Numbers 8 (December 1953-January 1954) and 9 (March-April 1954) — including in the latter John Morrison, "Comment," pp.11-12.

31. Beasley, *Red Letter Days*, p.141. *Realist Writer* (Sydney) 1 (1961), inside back cover.

Judah Waten, "Literary Comment," *Guardian* 26 July 1962, p.4.

32. In addition to *The Australian Tradition*, these texts included Jack Lindsay, *Betrayed Spring*; Alan Marshall, *How's Andy Going*; Cyril Pearl, *Wild Men of Sydney*; Donald Stuart, *Yandy*. Listed in Beasley, *Red Letter Days*, pp.161-62. Beasley also reminds readers that the ABS was a limited liability company, not a co-operative, p.135.

33. In Raymond Williams's terms: "*alternative* ... the provision of alternative facilities for the production ... or publication of certain kinds of work, where it is believed that existing institutions exclude or tend to exclude these"; "*oppositional* ... [the above] raised to active opposition to the established institutions, or more generally to the conditions within which thse exist," Williams, *Culture* (Glasgow: Fontana, 1981), p.70. The ABS functions precisely on the boundary line between these two categories.

34. The feature celebrating the first anniversary of the magazine section reveals precisely the grounds of agreement and divergence among the realist-communist writers. In letters of congratulation from Frank Hardy, John Manifold, J.D. Blake, Jock Graham, Eric Lambert, Laurie Aarons, Dave Smith, Lloyd Davies and David Martin we find the following array of terms: "the Australian tradition," "ideology," "active workers in the fields of science, art and literature," "a song of the Australian people," "working-class writing in Australia," "the Marxist standpoint on literature," "progressive writers," "a new body of worker-writers." The terms could be taken as equivalent yet they also reveal fault-lines that would later become irreparable splits. *Tribune* 8 July 1953, p.7.

35. Katharine Prichard had not played this role but rather offered commentaries as an individual writer. *Communist Review* prints Hardy's pre-Congress report, "On the Cultural Front," 153 (September 1954), pp.272-75; his speech to the 17th National Congress of the Party, "Literature and Art," 163 (July 1955), pp.201-204; and his report to the 2nd National Conference of Communist Writers, April 1956, "Some Ideological Problems," cited above.

36. See for example, from the *Communist Review* of 1952: J.D. Blake, "Art and Culture Discussion," 131 (November), pp.347-52; Frank Hardy, "Make Literature a Mass Question For the Party and the Working Class," 132 (December), pp.374-79 and Jack Beasley, "Henry Lawson, Vanguard Fighter for Peace," in the same number, pp.381-84. In his article, Hardy gives a detailed account of the importance of the ABS for "worker readers," "worker critics" and "worker writers": "The Society, of course, is not a Communist organisation; its role is to take the books of our progressive writers to the people. It will publish not only books like `Journey Into the Future', not only social-realist books like `Crown Jewel' and `Voices in the Storm' but also humanist novels and stories in the democratic Australian tradition" (378).

37. Blake, "Art and Culture Discussion," p.351.

38. Blake, "On the Work of Communist Writers", *Communist Review* 143 (November 1953), p.338.

39. See Hardy, "Some Ideological Problems," p.186 and passim.

40. Beasley, *Socialism and the Novel*, p.1.

41. Richard White article AS suggested, Waten's own novel, *Shares in Murder*, needs to be understood as anti-crime fiction.

42. Beasley, *Socialism and the Novel*, p.2. See also Beasley, "The Great Hatred: Patrick White as Novelist," *Realist Writer* (Sydney) 9 (1962), pp.11-14; plus commentary on the "Patrick White debate" in Patrick Buckridge, "Intellectual Authority and Critical Traditions in Australian Literature 1945 to 1975," in *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society*, eds Head and Walter, pp.206-208 and David Carter, "Coming Home After the Party: *Overland's* First Decade," *Meanjin* 44, 4 (December 1985), pp.472-75.

43. Beasley, "For a Working Class Literature," *Communist Review* 211 (July 1959), p.279 (*Journal of an Era*, p.66). The other aspect of the negative response to Patrick White, which has not been widely remarked, is its coincidence with the "arrival" in Australia of abstract painting. See Herbert McClintock, "Empty Pictures, Empty Galleries," *Tribune* 24 January 1957, p.5. White is read in the context of abstract expressionism.

44. Ted Parfitt, "We Have Troubles Too," Realist Writer (Melbourne) 7 (September-October 1953), p.5.

45. McKernan, *A Question of Commitment*, pp.54-64. First editorial: James McAuley, "Comment: By Way of Prologue," *Quadrant* 1, 1 (1956-57), pp.3-4. See also Susan McKernan, "The Question of Literary Independence: *Quadrant* and Australian Writing," in *Outside the Book: Contemporary Essays on Literary Periodicals*, ed. David Carter (Sydney: Local Consumption Publications, 1991), pp.165-76.

46. Carter, "Coming Home After the Party," pp.472-75. Revised as "Capturing the Liberal Sphere: *Overland*'s First Decade," in *Outside the Book*, pp.177-92.

47. Carter, "Capturing the Liberal Sphere", pp.177-81; Murray-Smith, *Indirections*, pp.36-37.

48. Murray-Smith, *Indirections*, p.37; but see the attacks on the magazine in the communist press: Rex Chiplin, "*Overland*: Where's It Being Taken?" *Tribune* 13 May 1959, p.7 and responses 27 May, p.8; 3 June, p.6 (de Boissiere); 10 June, p.7 (Prichard and Hardy); also Judah Waten, "The Latest Issue of *Overland*," *Tribune* 14 October 1959, p.6; R[ex] M[ortimer], "Heading `Overland' — But in What Direction?" *Guardian* 28 June 1962, p.4.

49. Beasley, "For a Working Class Literature," p.281. See also Hardy's speech to the National Congress, *Tribune* 16 April 1958 and an unsigned article in *Tribune* on the theory of revisionism, 10 June 1959, p.6.

50. See, for example, Beasley, *Socialism and the Novel*, ch.1; Waten, "The Australian Tradition and Communism"; Paul Mortier, "Socialist Realism and the Australian Tradition," *Communist Review* 194 (February 1958), pp.80-81; Jack Beasley, "Questions of Australian Literature," *Communist Review* 217 (January 1960), pp.31-35; Waten, "Socialist Realism: An Important Trend," pp.205-6.

51. Editorial, *Realist Writer* (Sydney) I, 1 (July 1958), p.1?

52. For example, Beasley's analysis of recent novels, *Socialism and the Novel*, pp.13-20; or

his review of Ron Tullipan's *Follow the Sun* (Sydney: ABS, 1960) which he describes as "outstanding", contemporary, "militant" but limited to the trade union perspective: "Deeper and continuing analysis will lead him to a more all-sided and penetrating realism than he has achieved here. Deeper analysis of people will enable him to better understand the history-making potential of his waterside heroes and strengthen his portrayal of women", *Realist Writer* (Sydney) 1, 3 (1960), pp.17-18. See also his two commentaries on *Power Without Glory*, "Fourth Anniversary of Power Without Glory" (1954) and "Incorrect Criticism of Power Without Glory" (1958), both reprinted in his *Journal of an Era*, pp.29-39. The first defined the novel as critical realism; the second revises this estimation to show that the novel does after all have significant features of socialist realism.

53. The phrase was used in an item in the "Observer's Notebook" column in the *Observer* (7 January 1961, p.2) regarding an article by Waten in *Overland* (December 1960, p.48) on the recently-established Chair of Australian Literature at Sydney University, which Waten hopes will not be given to "a nominee of the Australian Congress for Cultural Freedom or DLP circles" (i.e. James McAuley).

54. See "Eric Lambert Betrayed Himself," *Tribune* 21 November 1956, p.8.

55. Waten, "Bitter Freedom", *Tribune* 28 August 1957, p.6. The stroy was reprinted in the English *Labour Monthly* (December 1957), pp.561-65.

56. Waten, "Howard Fast Steps Into a New Camp," *Guardian* 21 November 1957, p.6. This piece was reprinted in *Tribune* 4 December 1957, p. 7, a mark of the importance granted to the issue of (literary) revisionism.

57. Waten, "Eureka Inspires Fight for Socialism," *Guardian* 5 December 1957, p. .

58. Waten, "When Literary Criticism is a Political Weapon," *Guardian* 23 January 1958, pp.4-5. Reprinted in *Tribune* 29 January 1958, p.6.

59. Waten, "New Book Aids Appreciation of Our Literature", *Guardian* 15 May 1958, p.. Original emphasis.

60. In an article on the ABS, Waten comes up with understated communist definiton of the braod realist trend: "Unlike today's fashionable writers who preach pessimism and men's helplessness, the writers whose books have been published by the ABS look to the future as well as the past, *arousing in their readers a determination to end the evil conditions which give rise to unhappiness*" ("Book Society Plays its Part in the Battle of Ideas", *Guardian* 5 June 1958; *Tribune*, 4 June, p.6; my emphasis).

61. Waten, "The Australian Tradition and Communism, " *Tribune* 22 October 1958, p.7. My emphasis.

62. Waten, "The Australian Tradition and Communism," p.7. Docker's "gloom thesis" thesis is argued in his *In a Critical Condition: Reading Australian Literature* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1984), pp.110-40. The targets of Waten's attack are, respectively, the supporters of White, the "prose poets" (and perhaps Geoffrey Dutton and Max Harris); and the *Overland*ers who had recently split from the Party and developed their own

readings of the 19th century heritage (particularly Turner and Murray-Smith).

63. Waten, "Alan Marshall's Story," *Overland* 5 (October 1955), p.33.

64. Waten, "*Working Bullocks*", *Overland* (September 1957), p.39.

65. Paul Mortier, "Socialist Realism and the Australian Tradition," *Communist Review* 194 (February 1958), p. 79; Hardy, "Some Ideological Problems," p.183. See also Beasley, *Socialism and the Novel*, p. 17: "For the first time in Australian literature, [Prichard] created the hero of the new type, the revolutionary worker, in the person of Mark Smith."

66. Waten, "Three of Vance Palmer's", *Overland* 12 (Winter 1958): 39-40; "Palmer and Mann", *Overland* 16 (December 1959): 38. Waten describes the trilogy as "the story of a militant but not politically-conscious trade union organiser who is gradually tamed and moulded into the typical Labor politician of the Theodore-Hanlon-Gair eras".
It is also worth recalling that *Overland* was out of the Party, Waten in, by the time of these reviews.

67. Waten, "Palmer and Mann", p.39. The review also links Leonard Mann "to the same realist school ... who form the *link between the Lawson school and the modern social-realists*" (my emphasis). He has "tackled the biggest themes in Australian life and history": the first world war, Eureka, the depression. Waten's other piece in *Overland* in this period (No. 17, April 1960, pp. 39-40) is a report of the Adelaide Festival. Reporting on an art exhibition he writes: "For my taste too many of the Australian painters tend towards the abstract and do not reflect nature or the life around them."

68. Beasley, *Socialism and the Novel*, p.12 "The typical circumstance is one that reveals a tendency of the time or of the people of the time.... [T]he typical characters with which we should be concerned are those representatives of the main social forces, of the working class and its allies, and the capitalists."

69. Buckridge, "Intellectual Authority and Critical Traditions", p.206.

70. The terms are taken from Paul Carter, "Lines of Communication: Meaning in the Migrant Environment," in *Striking Chords: Multicultural Literary Interpretations*, eds Sneja Gunew and Kateryna O. Longley (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992), p.17.

71. Waten writes to Les Greenfield at the Sydney ABS, 24 May 1960, that he will send them the new novel in a week or so. The letter also mentions that the manuscript had been looked at by a number of readers including Jack [Beasley], and in its new form by Noel [Counihan], Alan Marshall and Frank Davison. He suggests further readers too, Bob [Laurie?], Joe [Waters] and Vin [Bourke]. (The identifications in square brackets are almost certain.) All except Marshall and Davison were Party members. ABS Records, Mitchell Library, ML MSS 2297/14.

72. In an article prompted this controversy, Waten argues that *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is essentially reactionary and fascist, thus arguing against the attempt by "some critics in England and Australia [who] have read a progressive message into the novel, asserting that it strikes a blow against the ruling class." He claims that the capitalist press want the

book published, for Lawrence's works are "very pleasing to the ruling class", and that the contemporary campaigns are part of an Anglo-American cold war strategy. Lawrence is accused for his "magazine" bathos, his mysticism, his anti-semitism and, in an interesting argument, his "fascist conception of women." Against which Waten asserts the faith of the socialist realists "in art and science, in the possibility of happiness in the full equality of the sexes, [their] unconquerable optimism for the whole future of humanity": "D.H. Lawrence and `Lady Chatterley's Lover,'" *Realist Writer* 6 (May 1961), pp.8-9.

73. Waten, "Socialist Realism," p.205 (my emphasis).

74. Waten, "Socialist Reaism," pp.206-207.

75. Waten, "D.H. Lawrence," p.9.

76. Chambers, *Story and Situation*, pp.13-15.

6

Text of Conflict:
Judah Waten's *Time of Conflict*

Now in Time of Conflict *Mr Waten has come out openly as a literary spokesman for the Communist Party.*
(Theo Moody, *Daily Telegraph*, 1961)

1. Working (the) Models

The previous chapter has described the specific array of literary and political discourses structuring the field of possibility for the communist writer in post-war Australia. Judah Waten's location within the field, and at its strategic sites, has also been established. The argument of the present chapter is that Waten's novel *Time of Conflict* is itself structured in all its details of story, plot and discourse, and in its generic appropriations, by the decision to write a "communist novel" and hence by the complex of literary and political developments which make such a decision meaningful and give it an institutional site.[i] The relation of "text" to "context" is less that between subject and background than of overlapping, *overdetermined* discourses which the text enters and which enter the text. As argued above, these include nationalism in Party discourse; cultural nationalism derived from a literary tradition (or vice versa); realism, modernity and tradition; reformism and revisionism; Soviet politics and cold war history; cultural imperialism; post-war socialist realism; anti-abstraction and formalism; the notion of worker readers and worker writers; plus the institutional changes which organise all their possible interrelations (in the Australasian Book Society, the *Realist Writer*, *Overland*).

Time of Conflict is by no means the only Australian novel to feature communist characters. Ian Reid has noted this as a recurrent feature of Depression fiction, for example, from the 1930s to the 1950s.[ii] Nor is it the only novel to feature *model* communists or a communist argument. With the partial exception of *Sugar Heaven* and *Bobbin Up*, however, it is unprecedented in featuring a communist as its central character and the story of his communism as its central theme. Elsewhere, even where the argument is communist and the story one of conversion, the communists are relatively minor characters and the story concerns their influence on the central "ordinary" characters: the conversion, as in *Intimate Strangers*, provides only the novel's final resolutions. Elsewhere again the communists are

supplementary characters, as in *Power Without Glory*, providing the argument and framework of interpretation that the story itself cannot supply.

By the late 1950s, then, there were positive and negative local models for the communist or working-class novel. Yet even the positive models created the sense of a lack, a falling short of that historical, socialist and realist fullness that theory projected. *Power Without Glory* was the great communist novel of reformism or social democracy in the labour movement but not quite the great communist novel of communism. Whether it was critical realism or socialist realism, an argument that Jack Beasley had with himself in the communist press, it was at best only a precursor of "our national form of socialist realism." For in order to "portray our times," Beasley argued, the "new literature of the *epoch* of the struggle for people's power in Australia ... must tell of the *new hero* — the revolutionary Australian worker."[iii]

The other significant recent exemplar was Katharine Susannah Prichard's *Winged Seeds* which had brought her goldfields trilogy to a conclusion in 1950. The novel was welcomed as a great achievement for Australian literature with its historical scope and understanding, its "complex, *exquisitely disciplined* story line."[iv] But was it socialist realism, was it communist fiction? Beasley's extended worrying at the problem is worth quoting at some length, for he is he carefully thinking his way through the working application of socialist realist categories to local nationalist, historical fiction:

> Sally Gough is at once the pinnacle and the limit of K.S.P.'s (sic) art. Most of all in this, the author's finest creation, can we find the thing that was not achieved.... For Sally Gough, for all her life-long process of intellectual change and development is not quite adequate as the central character of the trilogy's latter parts.
>
> The onward movement of Australian history which has produced the most advanced representatives of the working class organised in the Communist Party, the author's own ideological rapport with communism and most important, the requirements of her own art, all called for the creation of the revolutionary worker as a genuinely heroic figure. There is a sense of loss, of something missing, particularly in *Winged Seeds*, because this is not achieved.
>
> The revolutionary worker is the type Australian of today, just as the militant bush worker was the type of the nineties, because he represents the future and the creation of such a fully human character will mark the next great forward step in the Australian novel. The novel may become embellished or even enriched by the continual re-creation of familiar characters, but it can only advance by extending the frontiers of personality
>
> .... *Winged Seeds*, of the decade 1936-1946 called above all for the creation of a vital revolutionary figure as the natural consequence of the trilogy's unfolding and the book loses zest because this was not achieved.[v]

Historical and social fidelity, correct political alignment, literary familiarity or tradition — all have their place in the novel's achievement but none is sufficient against the scale of socialist realism that the contemporary moment demanded. Waten had discovered the same insufficiency in his critique of Vance Palmer's trilogy despite historical significance; and

there was a similar lack to be found in (communist) John Morrison's *Port of Call*. For all its realist fidelity, Waten finds that there is a strain of fatalism in the novel reflected in a lack of character development: had Morrison "deliberately fashioned a seaman more characteristic of our time he would have heightened the significance of his novel."[vi] Fatalism is an historical and political, not merely ethical, attribute.

The critical moment for the communist novel was also defined by the presence of Patrick White, as we have seen, and by the kind of novels which were identified above all with Ruth Park and D'Arcy Niland: picturesque, "pseudo Australian" and *naturalistic* accounts of the poor and the working classes. Naturalism for Beasley was (merely) "the exact reproduction of people and circumstances from casual observation. It records surface impressions ... often losing sight of essentials."[vii] It was, in other words, the very opposite of typicality, for the typical "is not imitation of what is chance, or unessential, it is the unity of what is essential and general with the individual in both people and events." Naturalism, Beasley feared, was an increasing tendency in the Australian novel, and clearly the issue was not just technical, for naturalism made "use of the life of the working people, describing every wretched, tawdry and petty detail, everything that degrades and is degrading but avoiding at all costs descriptions of the struggle of the workers *against* those conditions." Again, the stakes were historical and political.

A more interesting and more immediate problem of "naturalism" was presented by a contemporary communist novel, Dorothy Hewett's *Bobbin Up*. The example is interesting because of the large degree of success, and yet always qualified success, which was granted to the novel despite its atypicality in structure and language. Beasley records that the novel generated a great deal of discussion; and this discussion occurred just when *Time of Conflict* was being written and revised.[viii] Beasley praises the novel's story of a strike: it is "typical, because essential characteristics of our class and their life are revealed." Further, the communist heroine is "a typical proletarian" and the qualities of the class "are revealed most fully in the Communists who represent not only its present but more importantly, its future." Nellie, the heroine, combines "the general and essential features of our class with specific, concrete traits which make her a real person." But, and the "but" is a significant one, the novel has shortcomings which "could be described as concessions to naturalism." There are, Beasley agrees, valid objections to the depiction of the working class evidenced in the novel's "reliance on surface description, a concentration on the unusual or sensational in people and events, a pre-occupation with anatomical description of women, an overstressing of physical relations." Similar judgements are given by Ralph de Boissiere and, poignantly, by Jean Devanny as well.[ix] The political gaze of post-war socialist realism can find the novel's erotics (and feminism) only distracting, whether in story or discourse. Sheer

prudishness will not really explain this reading; or if it will the prudishness also needs to be explained as presenting itself to communist readers and writers as a solemn political and historical responsibility.

In the face of this ever-approximating history of lack, History, we might say, demands a new kind of hero, a new plot. The hero of *Time of Conflict* is Mick Anderson and the plot is his coming into communism. His name clearly signifies ordinariness or, better, typicality, and we can let the word float between its socialist realist and its more everyday uses. The name also signifies typicality through Mick's "secondary" characteristics: as rural (originally), working class (potentially), Irish-Australian (probably) and masculine (particularly). Typicality is generated through the redundancy, in narratological terms, of these characteristics in relation to each other.

The novel can also be seen to strive for a kind of typicality in plot. Because it is not well known, and for the sake of my argument, let me summarise the plot as follows:

> The place: Wagga. The year: 1925. George Anderson, returned digger, unemployed, and his son Mick, 16 and newly in love with Agnes Duffy, get caught sheep-stealing, betrayed by the butcher they were working for. Mick gets sent to the reformatory. Here he gets into further trouble, innocently; his boxing skills are recognised; he escapes to Sydney where he meets two seamen who help him stow away to New Zealand. He starts boxing professionally under an assumed name. After a bloody fight, he quits and returns to Sydney, then Newcastle (early-mid 1930). Here he meets communists, especially Lew Jenkins and Harry Timmins, an acquaintance from Wagga; he gets involved with his landlady; gets introduced to literature via Lew; resumes his boxing career and a seedy lifestyle and doesn't join the Communist Party. Meets another communist, Tony Grayson, a young "intellectual," and becomes involved in the Unemployed Movement. Mick moves back to Sydney and, reluctantly at first, becomes involved further with the Unemployed Movement. He meets more communists and radicals of various character. He joins the Party (1931). He reads passionately and learns the political lesson of discipline. He chances to meet Agnes again in Sydney and a few weeks later they consummate their relationship. Their plans to live together are interrupted by Mick's arrest at an eviction fight. He is jailed with an additional sentence for his earlier escape. On his release (c.1935) he returns to Wagga, to his family, and Agnes; after breaking with her family Agnes joins him and they return to Sydney. Mick works on ships, then signs on to an English boat running arms to the Spanish Republican government during the civil war. He returns to Melbourne, where he meets Tony again, now an important union official. Tony has the wrong sort of friends (journalists, bohemian children of the rich); his faith is shaken by the non-aggression pact; he leaves the Party, attacks the Soviet Union, joins the ALP, eventually helping to split it to form the anti-communist Labor Party. Mick goes to sea in the merchant navy during the war, returns to Melbourne, becomes a member of the State Committee of the Party and a union official. He meets up with Lew again, and the novel ends with the two of them regarding the poor spectre of Tony, now a federal MP and thinking of joining the conservative party.

The historical time span and its significant moments are epochal (as the book's title suggests): from midway between the first world war and the Depression, to politics in the fifties, via unemployment, class conflict, Spain, appeasement, the non-agression pact, the anti-fascist war, the cold war. By 1961 this is a resonant, deeply familiar, even mythic sequence of events for communists and still for many liberal intellectuals. (More recent

communist memoirs find their structure in just this historical trajectory.[x]) It can be grasped as no less than the modern history of the nation although its very recognisability enables Waten to leave the momentous history largely in the background, or in the foreground as accurate historical detail. There is extended discussion in the correspondence between Waten and the ABS about minute details: did Hector St Clair sing that particular song; did the police have motorcycles at Rothbury; when did Harold Park commence night racing?[xi]

On the large and the small scale, and through identifiable dates and events, *Time of Conflict* thus stakes its claim as historical — and so national — fiction. Yet, as part of its identification of the historical and the national, the novel's emphasis is more on recognisability than revelation, on the familiar and the typical rather than, say, the sudden and unprecedented vision of everyday life as class history, the kind of thing figured in pre-war communist fiction. The focus of the narrative on the story of an individual's growth from youth to maturity means that although the emphasis remains on the period as "epoch-making," this history is relatively domesticated and relatively un-heroic. In a pattern discussed in the previous chapter, this modest rewriting of history has the effect of emphasising evolution and the long historical perspective rather than the one crisis-moment of apocalyptic change.

The point about "typicality," however, goes beyond a rhetorical strategy of evoking the familiar. For *Time of Conflict* is also clearly a novel that wants to argue a case: its history is tendentious, teleological. There is also a sense in the novel in which its *political* themes depend upon being recognised as typical, as stories often told, as deeply-embedded truths — dependent upon a specific political doctrine which must be visible (as doctrine) but also carrying something like the weight of proverbial wisdom. The themes are those which recur in all communist fiction, all communist texts: the inevitable betrayals of reformism and mere trade unionism, the essential difference that discipline and knowledge/education make, the transformation of the working class from despair to optimism and purpose, the fatal links between careerism, opportunism and revisionism. In a way that recalls folk tales and other traditional genres, there is only a small number of such themes upon which the plot can be constructed but also only a small number which it needs. The theoretical terms are provided by the doctrine — "opportunism" for example — but the narration also asks for a different kind of recognition, ethical but not merely individual: "look how he ended up ... just what you'd expect...." Each individual story thus echoes or prefigures a larger story outside the novel, in history, in (political) experience.

At the same time, as my model of the readable text has suggested, the novel will also depend for literary authority upon the acknowledgement of its originality and autonomy as a work of art. Its political stories thus depend upon the recognition that these "often-told" tales

are being told anew in a *novel* and in an *Australian* novel. Both factors create their own dynamic of narrative interest — how will he re-present what is already known? how will he "novelise" this politics? And given the local history of the communist novel, described above, both allow for the literary sense of something being done for the first time.

Finally, and despite the apparent idiosyncracies of Mick's boxing career, there is a further sense in characterisation in which the story the novel tells, indeed all its stories, have been told before (or are told *as if* they have been told before). This is not so much because of the way the narrative recalls the familiar pattern of the *Bildungsroman*, the story of individual formation, important as this aspect of the novel is and not least for its claim to status as a serious literary work. The aspect I want to emphasise is rather the novel's function as what we might call a "people's history." The historical plot depends for its narrativisation on a series of more localised but thoroughly familiar and predictable stories. The narrative moves back to the first world war, for example, via Mick's father, a returned digger. His story was one already told countless times in fiction and beyond: promised his old job he returns with gas in his lungs, loses the job, is never the same again.[xii] The story is generational (national and epochal), and further susceptible to class analysis for the link between the war and unemployment is capitalism.

The story of Mick's mother also depends upon its "deep," "folk" familiarity, so much so that, along with the father, she is caught in Susan McKernan's very broad generalisation: "In much socialist realist writing the Australian national character was represented by that romantic figure the easy-going, generous Irish-Australian and the poor were represented by the equally romantic working-class mother, keeping her children and house clean while her husband is out of work."[xiii] These are the characteristics we find in Annie Anderson, "blunt spoken and fearless ... straight-backed, high-shouldered and stout, ... prematurely old, completely grey" (9). The recognition factor also means that her character can work as a narrative model, that is, signifying another kind of story to which the novel itself can be aligned: perhaps foremost a local and nationalist tradition in the short story. Waten achieves thereby the maximum degree of representativeness for the minimum amount of representation.

Am I simply defining the novel's lack of originality or a failure of imagination? Perhaps, but what we find in *Time of Conflict* is something more like a *principle* of unoriginality. The sense of the story as pre-determined or inevitable, as impersonal, coming from history rather than the imagination, is clearly very much to the point as one kind of claim to realism ("truthful historical interpretation"[xiv]). At the same time, but reading more against the grain of the novel's readerly discourse, there are certain parallels with mythic or folk tales in the sense the narrative creates that this story is only one particular manifestation

of a deeper collective story. Either case, in fact, can suggest the ways in which the text might be interested in minimising, as far as possible within the limits of the novelistic, traces of the merely individual in character and of the merely accidental in events. Similarly, all traces of signature or "style" in the writing, all traces of the merely authorial, are ironed out as the narration aims for the impersonality and perhaps even the banality of history. The prose is plain, direct, "written with disarming simplicity" as an ABS reader's report put it[xv]; more accurately, the writing is rigorously constrained by the conventions which signify simplicity, directness and plain-speaking. It is thus no surprise that communism in *Time of Conflict* emerges as *experience*, "experience made sense of/experience disciplined," rather than as the vision *bouleversante* of the earlier revolutionary novels. It is quite without what Jean Devanny in reflecting on Waten's novel termed "glamor."[xvi]

Although the comparison represents some exaggeration of the point we are making, we might quote from Katerina Clark's account of the Soviet socialist realist novel:

> In some ways the most definitive characteristic of Socialist Realism is not the mode of writing it envisages but its radical reconception of the role of the writer. After 1932 (at least) the Stalinist writer was no longer the creator of original texts; he became the teller of tales already prefigured in Party lore.... The Stalinist novelist must present a fictionalised account of reality and events, but these "historical tales" must be based on something analogous to the "divine plan of salvation" followed by the medieval chronicler, namely, on the Marxist-Leninist account of history.... As chronicler he merely *shows* how, in the particluar model situartion he has chosen, social and political contradictions work themselves out in successive resolutions of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic.
>
> A corollary of the Soviet novelist's status as mere teller of tales is his lack of autonomy over his own texts. It is the prerogative of his editors, critics, and patrons to see to it that the purity of the tale is preserved in the novelist's work.[xvii]

I will return a little later to the question of the ways in which the Soviet novel could or could not supply a model for local socialist realist fiction. But for the moment I want to argue that there is at least a weak version of what Clark describes above operating for the writing and publication of *Time of Conflict*. In addition to the textual effects I have described — in which Waten too resembles a teller of tales already-prefigured — we can recall that Waten discussed the novel and circulated drafts not only among his fellow writers but also among his fellow communists and ABS functionaries, and as a matter of course not force.[xviii] This was precisely the sort of institutional difference that being a communist novelist might entail. Although Waten was interested in having the book taken by the "capitalist publishers," in his words, he prioritises publication by the ABS; and he writes to Jack Beasley, "I do want the movement to get as much as is possible out of the tome."[xix] Even the cover design, by Waten's friend and fellow-communist Noel Counihan, becomes a matter of collective discussion and political interpretation.[xx] In this light, the privileged autonomy of the author was only a qualified virtue in relation to the author's responsibility to tell the story

of the class or people. For the communist novelist operating inside institutions such as the ABS there is, in Foucault's terms, a somewhat different distribution of subject positions within the discourse of authorship from that which exists for the "author-function" elsewhere in the literary sphere (but it is still largely *within* the discourse of authorship).[xxi] This was a "sacrifice" the communist writer made in exchange for the right to tell *the* story of our epoch, "the dominant reality of our time,"[xxii] just as publication by the ABS most likely meant the sacrifice of certain kinds of "literary" readers. For the worker writers the issues might scarcely arise. For Waten, though, it was a matter of commitment, of mediation between competing claims, and a new disciplining of the indeterminacy of writing in a context, we might recall, also defined for Waten by the presence of Patrick White.

How is this disciplining effected and how does the writing make its claims to history, realism and communism? We can return, tendentiously at first, to the question of genre raised in the previous chapter, by reading *Time of Conflict* against the categories of the *roman à thèse*. The didactic element of Waten's novel will inevitably be in tension with its realist and historical ambitions such that while the book proclaims communism it will, as with *The Unbending*, fiercely disclaim its own function as "propaganda." Its duplicitousness, in Chambers' terms, will depend upon an extreme from of the mediation between implicit and explicit modes of narrative self-situation which characterises the readerly text: implied contrasts between modes of speech, for example, alongside explict narrator intrusions and intertextual references.[xxiii] We will find the novel divided in its ambitions and methods, not only because of its overdeterminations, but because of its very "determination" to look undivided, to constrain meaning to a single end and on a single plane of representation. The *roman à thèse* is a useful category in this analysis in so far as it conceptualises a set of relationships between didactic and realist modes. All fiction can of course be understood as a kind of argument but the point is precisely *which* kind.

In her *Authoritarian Fictions*, a study of the French *roman à thèse*, Susan Suleiman attempts to define the genre and its narrative grammar(s). Despite being somewhat innocently structuralist, the book's reductive schemata provide clear-cut models which can be used to explain the structuring and rhetoric of the didactic elements in *Time of Conflict*. We could say it enables us to see things about the novel which are so obvious we might otherwise miss them — and to see much that the novel itself wishes to conceal. Suleiman also directs her enquiry to a broader question: "How can a story become the bearer of an unambiguous meaning?"[xxiv] It is precisely the tension between "fictional" and didactic elements that initiates her definition of the *roman à thèse* in relation to the larger category of the realist novel and in terms of its techniques of disambiguation:

> The realist novel proclaims above all the vocation of rendering the complexity and the density of everyday life; the *roman à thèse*, on the other hand, finds itself before the necessity of simplifying and schematising its representations for the sake of its demonstrative ends. Simplification and schematisation are more suited to allegorical or mythic genres than to realist genres. The *roman à thèse* is perhaps condemned to missing its aim, either on one side or on the other. (23)

As the first principle of disambiguation Suleiman argues that the *roman à thèse* is founded on redundancy, indeed the multiplication of redundancies on every level: "the more one advances, the more the redundancies constrain meaning, reducing it and making it *one*" (55-56). Further, the *roman à thèse* seeks to impose not only a single meaning but "an unambiguous, dualistic *system* of values" (my emphasis) capable of producing "rules of action." Suleiman thus suggests three criteria for distinguishing the *roman à thèse* within the larger field of the realist novel: the presence of an unambiguous, dualistic system of values, the presence of a rule of action addressed to the reader, and the presence of a "doctrinal intertext" (56). The values and rules of action depend not simply on popular wisdom but on a specific system of thought that exists outside the particular narrative in explicitly doctrinal texts.

It is not difficult to apply these three criteria to *Time of Conflict*. Communism supplies the doctrinal intertext: it is not merely implicit in the course of the novel's action, say as an ethical position, but comprises the novel's principal, explicit intertextual framing device. Communism is introduced early on, through Harry Timmins, "the local communist" in Wagga. And the point of his introduction is the issue of discourse: who says what and who *reads* what. Harry interjects during a speech by a conservative politician in order to defend striking British seamen.[xxv] He distributes leaflets: "`Don't forget to read it, Mick.' `You know I always read what you give me, Harry,'" (15). Mick has read Harry's books, "Bolshevik books" as Agnes anxiously discovers. The ethical position defined in Harry's demeanour — he is tall, good looking "in a sombre, unsmiling way," dressed neatly but in a manner older than his years — is connected from the beginning to what he knows, what he has read: "Timmins never hesitated to express his views.... He was hard and uncompromising, never retreating. Mick admired his defiance but even more his eloquence" (15). This last reference initiates a theme in the novel and a pattern of self-situation: communism gives purposeful speech against the passive workers' silence and against self-interested "bragging," but this new articulacy later needs to be contrasted with Tony's "mere" eloquence. Harry turns up later as a "theoretician" (174) and Party tutor, taking classes on the limits of social democracy (of course, for this is the crucial theme of commuist difference, 109).

This brief early episode can also be used to show the dualistic system of values being set in train even if it is not yet altogether unambiguous. Mick remains indeterminate although he is intuitively drawn to Harry; Agnes, present in this scene, is linked to her petit-bourgeois family but also to her ability to provoke in Mick "an urge for heroic action and a yearning for devotion" (16), the true goals of which will be set in place through a series of substitutions. Still, the scene is constructed around a clear dualism of values: Harry, militant workers, communism and *knowledge*, on one side; conservativism, the bourgeoisie, anti-communism and ignorance on the other. Harry pitted against the parliamentarian is the most obvious opposition but not perhaps the most significant, not sufficient in the long run, for the stake is more than political power. The opposed value systems need finally to be identified as communism versus capitalism. Some of the secondary oppositions thus remain to be fully articulated although they are present discretely in this early scene: Harry's "respectability" is to be distiguished from that of the parliamentarian's audience ("men wearing bowler hats...."); his interjections are to be distiguished from those of "two young men dressed in the latest style Oxford bags"; and still to be revealed, the full significance of the comment by the Labor Party secretary: "With his appearance and ability Harry Timmins could have gone a long way if he hadn't got himself mixed up with the communists" (15). Communism generates the oppositions and will supply the framework of interpretation in which they have meaning, eventually in the form of a "rule of action" — follow Harry, follow Mick. (The implied reader, the receiver of the rule of action, is male.)

Communism is introduced in a relay of meanings that move Mick from sympathy and observation to knowledge and action. After the introduction of Harry Timmins and his books, the role is taken up by George Bright, a communist who helps Mick stow away to New Zealand. On the ship Mick is witness to a discussion between "older" radical positions — anarchism and the IWW — and their younger, more knowledgable heir, communism (62-63). The older seamen support the former positions, and the mere age differentiation signifies the historical perspective I have indicated in which the experience and partial wisdom of earlier radical politics is gathered into the historical evolution of communism. The argument among the seamen is a crucial one about the role of the state, and thus the role of the workers' state in the Soviet Union. But the theoretical argument is in a sense subsumed by the historical one (as the older positions are subsumed by communism), so that the appeal to the reader is more that "history shows" than "logic proves": the Russian revolution, not say the category of surplus value, has made all the difference. Mick listens, is "moved," but at this stage makes no interpretation or intervention of his own.

Similar scenes are positioned at key points throughout the novel, more or less explicit "teaching" scenes in which communism is situated in relation to other texts, other

doctrines. After returning from New Zealand, Mick first meets Lew when he goes to his aid spontaneously at a Workers' Defence Army demonstration where he just happens to find himself. Lew takes much further the process of Mick's education from spontaniety to consciousness, and thus also furthers the process of building-in the interpretive frame for the reader, by introducing him to explicitly-named communist texts — the *Manifesto*, Lenin's *State and Revolution*, the *Workers' Weekly* — and, most important, to allied literary texts — Lawson's poems, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, Milton, Byron and Shelley, even a poem from G. K. Chesterton, "For We Have Not Spoken Yet" (92-97). In terms I will discuss a little later, the intellectual or rational appeal of communism (figured by the theoretical texts) is brought together with the emotional and experiential (and non-doctrinaire, figured by the literary texts). In what is both a political and aesthetic model for the novel itself, Lew tells Mick that "Experience is the mother of all writing," and he admits to a desire "to write a long poem into which he would pour all his heart and soul." In an important sense communism is indeed like learning to read and write (indeed learning to speak). The next step in the relay occurs when Lew takes Mick to the Communist Party rooms and he sees Harry Timmins again, in the course of his class on social democracy, "a serious fellow who might easily be taken for a teacher" (110). By the time Mick joins the Communist Party there can be no suddenness — no "originality" — in the decision only a sense of its rightness (of historical inevitably).

We can also recognise *Time of Conflict* in Suleiman's analysis of a recurrent model for *romans à thèse*, the appropriation of the *Bildungsroman* structure or structure of apprenticeship. She describes the *Bildungsroman* syntagmatically in terms of "two parallel transformations undergone by the protagonist: first, a transformation from *ignorance* (of self) to *knowledge* (of self); second, a transformation from *passivity* to *action*" (65). In the *roman à thèse*, however, these two transformations are subordinated to a third which radically modifies their meaning:

> The hero's self-knowledge is no longer an end in itself but a simple consequence: it is *because* he acquires knowledge of an objective, totalising "truth" that the hero discovers, at the same time, "his own essence." The adhesion to a doctrine guarantees the authenticity of the self, and the self is defined essentially in terms of adhesion to a doctrine....
> Similarly, it is the adhesion to a doctrine that makes possible the hero's transition to action and the beginning of a "new life," ... a "life in accordance with the truth." Strictly speaking, the hero's apprenticeship ends when he acquires authentic knowledge; but the evocation, at least, of his future "life in accordance with the truth" is a necessary part of his story. (76)

The acquisition of knowledge transforms the hero and "is the prelude to *action undertaken by the group*: those who share the knowledge — in reality, the values — of the hero" (77, my emphasis). The transformation from ignorance to knowledge is thus a process of initiation, achieved through experience, through trials. However, Suleiman argues, because

of the passivity of the hero, whom we meet before the stage of authentic action, what we have is a trial of *interpretation*: "the candidate is placed before a situation — or a text — that he must understand and explain.... [R]ather than *leading* to the knowledge of truth ... the trial of interpretation ... simply *manifests* a knowledge [the hero] has already acquired" (78).

We are very close to the structures of *Time of Conflict*. Mick is introduced to the reader in the book's opening sentence as a "youth." The opening paragraph also initiates the theme of a *false* maturity which must be recuperated, replaced with its true alternative in a dialectical pattern of opposition characteristic of the novel ("He had never known a normal boyhood. From the age of ten he had been doing a man's work"). On another level, the text is here establishing its fictional contract with the reader in aligning itself with the *Bildungsroman*, which at least one critic — Lukács — has taken as the virtual definition of the novel.[xxvi]

The story of apprenticeship is also set in motion in the opening section. Mick has

> plans for learning a trade and dreams of a life in Sydney in which Agnes played an important part. He was ambitious. He wanted to do something, be somebody. But it was all very misty in his mind. (3).

He is ignorant of his true vocation; indeed a false vocation is offered — his father wants to take him to Sydney as a boxer, a career he later pursues. In addition Mick's story, as what Suleiman calls a positive exemplary apprenticeship, is already being set up for its later contrast with Tony's negative exemplary apprenticeship around the theme of ambition: positive ambition (serving the interests of the workers, the Party, "the people as a whole of course," 230) is opposed to negative ambition (self-interest). The dominant motif in the characterisation of Tony, almost throughout, is careerism. Further, in the communist glossary careerism belongs with opportunism or in Lenin's terms "adapting the Labor Movement to the interests of the bourgeoisie."[xxvii] This is the course of Tony's negative apprenticeship through communism and unionism to Labor to anti-Labor/anti-communism.

The *Bildungsroman* theme of ignorance of *self* is present in *Time of Conflict*, but only modestly or provisionally because the "thesis" is more interested in ignorance of an objective truth. Nevertheless the theme of ignorance of self motivates the narrative, not so much in the sense of a quest for Mick to "find" himself as for him to "make something" of himself, make something of who he already is (thus his communism also comes to mean a return home). There is scarcely a problem of interiority for Mick although he is characterised ambiguously between his strong mother — he has her "round, alert face" (2) — and "weak" father whose "sentimental" (4) smile he shares. But his sympathies, as we have seen, are in the right place from the start, and he already shows "determined self-possession" (22). In the structures of the *roman à thèse*, as Suleiman suggests, this self-

possession must be subordinated to possession of the truth; only this, finally, will make Mick "somebody" and make something of his life. The doctrine, communism, is thus equated with the *understanding* needed to turn sympathy into knowledge, turn his "urge for heroic action" into a true vocation, and turn self-possession into a political category, class-consciousness.

The transformation from passivity to action which Suleiman remarks is overtly thematised in *Time of Conflict* and has a peculiarly communist inflection. As she suggests, the possession of the doctrine is a prelude to group action, not just the group of communists figured in the novel but the working class, the people, whose actions are prefigured throughout. As argued in the previous chapter, passivity is one way of representing the condition of the working class before class-consciousness. This is the story of Mick's father, above all, reinforced by the novel's initial rural setting — for these workers are not (not yet) a working class. The story is repeated in some of the unemployed Mick later meets (148) and in Dai Jenkins, Lew's father, "an embittered man," disillusioned by union leaders, the Labor Party, the "boneheads" (94-95). George Anderson's experience of bosses and government, of war, work and politics, have left him cynical, resigned, self-pitying, hopeless: "he believed in nothing, in nobody" (8); "`It's the system, Mick, that's licked me in the end.... You can't toss the system'" (20). The betrayal by Smith that lands them in prison is merely the last in a (redundant) series of confrontations between George and "the system" in which he can only lose and for which he can only feel *guilty*. For Mick it is the first in a series, the first of the trials he must undergo in the process of turning passivity/"negative" action into purposeful, positive action in a struggle which he can only win and which is figured in part in terms of absolution from guilt.

Finally, does *Time of Conflict* foreground the trial of interpretation? We would expect so, not only given Suleiman's argument, but also given the "theoretical-ness" of communist doctrine itself. I think the novel can indeed be read in these terms, although the explicitness of theoretical or intellectual understanding is more muted than we might have expected. Because of a number of the factors governing both characterisation and narration, the trial of interpretation is present only in a weak form as what we could perhaps call the trial of *recognition*. Mick is rarely shown thinking about Marxist propositions or, something slightly different, responding emotionally, sensuously, to an idea. Despite the reading of which we are told — "he devoured books because of his passion to understand life and society" (182) — the characteristic mode of apprehension is one of recognition or a gradual coming into consciousness rather than devouring (or being devoured, overwhelmed): "Mick did not understand everything Lew said but quite naturally he felt sympathy for his ideas" (92); "The ideas of communism were settling deeply into Mick's mind" (128). Communism

as the recognition of a true description of experience is part of the same caode as Mick's ordinariness.

Earlier, in this and the previous chapter, I suggested some of the larger historical shifts behind this emphasis, rather than the "erotics of conversion," in post-war communist fiction. We can also see the issue as a narrative problem or the narrativisation of a political problem. Communism cannot be shown as the product of (or equated to or figured as) mere *experience* — which is just as likely signify passivity, despair or the inability to think beyond Labor or unionism — otherwise the difference that communism makes could scarcely be represented. Nor, from what I have called the long historical perspective, can its appeal be shown simply as *emotional* or spontaneous: politically this is equivalent to a form of anarchism,[xxviii] the super-revolutionary views of Trotskyism or the "older" radicalism expressed in *Time of Conflict* by Bert Leslie, for example, "who made a fetish of action" (163). Finally, the appeal of communism cannot be merely *intellectual* or rational, for it is not mere philosophising, not just ideas. Tony's "fate," for instance, is prefigured in the revelation that he did "not get any strong emotional satisfaction out of [his move towards communism]; it was entirely an intellectual conclusion" (130). The accession to communism must involve all three capacities — experience, emotion, intellect — and then be something different again.

In *Time of Conflict*, as I have argued, the language of vision is scarcely available as a mode of resolution for these different capacities. The vision is given substance and definition only gradually over the course of the novel, and despite regular reference to communist theory, the role of actual theorising is carefully delimited. There is no moment of conversion for Mick, only the formalities of becoming a Party member. Instead, although it can never be sufficient, experience is initially privileged as the ground upon which the emotional and the intellectual appeals of communism are brought together. But it is experience transformed by *discipline* or *organisation*: "`We won't get too far without discipline,' [Mick] added.... [Bert] would never have guessed that Mick would come on so quickly politically" (182). Discipline is the site of resolution, given which it is no wonder that we are a long way from the erotics of the earlier texts. It is in the realm of discipline (order, consciousness) that doctrine becomes knowledge and emotion and experience become purposeful as a "life in accordance with the truth." The heroism, historical necessity and theoretical completeness of communism are to be recognised as experience, sympathy or spontaneity "reorganised" on a higher plane.

The terms I have been emphasising in describing the novel's representation of communism, whether as history, theory or politics, are the terms that also suggest themselves as a description of the values of the narration: discipline, recognition,

experience, consciousness, plain speaking. The narration defines an assumed agreement between writer and reader as to what constitutes experience and its valuation, and similarly an agreement about the kinds of discipline that the serious tasks of writing demand. The tasks are at once modest and a solemn responsibility: to make recognisable, to make clear, to state plainly and frankly. The discipline of the text — its suppression of writerliness — is also disciplinary, constraining the reader's desire for "excess." The style aims above all to be "matter of fact," to borrow one of Waten's own terms of praise (another is "stern realism").[xxix] What better style to establish the fact, the sheer matter-of-factness, of the revolutionary course of history? Or as Mick puts it, with vernacular conviction, "In the natural process of history communism'll replace capitalism" (230).

This sense of communist doctrine being "merely" an elaboration of experience and sympathy — being knowledge and maturity rather than sheer ideology — might not after all be too far from Suleiman's definition of the trial of interpretation, in particular her point that rather than leading to knowledge the trial manifests knowledge already acquired. Mick Anderson acts on communist principles more often than not, even before he is a communist. His experiences do lead to the "new" knowledge communism provides, but equally we could say that the increasing level of consciousness that is revealed *as* communism is rather a progressive manifestation of knowledge already possessed. This is a tension in the novel's own argument, a tension that it needs rhetorically: communism as something altogether new, different in kind not just degree, versus communism as the mere evolution of working class experience. It is worth discussing the nature of our hero's trials in order.

First, the reformatory. Mick learns a good deal about institutions and how to survive them, but more important is a trial of interpretation which emerges by way of contrast with a "false" trial, a mere trial of strength. He is beaten up unfairly by prefects and by an Instructor; but his boxing prowess also offers him the chance to be a prefect, to make somebody of himself, to make it in this system. He refuses this "on some principle ... acquired from his father" (45) thus passing one test. He also refuses the false trial (a return fight), seeing its "futility" (51) and thus passing another test. This understanding is contrasted implicitly with the Instructor's sense of boxing as "a way to redemption ... honesty and manliness" (43). In fact, in another of the novel's sets of binaries, the notions of redemption, discipline, fighting and manliness all subsequently have their positive, communist equivalents. There is also an implicit contrast between Mick and the other prisoners whose fighting is symptomatic of their fate, a life of crime: the more they fight the more they become victims of the system. Finally, it is hard to resist the link between the reformatory and reformism: the reformatory of course does not change anyone just as reformism does not change anything for the better. Aiming to ameliorate the system they

only aid its perpetuation. If the analogy sounds far-fetched, it is clearly not an accident that the Superintendent is described as a reformer with some "rather daring ideas" (25); but it is precisely his system of self-government at the Home that is responsible for the worst injustices Mick suffers. His good intentions conceal moral cowardice.

Second, boxing. Mick's two periods as a boxer provide the same sort of trial of interpretation, bringing to full consciousness what he "knows" about the boxing game (this time knowledge inherited from his mother). Together they represent the major trial in the novel. Again, both end in a false trial of strength. The first is a fight Mick wins which gives him a shot at the title; but the sight of his defeated opponent leads him to quit and return to Sydney. His uneasy thoughts about boxing lead to thoughts about his mother, who always opposed it, then thoughts about Australia, then Agnes, "the symbol of that better life he had dreamt of ... the prospect of that new life, always obscure, that beckoned to him" (76). The second trial is a fight Mick could win routinely, against a past champ returning to the ring only to feed his wife and four kids. But he refuses to deliver the knock-out punch and after the fight he quits again, this time for good. The interpretation is not spelt out, not theorised at all, but at just this moment the question of joining the Communist Party returns. Mick does not join immediately but does become involved in the Unemployed movement, and his next fights are the anti-eviction struggles.

Boxing is a happy choice for Waten in a novel that, as Suleiman says of her genre, "thrives on ideological polarisation, which becomes both a fundamental theme and an oganising principle" (69). The boxing business, as Waten shows it, works like the reformatory as a relatively self-contained microsystem of the capitalist system. The harder the workers work the better the bosses do, and the ultimate logic is that the workers fight among themselves, fight to kill each other (hence the counter logic of Mick's last fight, which he manages to a draw). Boxing offers a "new life" to the boxers, the "battlers," offers indeed to make them "somebody" ("He was on stage; he was a somebody again," 102). But the mentality of the boxer, like the pre-communist worker, is fatalistic: "`I used to think every fellow who went into the ring was a fatalist'" (141).

The central sections of the novel are organised precisely around unfolding the "hidden" parallels between boxing and capitalism, and then the hidden oppositions between boxing and communism as the latter takes over from the former the meanings of "being somebody" and "fighting for a new life." Thus the two phases in Mick's boxing career, reflecting this structure. The contrasts are reinforced by the story of Terry McMahon. With communist George Bright, he is one of the seamen who helps Mick stow away. But working as the novel so often does through contrasting pairs, while Bright stays bright Terry turns up next as a boxing manager for Mick, eventually a manager just like all the rest: Lew

observes, "`It's inevitable he should go that way in this system,'" (108); or as Dai Jenkins puts it, "`Terry's decided to emancipate himself before the revolution'" (95). There is an irony here at Dai's own expense, and one of the novel's many repetitions: Lew comments that his father thinks that the greyhounds are going to "emancipate" him (97). False emancipation is opposed to true. Terry's story is also redundant in relation to Tony's, as another telling of the story of personal ambition and its inevitable end in this system.

Boxing also works in the structure of initiation which underlies the *Bildungsroman*. Mick loses his identity the moment he signs on as a boxer: he gives a false name which then becomes his ring name. He only gets his own name back in the Party, and only completely when he is arrested during the anti-eviction struggles. The process of initiation then is a kind of death and rebirth (perhaps even, with the trip to New Zealand, a descent into the underworld); and, as Suleiman suggests, it acts as an initiation into a collective and a process of transformation from passivity to action undertaken by the group, the Party. It is in one sense a final ("true") loss of self, of individualism, contrasted with Tony's increasing individualism, opportunism and self-seeking.

To mark the passage of his apprenticeship and maturing, the second term of imprisonment is paralleled to the first: "Then he had felt shame but now he did not feel any shame at all" (218). Further, Mick is contrasted to Tuttle, one of his old companions from the reformatory:

> Mick went back to reading a tattered copy of *David Copperfield*, a present to the prison library from a City Mission. But after several pages he gave it up. The image of the embattled, savage Tuttle stood before his eyes. Inexorably he would be crushed; there was nothing else possible. Mick was suddenly glad he was a communist; vista beyond vista of hope stretched out before him. (223)

This contrast is the very theme of the novel and Mick's interpretation is a sign that he has passed his trials. (The actual criminal trials, by contrast, are shown to be blind to true interpretation.) Mick's maturing is essentially his political maturing — so that communism is as natural as growing up — and when he is released from prison (in the mid-1930s) he finds the Party too has "matured"; that is, for the keyed-in reader, it has evolved from its early sectarianism to the united front policy: "The party had grown and become more mature" Harry Timmins informs him (227).

Mick's other two trials can be dealt with briefly. First, Tony Grayson is the focus for a problem of interpretation, and one which comes to a head precisely around the issue of how to interpret the Party line: how doctrine and discipline can be reconciled with "independent thinking" (which is again the issue of opportunism/Trotskyism, 256); and specifically, how to understand the non-aggression pact (265, 272). There is a pivotal scene in which Mick attends a party with Tony's "really brilliant" friends, all university people,

journalists and bourgeois bohemians. The argument circles around interpretations of the Soviet Union (267-70) and Mick is alone in interpreting truly — and selflessly. The trial of interpretation, however, is here overlaid with a pattern of confrontation (which will be discussed below).

Finally, trials are also associated with sexual relations. After being separated from Agnes, after beginning as a boxer, Mick becomes involved with three women: a prostitute; Biddy, his landlady in Newcastle; and Queenie, the owner of a sly grog joint. These city women, almost without names (Biddy, the one closest to a name, is also the most sympathetic), are associated with sensuality, guilt, loneliness and dissoluteness, contrasted at each point with Agnes in a characteristic pattern of the *Bildungsroman*.[xxx] In a romance pattern, desire is split into sensuality (self-directed, entrapping, degrading) and sentiment (other-directed, liberating, uplifting). Mick just "escapes" each time, interpreting or intuiting the dangers and false promises, and each time he meets communism again soon after. What is interesting is the relative absence of any moral critique: the disapproval of Mick's actions is to be understood only in terms of his apprenticeship, his true vocation. Agnes too just escapes, in her case the *merely* sentimental plot to which she seems doomed by her upbringing: "Would Agnes always belong by instinct to the middle class, only longing for a peaceful, snug, domestic life?" (236). She remains nevertheless a sentimental rather than a sensuous object of desire (almost reversing the earlier fiction's valuation of sentiment versus desire). She becomes "more beautiful than the women in romantic novels" (238). She too matures, but their sexual relationship, although briefly present, is subordinate to her becoming a worthy spiritual companion and in her own right a true interpreter. The novel is aware of its dangerous proximity to the genres of sentimental romance and attempts to police the boundaries between the sentimental and the popular. More than once different kinds of popular entertainment are contrasted, and the less "respectable" forms are preferred: in an interesting piece of intertextual framing Dame Clara Butt, "God Shall Wipe Away All Tears" *and* Rudolph Valentino are juxtaposed to their disadvantage with the latest dance hits, Tom Mix and "Tessy Stop Teasing Me" (13-14).

In another romantic twist, and another of the novel's many parallels, their relationship is interrupted twice: after their first declaration of love when Mick is arrested for sheep-stealing; after their second declaration of love when he is arrested for communist actions. Mick of course cannot rediscover Agnes until he is a communist. And he cannot live with her happily ever after until his second release from prison and his return to Wagga — that is, until the complete restitution of his old identity which is now a new identity cleared of all guilt and ambiguity.

Again *Time of Conflict* recalls Katerina Clark's description of the prototypical Stalinist novel (which is not to accuse it of Stalinism in any simple sense): "The hero's love life is not valuable in itself; it serves only to aid him in fulfilling his tasks and in attaining `consciousness' [thus Agnes comes to mind whenever Mick doubts the shape of his career].... When the hero does `get the girl,' he cannot get her as an erotic object; she must be his spiritual companion and a means of adding to the new generation of the `family.'"[xxxi] And indeed family is the issue at the end of *Time of Conflict*. In an otherwise pointless exchange between Lew and Mick in its final pages, the two men's children are enumerated — and there is a serious joke about Mick's eldest boy becoming a revolutionary rather than a boxer.

2. Folk Tales, History and the Here and Now

To turn the discussion in another direction, the arguments of Suleiman and Clark both lead to a consideration of the "allegorical or mythic genres" which we find working within and against the novel's realist conventions. As suggested earlier, there is a sense in which the *realism* of *Time of Conflict* depends upon its repetition of certain of the patterns of these non-realist genres. Suleiman draws on the actantial system of Greimas, itself elaborated partly on the basis of Propp's analysis of the folk tale, in order to define the paradigmatic structure of the *roman à thèse*. In a positive exemplary apprenticeship, she argues, "subject, object, and receiver are syncretised in a single character, who is the hero," although the object is a complex category for it is both the subject's true self and the true doctrine: it is therefore "occupied by two actors, one animate and one abstract."[xxxii] The syncretisation of these first three actantial categories might seem to cast doubt on the usefulness of applying the system, suggesting criticisms of the kind that Jonathan Culler has made of the Greimasian project.[xxxiii] But we can stop short of endorsing the whole project and abandon the system when it ceases to be useful. Where it can be useful, as Suleiman points out, is precisely in its reductiveness, its ability to suggest the "inevitability" of certain functions and its location of redundancies. And if we assume that the system works best for the non-realist — mythic, allegorical, didactic — genres, then the degree to which it is operable for *Time of Conflict*, the degree to which in Culler's terms the distribution of actantial categories locates a thematic problem, will tell us something about the novel's own "grammar."

Further, I think we can disaggregate Suleiman's syncretisation of subject-object-receiver, taking up the clue in her own discussion of the object. Although in one sense this syncretisation clearly operates at the level of the *Bildungsroman*, the doctrinal intertext of the *roman à thèse* gives each category a double function. We might even take up the schema proposed by Greimas himself for a Marxist ideology:

Subject .....*man*
Object .....*classless society*
Sender .....*history*
Receiver .....*mankind*
Opponent .....*bourgeois class*
Helper .....*working class*[xxxiv]

Subject and receiver remain linked but as slightly different abstract categories and actors in history (*homme*, *humanité*[xxxv]); the subject could also be rendered as "history" or as the "working class," the object as "mankind." But we can keep the arbitrariness of Greimas's system at bay just long enough for it to perform its local task. Its interest for my purpose is the degree to which it does indeed make sense of the distribution of characters, and more, in Waten's novel.

At the simplest level Mick Anderson is subject. His ordinariness allows (*requires* for the sake of significance) the generalisation to the more abstract level of "man" or "class," and it does so, as it were, without the necessity for abstraction. Identity and understanding, being "somebody," making something of life, a *new* life — these are all simultaneously the object, and again with a double dimension (Mick, communism). Agnes, as Suleiman's analysis would suggest, is only a secondary object subordinate to Mick's attainment of self-possession (class-consciousness). Thus her mere sentimentality is sufficient — an erotic object of desire would be excessive — and she must be absent for the whole course of Mick's "conversion."

Mick is the receiver too, although self-possession is gathered up at each point into the larger category of the collective, "mankind." Here, as elsewhere, the narrative proceeds from an initial parallelism through a series of substitutions to the resolution of the two dimensions (ethical, theoretical) on a "higher" plane (historical perhaps). The narrative's ongoing-ness is generated in part by this process such that no personal resolution for Mick can be a final resolution for the novel or for history. The novel ends on just such a moment, the resolution of one story, the exorcism of Tony, balanced against the mere beginning of another, the future of mankind.

More interesting is the way the actantial categories of sender, helper and opponent sort out the novel's array of characters and much of the specific detail of its characterisations. Sender and helper need not be significantly separated, but both obviously must be clearly distinguished from the opponent. We might also quote from Suleiman:

> The archetypal donor [sender] is a paternal figure. Possessing a knowledge similar, if not identical, to the one sought by the hero, the paternal figure functions as donor and/or helper: he communicates what he knows, helps the hero surmount his trials.... What is striking is that the

> father-donor, if he is present, is rarely the hero's biological father. He is, rather, a spiritual, elective father, whom the hero choses as his own. (80-81)

In addition, the father is likely, while occupying the structural position of the sender (or donor in Suleiman's terms), to act as an opponent, as pseudo-sender. George Anderson is an interesting case. He is both sender and opponent/false sender, although not in a way that produces confusion or ambiguity. To refer to the Marxist actants Greimas suggests, it is in his role as "history"/"working class" — as the embodiment of the working *man*'s "pre-conscious" history — that he can operate as sender, bequeathing to Mick his intuitive sympathies for the working people and against the system (thus the principle which leads Mick to reject the offer of being a prefect). On the other hand his aspirations are bourgeois and "anti-historical" (i.e., fatalist), so he also bequeaths to Mick his career as a boxer. As representing the "system," then, he is a false sender if never quite an opponent, sending the hero *into* the system (the reformatory, boxing). Mick's mother, by contrast, is unambiguously a positive sender-helper.[xxxvi] Agnes too: despite Mick's doubts she functions only as a figure of his "urge for heroic action" and desire for a new life.

Mick's elective father is Harry Timmins, or rather the sequence Harry Timmins-George Bright-Lew Jenkins, those figures who combine the experience of the working class with the knowledge of its class aspirations and the disciple to bring them about. The characterisations mark them as such: although only three years older than Mick, Harry is characterised as we saw in terms of his older demeanour (and his relation of mentor to Mick); George Bright is older, over thirty, and the union delegate on the ship where his credentials are established in political discussion (62-63); Lew is possibly younger than Mick, but his possession of experience-knowledge is marked by his appearance — "short, narrow shouldered and slightly stooped ... a grey face, an earnest expression" (90). Literature, in the various texts cited in the novel, and communist doctrine itself also play the roles of sender and helper in so far as they are aligned against the system and for the working class. As Suleiman suggests, the doctrine is paradoxically both object and helper: "in the *roman à thèse*, one always and only discovers what was already known" (84). The redundancies between the characterisations help create that sense in the novel of stories often-told and of truths that need only be recognised. The intrusive narrator then has the further redundant role of *telling* the reader what need only be recognised.

The position of opponent is occupied by Terry McMahon, Tony, Agnes's father and the women with whom Mick gets involved. What they share, manifestly or latently, is their implication in the bourgeois capitalist system. Mr Duffy is the simplest, the petit-bourgeois manager of a grocery store and an office bearer in the Returned Soldiers' League and the Masonic Lodge (13). Queenie, the sly grog shop owner, is the clearest opponent among the

women. Like Terry she is also a false helper, self-seeking and careerist, offering what can only turn Mick into a victim.

Tony is the most complex case. What the actantial system enables us to see is that this is not interesting as a complexity of personality, for the personality is represented unambiguously even though the development from latent to manifest careerism takes some time. Indeed in actantial terms Tony is unambiguously a helper in so far as he offers a doctrine to Mick that does not depend on his primary personality trait for its validity; and he is unambiguously a false helper in so far as his personality seems to offer a model for Mick to emulate. Thus the recurrent scrutiny in the novel of Tony's eloquence, his most attractive, powerful and dangerous quality (compared more than once to the plain speaking of Lew or the power of speech that Mick acquires). He becomes a true opponent when he denounces the Soviet Union and joins the Labor Party. The apparent ambiguity of his genuine friendship and sympathy with Mick only serves to highlight the doctrinal point, the "truth" that was always present, that if you are not serving the interest of the working class you are serving the interests of capitalism.

The actantial structure enables us to see how one of the aims of *Time of Conflict* is indeed *simplicity*; or at least that its complexity or scope must be managed without disturbing the fundamental simplicity of the structure described. Thus its complexity depends upon the multiplication of redundant parallel and opposed characters, episodes and discourses. We can see clearly what Suleiman calls "the overdetermined character ... of the donor and of the helper" in the positive exemplary apprenticeship (84). Conversely, as Tony's story becomes a negative exemplary apprenticeship an array of overdetermined false helper-donors is introduced: a girlfriend, drinking mates, bohemians and academics, his girlfriend's wealthy father. The characters' places in the actantial system are determined almost exhaustively by their position on the axes worker-bourgeoisie or communist-capitalist. But the positions cannot be assigned only by political *argument*; they need to fall "naturally" and familiarly into place. The actantial system thus underlines the ways in which, in this particular novel and broadly in the *roman à thèse*, the raising of folk or mythic structures "beneath" a realist prosaic-ness is to the point both narratively and politically.[xxxvii] In the case of *Time of Conflict*, the point is to connect ordinariness to heroism, recognition to revelation — and Literature to an "ordinary" story which is also no less than a mythic history of the people.

Suleiman describes a further structure common in the *roman à thèse*, the structure of confrontation, which she suggests is especially attractive to the communist novel. Rather than an exemplary apprenticeship we have an "antagonistic hero" who fights, not for glory, but "for truth, justice, freedom, or his fatherland — in a word, for transcendental and

absolute values" (103). Both syntagmatic and actantial axes are different from those in the *Bildungsroman*. The hero espouses from the beginning the true values; his adherence to the values does not change in the course of the confrontation (there is no "becoming" as in the *Bildungsroman*); he represents a group that fights for these values; his individual destiny merges with a collective one (106). He is the conscious representative of the group, not simply typical of "hidden" historical forces in the socialist realist sense. Here the narrative stake is not the "internal evolution of the protagonist, but the external evolution of the conflict" (112), one consequence of which is that these narratives must remain open-ended. Triumph in any particular confrontation only prefigures future struggles.

Suleiman describes the actantial structure as follows. Subject: collective/representative individuals; object: the triumph of true values; receiver: collective/humanity; helper: those who share values, provide support; opponent: either an anti-subject who leads the fight against the hero or an anti-helper who aids the enemy; sender/donor: historical necessity/God/national destiny etc (113-14). This account is much closer to Greimas's own version of Marxism.

The structure of confrontation helps us "complete" the narrative of *Time of Conflict*. In one sense Mick's apprenticeship is over less than two-thirds of the way through the novel when he joins the Communist Party, although in another sense, as suggested, the *Bildungsroman* is not fully resolved until Mick's second jail sentence and reunion with Agnes. In either case what we see is the structure of confrontation taking over from the structure of apprenticeship in the anti-eviction fights, the second prison term, a confrontation with Mr Duffy, anti-fascism, union struggles against Tony and so on to the end. The actantial slots can be redistributed too in a way that clarifies Tony's role as anti-subject and anti-helper and suggests how communism is set in place as the historical heir of working-class experience.

Confrontation, then, dominates at least the last quarter of the novel, especially its fourth and final section ("At Melbourne"). Perhaps this is why the novel goes beyond the more traditional three-part structure, and why the final section in some way feels supplementary (in fact my plot summary above is misleading, for Mick's involvement in the Spanish war and the Second World War are each recounted in only a few sentences). The matter that remains to completed in this final section is the confrontation with Tony, and the final scenes might be better understood as such rather than as a trial of interpretation. At the start of Section 4, after his experiences in Spain, Mick longs "for the first time ... to become a leading member of his movement" (239): thus, for the first time, he fully occupies the slot as antagonistic hero in the confrontation with Tony, already a leading communist union official. This final section of the novel is structured around a series of confrontations

between the two. As Suleiman suggests, the stakes are essentially performative rather than cognitive. Tony loses in the sense that he must forego his leadership of history; he becomes less "free," he fears political obsolesence, and his last thought in the novel is to wonder whether communism was "historically inevitable after all" (280). Tony is consigned to the past, but the novel's conclusion (and closure) is surprisingly low-key, at least at the level of story, ending as it does with Mick's comment to Lew, "Our best days are ahead of us. Not behind us, like Tony's." The structure of confrontation, we might say, keeps open the narrative of history *through* the closure that the structure of apprenticeship would otherwise entail.

Suleiman's discussion of the *roman à thèse* structures and their various alignments with allegorical and mythic genres recalls Katerina Clark's discussion of the Soviet novel at a number of points. In particular, Clark analyses the Soviet novel's "rite of passage" structure, its parallels with traditional tales, as we have seen, and its recurrent dialectic around the poles of spontaneity and consciousness. In order to mobilise this comparison for our reading of *Time of Conflict*, it is not necessary to posit any particularly detailed or direct influence of the Soviet novel on Australian communist writers, even less a strictly-applied policy-weighted model determining the forms of local communist fiction. As suggested earlier, Australian writers had their own agenda and a local cultural economy in which to intervene. In fact, the parallels between Soviet and Australian fiction become all the more interesting if we free ourselves from such a proposition and see any similarities as produced relatively independently by a similar set of problematics, as communist theory and its political presence are subjected to the constraints of novelistic discourse.

In this light we do not need to be too subtle about the various shifts in the Soviet novel from the thirties to the sixties. For reasons of cultural distance and the local literary agenda, changes in Soviet literature were likely to be registered as accretions rather than fundamental shifts (that is, after the large scale shift from pre- to post- socialist realist modes). We can turn then to Clark's analysis of the prototypical plot of the "high Stalinist" novel of the thirties and forties without being too disturbed about changes in Soviet literary politics post-war; indeed her own argument suggests that this remained a fundamental plot structure against which variations were registered. Clark describes the prototypical plot as that of a rite of passage in which a "hero sets out consciously to achieve his goal, which involves *social integration* and *collective* rather than *individual* identity for himself." The hero is "assisted in his quest by an older and more `conscious' figure who has made just such a successful quest before him" (167).

Missing in *Time of Conflict* is the initial element of consciousness, although we do have Mick's obscure desires for a new life. The element of historical development, from

obscurity to consciousness, is of more central import in the Australian novel (in this pre-socialist Australian society). Perhaps, though, the difference is only a matter of degree. Clark's description seems closest to the structure of confrontation: "the hero is presented with some task in the public sphere, the fulfillment of which will really test his strength and determination ... against formidable obstacles" (167-68). But the structure of apprenticeship is not far away, here in the more traditional form of the rite of passage: "as he meets each test, he gradually achieves the required degree of self-mastery and impersonality to be initiated" (168). The *Bildungsroman* pattern of a quest for true vocation is underscored by the older "folk" pattern of the initiation.

There are a number of elements defined here that are repeated in *Time of Conflict*, and the similarities are more consistent than the merely casual parallels that might be produced by the broad accessibility of such traditional literary motifs as the quest or journey. First, the three part initiation structure: the hero's separation from his habitual environment; his transition and instruction in the law; and the final rite of incorporation, which, Clark suggests, is not a major *event* but more of symbolic significance in that it changes the life of the hero forever — something just like Mick's joining the Party, at once routine and momentous. Initiation also involves taking the character away from the mother- or female-dominated world, and his trial is in part a test of *manliness*. As inscribed in the novel such a pattern is essentially sentimental, and pastoral too. That Waten conforms to this pattern is significant, not least because of his strong writing of women in previous fiction. It is the sense of typicality and of historical necessity, in post-war communism, in nationalism, in *Time of Conflict*, that makes the difference; frankly, the masculinism of Australian communism and nationalism decrees that only men can be the bearers of history and only their experience can be typical (the unusual success of *Bobbin Up* is in partly proving otherwise).

The second parallel is in the pattern of death and rebirth in the rite of passage from individualistic self to the impersonal collective. Again, underscoring the structure of apprenticeship in *Time of Conflict* is an older pattern of death and re-birth, summoned through Mick's name change, his voyage across the sea and his descent into the underworld of petty criminals, alcoholics and temptresses. In modulating between the two structures the narrative folds together its two arguments, the continuity of identity between people and communist and the discontinuity between communism and all that precedes it. Mick is relatively without individualism from the start; nevertheless the central opposition in the resolution of the novel, as we have seen, is that between Mick's selflessness (serving the collective) and Tony's ambition (self-serving). Mick's growth in personal stature, his new

"personal and intellectual authority" (275), is exactly his commitment to the collective which in turn is equivalent to the impersonal inevitability of history.

Third, there is the figure of the helper, the more conscious "elder," already familiar to us in Harry Timmins and Lew Jenkins. These characters are marked, as Clark suggests of the elders in the Soviet novel, by conventional epithets — "earnest," "tired, gray, wasted and stooped" etc. — which mark their accession to consciousness (and which can also act as figures for the novel's own readability, for *its* experience and earnestness). Fourth, and by way of contrast with the figures of the hero and the elders, is the manner in which the "villain" is represented in terms of psychological motivations — in Tony's case, frustrated ambition — with a degree of attention given to the inner self which is not given to the positive hero. The hero must show wholeness (relatively, then completely); the villian on the other hand is divided between inner and outer or, as in Tony's case, between intellect and emotion.

In addition Clark's analysis of the Soviet novels in terms of a fundamental dialectic between spontaneity and consciousness which is resolved in the hero is not at all an inappropriate way to represent Mick Anderson's development from physical strength and powerful but unformed sympathies to the discipline and certitude of the communist (and again his development prefigures the course of working class history). Indeed Clark describes how in the Soviet novel, resembling nothing so much as the medieval Corpus Christi plays, no incident is unique, "nor is its significance confined to the action of the novel" (175). As we remarked earlier for *Time of Conflict*, "each occurence either echoes or prefigures a greater event" (175). These are the attributes we have referred to above as redundancy, typicality and the presence of the doctrinal intertext, which enable us for example to read Harry's initial appearance as prefiguring Mick's story, which in turn merely prefigures the transformation of the whole class (and whole society). At each step there is a synecdochal relationship between story and History (individual, Party, class, people, *humanité*). In some ways in *Time of Conflict* we have only a weak version of what Clark describes, because the categories of nationalism leak into the doctrinal intertext and blur its edges: the one myth cannot contain the whole of society in quite the Soviet way. On the other hand, one of the novel's arguments is to show precisely the redundancy of nationalism and communism in relation to each other.

We could continue, factoring in post-war developments in the Soviet novel (Clark notes the appearance of less heroic heroes, more attention to the hero's cultural attributes, a post-1956 theme of struggle against careerists).[xxxviii] However, as suggested, the point is not to trace detailed lines of influence but to remark on the similar structural effects, on novels written in different times and different places, of telling *the same kind of story*. The parallels,

in other words, describe the effects of trying simultaneously to narrativise "History" and the "here and now" in Clark's terms; making the individual *bildung* or initiation bear what is, at least in relation to the novel, a mythic structure, the Marxist narrative of history; and doing so within what remains an aesthetic of realism, "realist" in a peculiarly over-determined sense of the word, referring all at once to a literary tradition, a set of political imperatives and a sense of "ordinary experience" itself overflowing with literary and political investments.

3. Tradition, Modernity, Revolution

In a passage from *Time of Conflict* quoted earlier Mick Anderson is described reading *David Copperfield* (and he contrasts his fate with that of the Dickensian-named Tuttle). The reference reminds us that communism is not the only interxtual device in the novel. The *Bildungsroman* itself is explicitly offered to the reader as an appropriate interpretive frame and is, as it were, the stake in the novel's fictional contract with the reader. Indeed the appropriation of this deep (nineteenth-century European) tradition for a contemporary Australian communist novel is in a sense exactly what the communist politics and aesthetics of the period demanded. *Time of Conflict* asks to be read for its *roman* and not just *à thèse*. Further, as suggested in the previous chapter, this novel more than any previous ABS publication except perhaps Waten's own *The Unbending* defined the mode by which the "marginal" ABS wanted to address the Australian literary mainstream, to earn its respect, to make it change. Waten's novel aspires on the one hand to the status of a book distinctly for worker readers, for the movement, and this as we have seen means some qualification, some disciplining, of its literary aspirations. At the same time, and equally as a political imperative, the novel aspires to maximise its respectability as a work of art, its serious aspirations to literary authority (in order to maximise the respectability of its marginal politics). We should not forget the precedent offered by Soviet literature, where "for the first time in history the gap between art and the people has disappeared and at the same time the gap between the writer and the people disappeared too."[xxxix] The *Bildungsroman* tradition becomes irresistible, both as the familiar vehicle for the story of an ordinary hero and as a mainstream of the great realist tradition.

There are also some particular reasons for considering Judah Waten as a writer within the *Bildungsroman* tradition, in terms of the way he situated himself in relation to English and especially European exemplars. Dickens, for example, is a frequent reference point in *The Unbending* and *Time of Conflict* (the name of Agnes too might be derived from *David Copperfield*), and Dickens was generally singled out by communist critics as representing the socially-conscious and critical wing of English realism. Waten could also

read *Robinson Crusoe* as a version of the *Bildungsroman*.[xl] At the same time, Waten aligned himself with the European, and especially the French tradition. He once defined his "ideal" novel as one which would "describe the revolutionary mind in a tranquil country like Australia," and he found his model in Flaubert: "I would like my novel with the revolutionary in the centre to be truly compassionate and human like Flaubert's *Sentimental Education*, one of the most successful political novels ever written."[xli] More broadly, Russian and Soviet literature can be understood as having a double significance for Waten, as himself "Russian" and communist, and it was the *continuities* between the nineteenth and twentieth century literatures that most attracted his interest.[xlii] In a way that was not available to many of his communist contemporaries, Waten was able to feel himself heir to multiple European, realist traditions each of which held forth the *Bildungsroman* as a deep, natural structure.

What does *Time of Conflict* do with and within the *Bildungsroman* tradition? A standard literary analysis of the *Bildungsroman*, Jerome Buckley's *Season of Youth*, describes the "typical plot" in familiar terms:

> A child of some sensibility grows up in the country or in a provincial town, where he finds constraints, social and intellectual, placed upon the free imagination. His family, especially his father, proves doggedly hostile to his creative instincts ... antagonistic to his ambitions, and quite impervious to the new ideas he has gained from unprescribed reading. His first schooling ... may be frustrating insofar as it may suggest options not available to him in his present setting. He therefore ... leaves the repressive atmosphere of home (and also the relative innocence), to make his way independently in the city.... There his real "education" begins, not only his preparation for a career but also — and often more importantly — his direct experience of urban life. The latter involves at least two love affairs or sexual encounters, one debasing, one exalting, and demands that in this respect and others the hero reappraise his values. By the time he has decided, after painful soul-searching, the sort of accommodation to the modern world he can honestly make, he has left his adolescence behind and entered upon maturity. His initiation complete, he may then visit his old home, to demonstrate by his presence the degree of his success or the wisdom of his choice.[xliii]

It is significant that *Time of Conflict* follows this classical structure more closely than it does more contemporary, less "optimistic" variations (such as in William Golding): the optimistic trajectory of the narrative is one of things Waten's novel needs the tradition for. We can note the novel's close approximation to this typical plot, but also read off its differences, as a belated, Australian, communist example. The child of sensibility is present ("for all that he hadn't had any real schooling after he'd turned ten, he could read well and often took books out of the public library, especially books of travel," 2) but he is present also in the specific form of the child of working-class sympathies. The constrained imagination is present in Mick's youthful "urge for heroic action," the unhelpful father too, but significantly the major constraints are external to the (relatively innocent) family: the police, the butcher, the bosses, the repressive system rather than the repressive home. Freedom or emancipation

thus takes on a range of meanings beyond the "free imagination" (and "painful soul-searching" takes on the relatively modest, passive characteristics — recognition rather than revelation — that we have described above). Finally, Mick also achieves his "accommodation to the modern world" and can return home — and yet perhaps the point here is that accommodation seems exactly the wrong word. Instead we have a *refusal* to accommodate to the modern world in its present capitalist state (and that includes its modernity), together with an "accommodation," a *commitment* rather, to the future evolution of communism, the modern world in quite another sense. Indeed this "other" sense does not preclude an accommodation with the pre-modern world of rural community that is, we might say, the novel's pre-history.

The implied reader of *Time of Conflict* is required to appreciate both the degree of Waten's literary traditionalism and his departures from the tradition, his appropriations of it for "another story." In fact the novel found its readers where it sought them among communists and unionists, but failed to do so, often spectacularly, in the literary press. The point of interest as regards the former group is not the political predisposition towards the novel, which is simply predictable, but rather the terms on which it is read and read critically. Also of significance are the places in which it was thought appropriate to review the book: *Communist Review* (E. Thornton), *Tribune* (Paul Mortier), the Queensland and Melbourne *Guardian*s (Rex Mortimer), the *Building Worker*, the *Seaman's Journal* and *Common Cause* (Edgar Ross in the Miners' Federation journal).[xliv] In these places, the novel is read against the criteria of historical fidelity, its presentation of a working-class/revolutionary hero, its objectivity and optimism, its adequacy to communism, the *knowledge* it imparts and its writing *for* the working class. Historical fidelity, in fact, is too weak a term to suggest the demands the book's communist and worker critics place on it. At stake is rather the book's ability to represent "our time," to show history as epochal, the epoch of communism as "the most significant organisation in contemporary history" (Mortier).

In short, the novel is read "correctly" against the categories of History, *before* those of fiction, and it is sometimes found wanting. Some brief quotations can show this activity of a distinct reading formation, with its own hierarchy of categories, fully attuned to the "task" the novel sets itself and to its *newness*: "The wide range of the book shows the class struggle of the times in all its naked and often bloodied reality as the working class fought for food, for shelter and the right to speak and organise"; "Where the masses are the makers of history, there are thousands of heroes"; ".".. a prototype of the militant worker who shapes the strength and conscience of our working-class movement, the hero-in-the-mass who will build the Socialist future"; "All workers should read this novel for a better knowledge of our

social set-up and the great part the Australian working class has played"; "Katharine Susannah Prichard, Frank Hardy, Dorothy Hewitt (sic) and others have, of course, created Communist characters, but Judah Waten does much more than that. The Communist Party itself is the real hero of *Time of Conflict*"; "Mick Anderson's development as a revolutionary hero after he joins the Party is restricted by the fact that the novel does not adequately portray the leap in political and ideological maturity that the Party itself took in this period"; "For the first time in Australian literature, [Waten] has successfully centred a novel around the theme which has defeated many talented overseas writers: the making of a Communist"; "The very ordinariness of his name points to the secret of his strength and dynamism. His is the heroism of the working people from whom he springs, given power and direction by the logic and humanism of Communism"; "Judah Waten has selected a typical Australian working class family"; "It has its weaknesses but it will play a big part in the task of developing working class understanding."[xlv]

The novel receives predictably hostile or disappointed reviews in the newspapers and periodicals, although in the literary pages it can also be treated with the respect due to a work of art, even a flawed one.[xlvi] Interestingly the book's most hostile reception comes from the new, liberal "higher journalism" of the early sixties, in *Nation* and the *Australian Book Review*: "a dreary pre-adolescent world of priggishness, envy, and non-blubbing" in the former, "a laborious novel stiffened into complete paralysis by communist dogma" in the latter.[xlvii] At stake is a "modernising" liberalism, and a new liberal intelligentsia, that had as one of its enabling conditions the privileging of literature as a category representing freedom, creativity and independence against all the orthodoxies it could identify — socialist, Soviet, conservative, mass cultural, nationalist, labourist. In a sense the book finds its target here too in offending a group that is itself prefigured in the novel, in Tony's university and intellectual friends.[xlviii]

Before concluding I want to push a little further some of the points developed thus far, by reading the novel against a more sophisticated cultural history of the *Bildungsroman*, Franco Moretti's *The Way of the World*. Moretti distinguishes between the classical *Bildungsroman* (Goethe, Austen) and what we can call the continental *Bildungsroman*, later and predominantly French (Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert). He further distinguishes a distinct tradition of the English *Bildungsroman*, from *Tom Jones* through Dickens to *Daniel Deronda*. The classical mode emphasises narrative closure, managing individual formation such that identity and social integration are synthesised: youth must give way to maturity, and "happiness" is posited as the highest value but ultimately at the cost of "freedom."[xlix] The later continental *Bildungsroman*, by contrast, stresses openness, change, an opposition between the individual and society, and a youth that can only be betrayed. As Moretti

comments, "the two models express opposite attitudes towards modernity." The classical *Bildungsroman*, he writes, "narrates how the French Revolution could have been avoided" (64).

What we have in *Time of Conflict*, I would suggest, is a belated return to the patterns of the classical *Bildungsroman*. The point will need qualification and explanation, but as my argument has already emphasised, identity in the novel is gained only through social integration, although this time through integration into the collective of the Party. If this seems too sectional a "society," the correct understanding of the novel requires us to read the Party as the working class, the Australian people/society, indeed the worldwide movement of history. We might also suggest that such a return to an older pattern is possible, in part, because of the presence of cultural nationalism and specifically an Australian tradition that still provides access to a largely rural sense of community.

Moretti's discussion of the English *Bildungsroman* gives us a more elaborated argument against which to read *Time of Conflict*. His formulation to describe the English *Bildungsroman* partly echoes the formulations we have given earlier in describing the ambivalent "aspirations" of Waten's novel. He finds the genre's "unique interest for the history of culture" in its attempt "to combine `democratic' and `narrative' values: `protagonism' and `antiheroism'" (192). If we add "revolutionary values" to the equation we arrive once more at the paradoxes which, we might say, *Time of Conflict* is designed to *contain*.

Moretti argues that in the English tradition as opposed to the continental, novelistic patterns are upheld by an "older sort of framework." Writing of *Jane Eyre*, *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations* and *Tom Jones*, he asks: "Could it be that deep down, these novels are fairy tales?" (185). Again we find ourselves with an account of a novelistic genre that combines "literary" and "pre-literary" categories, but not in a way that could easily be called dialogic.

In ways that recall the interpretive models employed above, Moretti discovers in the English *Bildungsroman* "extreme paradigmatic oppositions" which are present fundamentally as oppositions between good and evil: "fairy-tale like ... the world has meaning *only if* it is relentlessly divided into good and evil" (187). He singles out the role played, not by society or the system, but by siblings (or their substitutes) in these polarisations; especially the sibling's demise, "an unusually definitive and taxonomic final syntagm, one that dissipates any residual ambiguity and irreversibly separates the hero and his alter ego" (186). Having set up Tony as Mick's "sibling," this is precisely the end that the last section of Waten's novel exists to produce, almost its sole point. There is indeed a sense

in which *Time of Conflict* is not a political novel at all, not a novel about power or power structures, but a simple story of good and evil.

At the level of the story, and in the structure of confrontation, *Time of Conflict* works primarily in this moral realm, creating a desire for the triumph of the good and a desire for the true doctrine that will show just how the world can be relentlessly divided into good and evil. But in contrast to the English *Bildungsroman*, it is also committed to a strong "ethico-political universalism" even if it can scarcely represent this as an "ism." At the level of the discourse, then, and between discourse and story, we see a process of "double conversion": *from* the moralistic and empirical, the realm of experience and personality and the here and now; *to* the realm of political universalism, of abstract categories and principles, and of History; and *back again*, from History to experience. How, for example, are we to interpret Tony's fate? Is it a fault of personality or a political error? The point of course is that there is a reversible relation of cause and effect between the two; the doubleness is caught precisely in the notion of careerism, at once an ethical category to be understood on the level of personality ("ambition") and an abstract class of action to be understood on the level of History ("opportunism," "reformism," "revisionism"). The difference between the two realms is precisely what the novel's rhetoric conceals with its disciplined banality and its disciplinary intrusive narrator, but conceals by "revealing" the transformation from one realm to the other. Paradigmatically the two realms are simultaneous. Syntagmatically the novel must work to prove their simultaneity, which again is the point of Tony's final appearance — no wonder he doesn't look "happy" (in one realm) having just been consigned to the dustbin of History (in the other)!

The ethico-political theme of careerism in *Time of Conflict* might also be taken as a self-situating device in relation to Waten's own authorial investment in a communist career, a reflexive allegorisation of the place of this text and this author in the world (and across literary and "sub-literary" spheres). The novel, paradoxically given its political logic, speaks with an implied authorial "voice" which has a cultural authority exceeding that of its hero and his class — Waten's *author*-isation depends upon it. But the argument against bourgeois careerism that Mick enacts allegorises, at the same time, the impersonality which the novel needs for its authority as history (and, for its author, as communist) thus warding off mere literariness. The text, in short, offers one sort of fictive resolution for the recurrent ambivalence in Waten's construction of a writing career, a career that is both a personal, authorial attribute and a political exemplum. Theo Moody, for one, grasped this aspect of the work in giving his review the acutely-punning title, "Red Career."[1] Mick Anderson is a hero "of our time" but he is also (therefore) virtually anonymous: over the course of the

novel he comes to *embody* a public career which is both more and less than an individual achievement.

To return to the *Bildungsroman*, *Time of Conflict* is found largely within the conventions Moretti describes, but inevitably never entirely within them. He remarks, for example, on the ordinariness of the English hero:

> He is ... not expected to establish a moral universe that already exists, eternal and unchangeable, and even less to question that universe. His most typical function lies rather in making that world *recognisable* for any and all readers. The more the hero himself is an "anybody," better yet with a nondescript name such as "Tom Jones," the more easily will this process of identification take place (189).

Recognisability is clearly a major function of Mick Anderson from his name onwards. Yet he must also function in some degree to create a moral universe. Once more a "correct" reading of the novel must accept both dimensions simultaneously. As I have emphasised the moral universe that is here named as communism must be shown to have always been present or at least as long as "the people," the working class (the nation) have been present in history; but communism is also nothing if not an utterly new moral universe, transforming life not just in degree but in kind.

It is difficult to say just which perspective predominates. The same ambivalence occurs, as it must, in Mick's character and in such a way that his ordinariness becomes not just a precondition for his transformation into a hero of our time, but paradoxically the one condition that must not be transformed. This course is enacted in the inevitable scene of the return home in *Time of Conflict*, when Mick as a communist is reunited with his family in Wagga (229-31). He is at first not recognised; then his *transformation* is recognised, first in ethical terms ("`You've grown into a man'") and then politically ("`It's a real school, the Party'"); then, in Moretti's terms, he can "be finally recognised for what he has always been" (204). He is linked once again to the rural, which still means continuity, and to the maternal (his hair is "prematurely grey, like his mother's"; she of course had "hardly changed at all"). The question of guilt in relation to his father is resolved, but the father must still die, for he belongs to an earlier historical era and has bequeathed all that he can. Again stressing the parallels with an earlier bourgeois literary tradition, we might say that Mick has earnt the right to *inherit* ("one gets the inheritance, but actually one had it all along"[li]).

The series of parallelisms and binaries, redundancies and synecdoches, which characterise *Time of Conflict* can now be understood as its attempt to return revolutionary history to the realm of everyday life and "ordinary administration" which is the novel's own. Here the *roman à thèse* and the narrative of History call on the *Bildungsroman* and the sentimental romance. But, as Moretti remarks, this novelistic realm is conventionally anti-tragic, un-heroic and not least *anti-revolutionary*.[lii] The novel's further task, then, is the

inverse: to turn the realm of the ordinary and everyday "back" into an heroic one but without losing any of its recognisability, its common sense. Here the *Bildungsroman*, in turn, calls on the *roman à thèse*, the historical novel and, it might be, the fairy-tale, the allegorical or mythic genres.

But what attitude to modernity, and indeed to revolution, can the novel then sustain? *Time of Conflict* is, in one pespective, precisely about managing modernity — that of course is the "other" meaning of its title. As "post" modern in this sense the narrative must take us through the crises of modernity which, as a revolutionary historical novel and unlike some of its contemporaries, it can avoid only partly through its Australian-rural "background." However mildly, it must take us through the separation of individual autonomy and social integration, of freedom and meaning, of past and future, and through the explosion of discourses consequent upon the bourgeois revolution. These are forces latent in the city that Mick experiences and in the "journalists, painters, intellectuals and bohemians" (244) who briefly appear.[liii] James Joyce gets a special mention (along with a barely-disguised John Anderson):

> "One day [`the Professor'] showed me a book by a writer called Joyce. He said he was very good. But I didn't understand a word of it. Course I've had very little schooling.... "
> "Wouldn't have made much difference if you'd had a lot," Tony said. "Joyce is only for the select few, not the majority. He's a nihilist, and he's the voice of capitalist nihilism."
> .... "Well, the Professor supports many progressive causes for the moment," Timmins said. "But in his own field he's a reactionary. He mightn't think so but he teaches the ordinary kind of capitalist university philosophy."
> "But that wouldn't make him a reactionary as a whole, would it?" Stevenson asked.
> "No," Timmins replied. "But you can't reject one basic part of Marxism without sooner or later falling a victim of bourgeois falsehood." (183-84)

In the face of capitalist nihilism, *Time of Conflict* wants to insist that meaning is (still) immanent, that freedom and community or identity and social integration can still be parts of the one trajectory. It wants indeed to reconnect past and future — youth and maturity — so that the irruptions of modernity are contained within a trajectory of historical evolution where, as in the classical *Bildungsroman*, "events acquire meaning when they lead to *one* ending, and one only."[liv]

Moretti finds parallels for the English and French traditions in the nature of their respective revolutions. Very broadly, the theme of social consensus marks the former, the theme of principles betrayed marks the latter. In *Time of Conflict*, written after a third social revolution and as "working class," we see a return to the "pre-modern" structure of the English *Bildungsroman* at least in so far as the model of the normal individual achieving social integration can be sustained. But, as inescapably post-modern in the sense suggested earlier this structure can only be sustained by projecting the notion of social consensus into

the future and into one antagonistic section of society, and by abandoning the valorisation of compromise that, for Moretti, characterises the English tradition. The communist/working-class novel is in this sense less democratic than its middle-class model, and its mode might well be described as "uncompromising." Yet neither can the communist/working-class novel sustain the structure of an open-ended dialectic between individual and society that characterises the French tradition, for its whole point is to announce the end of this dialectic once and for all. The Russian revolution, then, represents the narrative possibility of the end of modernity, the "end" in both senses of what the previous two revolutions had set in train. The valorisation of stability produced by the first and the obsession with restlessness produced by the second are resolved into the steady inevitability of historical progress — which, despite its revolutionary credentials, perhaps offers the least narrative interest of all. How indeed to arouse desire for the inevitable?

Perhaps we can say that in *Time of Conflict* Waten wants to contain the *scope* of the French *Bildungsroman* within the structures of the classical or English mode. The novel thus offers itself as both a large-scale epochal story, the story of a generation, of the future of mankind; and as "just" the story of an ordinary bloke living in his time and place. In one dimension the novel's aspirations lead to the very limits of the novel form, to the point where novel disappears into history or theory. But *Time of Conflict* might also be understood, in the context of its Australian and its political occasions, as nothing less than a reassertion of the *novel*, a calling forth of the full authority of the novelistic tradition and of its power to invest the story of an individual life with social meaning. The attempt to write the great "Australian communist novel" must be interpreted with the stress on each one of the three words in the phrase. Paradoxically, though, it is this very reassertion of the novelistic tradition, which must be a belated appropriation of the tradition against others, that turns the complexity of the novel into the simplicity of the *roman à thèse*. As with George Eliot, whose novels are discussed by Moretti as marking the end of the *Bildungsroman* in the English tradition, we might say that Waten "was tempted by the impossible, and tried to capture the essence of a new historical phase [the `age of the masses'] with the most significant symbolic form of the previous age."[lv]

I have travelled a long way from *Time of Conflict* in order, I hope, to get closer to it and in order to show that in this most single-minded of novels nothing is singular after all. We have seen both the impossiblity and the inevitability of its appropriaton of *Bildungsroman* structures. It is as I have demonstrated a "simple" novel, even simplistic, but no less a complex cultural object. It is in many ways Waten's most ambitious novel but also the one for which he was "guaranteed" the least literary appreciation. We know enough of

Waten's literary and political culture to know that its single-mindedness is not the function of simple-mindedness, but an act of will, even we might say an historical necessity.

1. Judah Waten, *Time of Conflict* (Sydney: Australasian Book Society, 1961). Further references will appear in the text.

1. Ian Reid, *Fiction and the Great Depression: Australia and New Zealand 1930-1950* (Melbourne: Edward Arnold, 1979), pp.8-9.

1. Jack Beasley's two articles, "Fourth Anniversary of *Power Without Glory*" (April 1954) and "Incorrect Criticism of *Power Without Glory*" (April 1958), both from the *Communist Review*, are reprinted in his *Journal of an Era: Notes from the Red Letter Days* (Earlwood, NSW: Wedgetail Press, 1988), pp.29-39 (my emphases in quotations). Beasley's *Socialism and the Novel* (1957), reprinted in the same volume, also discusses the novel. The quotations are from the earliest essay, p.34, but Beasley's later qualifications do not affect my point.

1. Beasley, *The Rage for Life: The Work of Katharine Susannah Prichard* (Sydney: Current Book Distributors, 1964), p.54 (my emphasis). Prichard, *Winged Seeds* (1950; London: Virago, 1984).

1. Beasley, *The Rage for Life*, pp.60-63. Although his judgements do not represent Party policy and occasionally landed him in hot water, Beasley was the most consistent and considered of the communist critics in the fifties and sixties. See his retrospective piece concerning the Prichard book, "My Unilateral Debate: Katharine Susannah Prichard, Rebel Heroes and Matters Pertaining," *Australian Literary Studies* 11, 2 (October 1983), pp.246-55. Beasley was also ABS manager and editor during the production of *Time of Conflict* and held extended correspondence with Waten about the novel (see below). He is therefore a useful "benchmark" for my purposes for suggesting the reading formation to which Waten belonged — at least in part.

1. Waten, review of *Port of Call* by John Morrison, *Meanjin* 10, 2 (Winter 1951), p.193.

1. Beasley, "Questions of Australian Literature," *Communist Review* 217 (January 1960), p.32. Also in *Journal of an Era*, pp.78-79; and see comments in *Socialism and the Novel*, pp.40-41.

1. Beasley, "Questions of Australian Literature," p.33. Dorothy Hewett, *Bobbin Up* (1959; London: Virago, 1985).

1. Ralph de Boissiere, "On Socialist Realism," *Communist Review* 219 (March 1960), pp.124-25: *Bobbin Up* is described as "a novel about the working class written from the revolutionary working class point of view. This is the most important thing about it." Nellie is praised again, but the book is seen to be spoiled by "a host of secondary contradictions .... The various stages of lovemaking so persistently described strike the selfsame note again and again, when what is needed is chords and discords to make harmonies" (p.125). Jean Devanny wrote to Les Greenfield at the ABS, 2 November 1959, reporting on discussions she had conducted in Townsville on the novel: "The consensus of opinion was comendatory in respect of the surging vitality of the novel, the gripping picture it gives of aspects of Sydney life and the characterisation. Opposite views were expressed on the treatment of communists. Some considered that the book gave a true, un-idealistic picture of communists; others that it gave a true picture of some communists in that particluar environment.... The loose construction was recognised by all as due to inexperience. The aspect of the book deplored by all but one or two was the overstressing of the sex angle, and, as one out it, the insistence on `bottoms and bellies and bosoms.' This, it was considered, would tend to make it unpopular with that section of readers whose attention a book of this nature should be designed to reach and influence. This aspect, it was considered, had no political value in itself and detracted from the political value of the novel. Five outsiders approached by me for their opinion ... said they "liked it". In each case the sex angle was remembered, the politics scarcely mentioned.... To sum up, I myself have to accept that to influence the wide mass of the people politically, that is, to the left, sex crudities such as appear in *Bobbin Up* have no place." (ABS Records, Mitchell Library, ML

MSS 2297/3)

1. See David Carter, "`History Was on Our Side': Memoirs from the Australian Left," *Meanjin* 46, 1 (March 1987), pp.108-21.

1. ABS Records, ML MSS 2297/14: correspondence between Waten and Beasley between June and August 1961. Waten comments on the difficulties of trying "to recreate the thirties without falling into flat photographic ways" (14 August 1961).

1. Novels which tell variations of this story include Katharine Susannah Prichard's *Intimate Strangers* (1937), Leonard Mann's *The Go-Getter* (1942), M. Barnard Eldershaw's *Tomorrow and Tomorrow* (1947), Eric Lambert's *Twenty Thousand Thieves* (1952). See Ian Reid, *Fiction and the Great Depression*, pp.77-84 for an account of links between war and Depression in a range of Australian writers.

1. Susan McKernan, *A Question of Commitment: Australian Literature in the Twenty Years After the War* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), p.43.

1. Beasley, *Socialism and the Novel*, as reprinted in *Journal of an Era*, p.49.

1. ABS Records, ML MSS 2297/14, [April?] 1961.

1. Devanny to Beasley, ABS Records, ML MSS 2297/3, 22 October 1961: "In my opinion [*Time of Conflict*] ranks with *Yandy* and *The Hard Way* as a must for the ABS.... I believe my more sophisticated work appeals to a wider circle than Frank's or Judah's, to the `allies,' the farmers and urban middleclass. Though I must admit that workers too, in my experience, like their books to be infused with a certain glamor, using that word in its true, not bohemian sense." Devanney's *Cindie* appeared in 1949; the unpublished sequel was rejected by the ABS in 1958.

1. Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p.159.

1. Waten to Les Greenfield, ABS Records, ML MSS 2297/14, 24 May 1960. See note 70, Chapter 5. CAREFUL WILL NEED TO CHECK THIS AT LAST MINUTE

1. Waten to Beasley, ABS Records, ML MSS 2297/14, 28 April 1961.

1. See letters between Noel Counihan and Beasley, May-July 1961, ABS Records ML MSS 2297/14. The discussion centres on the central figure of the cover design. Beasley writes: "Judah's hero despite his bitter life experiences is a very warm and appealing fellow. I wonder if your figure just misses this characteristic. True enough, he's presenting an iron fist to the class enemy but at the same time he presents this front to every reader. It may be that the prizefighter in Mick tends to impinge on the revolutionary so giving the impression that militant workers and communists are all bashers.... It doesn't matter at all what the class enemy thinks about this but as you point out it does matter what our members and potential members think".

1. Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" trans. J.V. Harari, in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), pp.101-20.

1. Waten, "Three of Vance Palmer's," *Overland* 12 (Winter 1958), p.40.

1. Ross Chambers, *Story and Situation: Narrative Seduction and the Power of Fiction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp.29-35.

1. Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions: The Ideological Novel as a Literay Genre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p.27. Further references will appear in the text.

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"not capitalism" = *communism*: optimism self-possession	non-working class = *bourgeois values*: despair fatalism

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discipline	careerism
knowledge	doubt

This version has the advantage of producing communism as the "negation of the negation" as in Jameson's rendering of the semiotic square, *The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p.166. On the other hand, if we begin with the systemic binary opposition between "communism" (A) and "capitalism" (B) we then produce the list of "non-working class values" as not-A, and the list of positive values as not-B. Again the primary point might be the relative ease with which the novel lends itself to such an operation.

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i. Judah Waten, *Time of Conflict* (Sydney: Australasian Book Society, 1961). Further references will appear in the text.

ii. Ian Reid, *Fiction and the Great Depression: Australia and New Zealand 1930-1950* (Melbourne: Edward Arnold, 1979), pp.8-9.

iii. Jack Beasley's two articles, "Fourth Anniversary of *Power Without Glory*" (April 1954) and "Incorrect Criticism of *Power Without Glory*" (April 1958), both from the *Communist Review*, are reprinted in his *Journal of an Era: Notes from the Red Letter Days* (Earlwood, NSW: Wedgetail Press, 1988), pp.29-39 (my emphases in quotations). Beasley's *Socialism and the Novel* (1957), reprinted in the same volume, also discusses the novel. The quotations are from the earliest essay, p.34, but Beasley's later qualifications do not affect my point.

iv. Beasley, *The Rage for Life: The Work of Katharine Susannah Prichard* (Sydney: Current Book Distributors, 1964), p.54 (my emphasis). Prichard, *Winged Seeds* (1950; London: Virago, 1984).

v. Beasley, *The Rage for Life*, pp.60-63. Although his judgements do not represent Party policy and occasionally landed him in hot water, Beasley was the most consistent and considered of the communist critics in the fifties and sixties. See his retrospective piece concerning the Prichard book, "My Unilateral Debate: Katharine Susannah Prichard, Rebel Heroes and Matters Pertaining," *Australian Literary Studies* 11, 2 (October 1983), pp.246-55. Beasley was also ABS manager and editor during the production of *Time of Conflict* and held extended correspondence with Waten about the novel (see below). He is therefore a useful "benchmark" for my purposes for suggesting the reading formation to

which Waten belonged — at least in part.

vi. Waten, review of *Port of Call* by John Morrison, *Meanjin* 10, 2 (Winter 1951), p.193.

vii. Beasley, "Questions of Australian Literature," *Communist Review* 217 (January 1960), p.32. Also in *Journal of an Era*, pp.78-79; and see comments in *Socialism and the Novel*, pp.40-41.

viii. Beasley, "Questions of Australian Literature," p.33. Dorothy Hewett, *Bobbin Up* (1959; London: Virago, 1985).

ix. Ralph de Boissiere, "On Socialist Realism," *Communist Review* 219 (March 1960), pp.124-25: *Bobbin Up* is described as "a novel about the working class written from the revolutionary working class point of view. This is the most important thing about it." Nellie is praised again, but the book is seen to be spoiled by "a host of secondary contradictions .... The various stages of lovemaking so persistently described strike the selfsame note again and again, when what is needed is chords and discords to make harmonies" (p.125). Jean Devanny wrote to Les Greenfield at the ABS, 2 November 1959, reporting on discussions she had conducted in Townsville on the novel: "The consensus of opinion was comendatory in respect of the surging vitality of the novel, the gripping picture it gives of aspects of Sydney life and the characterisation. Opposite views were expressed on the treatment of communists. Some considered that the book gave a true, un-idealistic picture of communists; others that it gave a true picture of some communists in that particluar environment.... The loose construction was recognised by all as due to inexperience. The aspect of the book deplored by all but one or two was the overstressing of the sex angle, and, as one out it, the insistence on `bottoms and bellies and bosoms.' This, it was considered, would tend to make it unpopular with that section of readers whose attention a book of this nature should be designed to reach and influence. This aspect, it was considered, had no political value in itself and detracted from the political value of the novel. Five outsiders approached by me for their opinion ... said they "liked it". In each case the sex angle was remembered, the politics scarcely mentioned.... To sum up, I myself have to accept that to influence the wide mass of the people politically, that is, to the left, sex crudities such as appear in *Bobbin Up* have no place." (ABS Records, Mitchell Library, ML MSS 2297/3)

x. See David Carter, "`History Was on Our Side': Memoirs from the Australian Left," *Meanjin* 46, 1 (March 1987), pp.108-21.

xi. ABS Records, ML MSS 2297/14: correspondence between Waten and Beasley between June and August 1961. Waten comments on the difficulties of trying "to recreate the thirties without falling into flat photographic ways" (14 August 1961).

xii. Novels which tell variations of this story include Katharine Susannah Prichard's *Intimate Strangers* (1937), Leonard Mann's *The Go-Getter* (1942), M. Barnard Eldershaw's *Tomorrow and Tomorrow* (1947), Eric Lambert's *Twenty Thousand Thieves* (1952). See Ian Reid, *Fiction and the Great Depression*, pp.77-84 for an account of links between war and Depression in a range of Australian writers.

xiii. Susan McKernan, *A Question of Commitment: Australian Literature in the Twenty Years After the War* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), p.43.

xiv. Beasley, *Socialism and the Novel*, as reprinted in *Journal of an Era*, p.49.

xv. ABS Records, ML MSS 2297/14, [April?] 1961.

xvi. Devanny to Beasley, ABS Records, ML MSS 2297/3, 22 October 1961: "In my opinion [*Time of*

Conflict] ranks with *Yandy* and *The Hard Way* as a must for the ABS.... I believe my more sophisticated work appeals to a wider circle than Frank's or Judah's, to the `allies,' the farmers and urban middleclass. Though I must admit that workers too, in my experience, like their books to be infused with a certain glamor, using that word in its true, not bohemian sense." Devanney's *Cindie* appeared in 1949; the unpublished sequel was rejected by the ABS in 1958.

xvii. Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p.159.

xviii. Waten to Les Greenfield, ABS Records, ML MSS 2297/14, 24 May 1960. See note 70, Chapter 5. CAREFUL WILL NEED TO CHECK THIS AT LAST MINUTE

xix. Waten to Beasley, ABS Records, ML MSS 2297/14, 28 April 1961.

xx. See letters between Noel Counihan and Beasley, May-July 1961, ABS Records ML MSS 2297/14. The discussion centres on the central figure of the cover design. Beasley writes: "Judah's hero despite his bitter life experiences is a very warm and appealing fellow. I wonder if your figure just misses this characteristic. True enough, he's presenting an iron fist to the class enemy but at the same time he presents this front to every reader. It may be that the prizefighter in Mick tends to impinge on the revolutionary so giving the impression that militant workers and communists are all bashers.... It doesn't matter at all what the class enemy thinks about this but as you point out it does matter what our members and potential members think".

xxi. Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" trans. J.V. Harari, in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), pp.101-20.

xxii. Waten, "Three of Vance Palmer's," *Overland* 12 (Winter 1958), p.40.

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7

A Closed Book:
The Soviet Union and the Literary Witness

In the great enterprise of working directly for the establishment of the system of public good, the artists, the men of imagination, will lead the way. They will proclaim the future of the human race
(Henri Saint-Simon, On Social Organisation, 1825)

1. Towards the Fully Developed Man

From the 1920s to the 1960s writers from throughout the western world produced many hundreds of books about the Soviet Union. Among these, works by literary figures as visitors to the USSR can be seen to constitute a distinct genre: the journey-narrative of the literary witness. One can find Australian examples of this genre in all its various phases. Those published in book form--and the form of book publication is an important aspect of the authority which the literary witness carries--include Katharine Susannah Prichard's *The Real Russia* (), Frank Hardy's *Journey Into the Future* (1952), Manning Clark's *Meeting Soviet Man* (1960), Dymphna Cusack's *Holidays Among the Russians* (1964) and Judah Waten's *From Odessa to Odessa: The Journey of an Australian Writer* (1969).

Waten's book is the last in the series, not only chronologically, but also, as I will show in this chapter, because the genre could scarcely survive the course of events within the USSR and the communist world, and within the cold-war west, in the 1950s and 1960s.[1] The relationship between writing as a communist and writing as an 'author' becomes fraught with conflict. In terms of narrative and argument, what was almost inevitable in the 1930s and still possible in the 1950s--for communists but not only for communists-- becomes virtually unsayable, even for communists, by the late 1960s. But the genre continues to exercise its limits and pressures on what gets written, and it can be discovered as both a positive and a negative presence in *From Odessa to Odessa*.

Each of the different elements of our brief generic definition above--the journey-narrative of the literary witness--needs further elaboration. It is necessary to see the difference that it makes that these are books structured around journey narratives; that the narrator was *there* as a

witness; and that the author is already an author, already a recognised literary figure or a figure of comparable cultural authority (a figure established by both intertextual and circumtextual framing). The extension to the figure of the author/culture critic enables us to make proper connections between the writings of, say, novelists and those of other 'marginal' literary figures: critics, certain academics, and cultured/cultural individuals such as the famous Red Dean of Canterbury, Dr Hewlett Johnson.[2]

In other words these authors' accounts of the Soviet Union are, in significant ways, unlike "straightforward", partisan or scholarly political accounts and general histories. Although each example will become political and historical description or argument at different points in the text, more appropriate generic co-ordinates are those of travel writing, autobiography/memoir, and the literary utopia. The point of reference to the first two of these terms should be evident, although it might be added that their presence in the text is likely to be in inverse proportion to the text's political interest; also that the element of autobiography, while generally muted or dispersed, is essential to the construction of the authoritative literary witness. The self reflecting on itself is rarely the centre of attention; but the figure of the traveller-narrator (and author) is continually present as the reader's companion on the journey.

The reference to the literary utopia is perhaps less self-evident, or, at least, is capable of greater misunderstanding. We might expect that many accounts of the Soviet Union are, in some general sense of the term, utopian or dystopian (that is, an inversion of the utopia, a picture of the perfectly bad society). But the author's accounts with which I'm concerned are utopian in ways that can be defined more specifically. I want, then, to use the category "utopian", not in the common vague or merely dismissive sense, but in precise generic and philosophical terms ("philosophical" rather than "ideological" because what I want to define is more limited in its effects than the latter term suggests, and "portable" across a number of ideological domains).

At the philosophical level we can distinguish between two modern forms of utopianism, programmatic and aesthetic.[3] The former proposes the total transformation of society on the basis, typically, of a single foundational principle which grounds a philosophical system or programme (Fourier's Bellamy's). To change contemporary society is to change its *whole* organisation on the basis of an unsound principle to its whole reorganisation on the basis of the

new principle--and all else follows, from revised architecture and the design of social space to the reformulaton of human capacities. The utopian programme thus typically involves the more or less detailed description of new disciplinary and administrative procedures, and new forms of sociability between citizens. Its central figure can be thought of as the totally planned city.

Aesthetic utopianism, on the other hand, has as its central figure the completely developed personality. From Schiller to William Morris, aesthetic utopianism is expressed through a *dialectical* model in which contemporary society is described--dramatised rather--in terms of the division, fragmentation or alienation of human attributes and social processes. The progress of civilisation, industrialisation or capitalism has been achieved at this cost: the divorce of the sensuous and rational capacities, of perception from abstraction; of work from pleasure or production from true needs; of the individual from society. This binary division within the individual and within society produces, as its utopian 'synthesis on a higher plane', characteristic resolutions in the realm of culture--the 'aesthetic' personality--or in the realm of labour--communally organised and non-alienated modes of production. The differences between these two forms of resolution are more apparent than real. The aesthetic personality is a pre-condition for the remaking of society, above all in its modes of work and the relation of individual to social whole; and the communal reorganisation of society, in turn, is centrally about the aestheticisation of labour and the labourer, reconciliation of 'hand' and 'brain', work and pleasure, necessity and freedom. It is no accident that aesthetic utopianism in particular is associated with the figure of the 'author' or the culture critic, and with the work of art.

Having drawn the distinction, we can note certain shared characteristics across both these modes of utopian thought. Both favour collective forms of social organisation, although these are certainly not always socialist. They are, however, always more than programmes for economic or political reorganisation: there is always an ethical dimension, a final outcome in terms of the remaking of the individual. This in turn is related to their characteristic 'socialisation of politics' in models of wholly self-governing communities or purely administrative-technological regimes. Politics is dissolved into administration or culture as a defining characteristic of the completely developed or wholly transformed society. But what we also find in the utopian proposals--indeed as a pre-condition--is that this social revolution has been achieved without (political)

revolutionary activity but instead through education, reason, charity. One surprising feature of authors' accounts of the Soviet Union is the degree to which the latter kind of revolution is also absent from their narratives.

Both programmatic and aesthetic modes of utopianism will be discovered in our authors' journey-narratives. In addition, the philosophical framework has its consequences at the level of narrative form and structure, for our purposes in the utopian fiction, the utopian novel. There is a cluster of generic markers which can be drawn together to define the field of the literary utopia, to trace the lines of difference and similarity between the utopia and its 'others'--the realist novel, the political programme, the idyll, the pastoral. We can establish the utopian terrain and the place of authors' accounts of the Soviet Union within it by reference to some of the most common of these generic features.

First, the journey structure itself, the journey to another place or another time. The latter is most common in modern utopian fictions because of their emphasis on the possibilities of historical change, and we will see that the 'non-fictional' journey to the USSR is a journey to another place which nevertheless functions as if it were a journey into the future. In Raymond Williams's terms, the utopia represents 'our familiar country transformed...'[4]. The function of the traveller, the individual from 'our familiar world' who undertakes the journey, is to bear witness to the transformations and to return to the familiar world embodying the wisdom gained on the journey.

The narration of the utopian novel more often than not will thus be first-person. The narrator-traveller represents the space of the reader in the text, enacting a journey from disbelief to resistance to curiosity to conviction and desire. The return to the "here and now" of the text acts as a kind of exit procedure for the reader, a readjustment of the text's relations to fiction and reality which shifts the site of desire to the immediate world or at least to the world of the reader's own person.

The journey, then, is constructed in terms of three phases: the point of entry or journey from the familiar world, the journey around the other/transformed world, and the journey back to the familiar world (which can never look the same again). The first and last of these phases are characteristically brief, even "weak" structurally--redundant in relation to the text's political

interest but not to its effectivity in relation to the reader. The middle phase is of course the most important and elaborated. Indeed its structure is designed to effect or at least to represent a kind of exhaustiveness: to show us, to bear witness, that the new society has been transformed in every single aspect of its organisation and daily administration. The textual strategies for this operation which work in part to define the genre of the literary utopia involve, first, kinds of panorama effect, a quasi-rational progression from one sphere of social life to another (from factory to collective farm to shop, from nursery to school to Cultural Centre, and so on); second, extended dialogue or question and answer sessions, in which a "delineator" figure, typically, explains the essential *simplicity* of rational and communal solutions to what would seem otherwise to be bafflingly complex social problems; and third, a pattern of inversion in which the values of the contemporary world are rigourously over-turned, turned into their opposites, as the journey progresses.

These strategies bear the main burden of the utopian--or, for that matter, the dystopian--fiction's didactic purposes; and, together with the journey structure, they are the textual attributes that we find repeated in the various authors' accounts of the Soviet Union especially in the genre's earlier phases. The recurrence of these features is of course not accidental. They are, in the first place, one expression of what we properly mean by the term "utopian"--as suggested above, not any and every notion of a "better life" but specifically those programmes or models for the complete re-making of social and individual life in which the foundational principles of the social organisation, at once ethical and administrative (rationality, communality, etc), are manifested in every sphere of social life from the production and distribution of goods to the design of domestic space to the conduct of individual lives. (If utopias often risk absurdity it is because of their attention to banal detail as much as their grandiose schema.)

The complete development or total transformation of social relations *is*, at one and the same time, the complete development of the individual. This is the key utopian figure, one which can also be expressed in terms of an achieved harmony or synthesis of the social and individual spheres in the communityor collective. Zhdanov's description of writers as 'engineers of the human soul' is not (only) a barbaric invention of Stalinism but an extension of a utopian tradition, an ethical discourse that has its origins in liberalism.

To look more directly at authors' accounts of the Soviet Union, we can trace a literary tradition back from, say, Hewlett Johnson's *The Socialist Sixth of the World* (1939) or Katharine Prichard's *The Real Russia* to the late-nineteenth century writings of William Morris and Edward Bellamy.[5] The socialist (and rationalist and evolutionary) arguments of these earlier utopian writers and the textual organisation of their fictions act as a template for the later socialist travellers/writers, both at a philosophical-political and at a narrative level. As in any definition of a tradition or genre we are working as much in terms of the definition of difference as of repetition. For one thing, the works of Johnson and Prichard must insist upon their "factuality": must, in other words, distinguish themselves from the utopian *fictions* of their predecessors. Engels's *Socialism: Scientific and Utopian* () helped to make this obligatory, and it is one the key documents in Prichard's account of her own communism.[6] Further, the advent and, very importantly, the "successful" continuation of the revolution in the USSR makes the fiction obselete (and it will recur at first only in the dystopian gesture). At the same time, in the very process of establishing its difference as fact rather than fiction, the author's account of the Soviet Union is likely to repeat the kind of inversion of perspective characteristic of literary utopias, wherein the capitalist here and now is made to look "unreal" from the perspective of the utopian future or other place. Impossible ideals are revealed as simple and *practical*, the fantastic is revealed as everyday, and the banal is endlessly remarkable--the development of a tractor, domestic architecture, lighting in a laboratory, factory outputs, are all witnessed as miracles ("Foreign Writers Visit Coke Plant", from Prichard's book, is an indicative chapter title). In the case of the Dean of Canterbury, the inversion consists of showing that it is *Soviet* society which truly embodies the ethics of Christianity.

To attest to the factual nature of social transformation is, of course, one function of the first-person narrator-traveller: "facts" become not just balance sheets or production levels (though the books are full of these) but evidence of the "lived" or, we might say, "lived" evidence. Its sphere is that of everyday life rather than of political power or economic organisation; more accurately, as part of the utopian moment, politics and economics are dissolved into everyday life, are discovered everywhere, transformed into what we might best call "culture". The figure who bears witness to these transformations in the realm of culture is

closely tied to the figure of the *author*.

Perhaps the neatest statement of the literary witness genre is the memorable phrase from Lincoln Steffens on his return from the Soviet Union: 'I have seen the future and it works!'[7] The sentence foregrounds the presence of the witness and the act of witnessing. It sums up the journey and the return. It translates a journey to another place into a journey into the future, and it enacts an inversion of the impossible and the banal real: understatement becomes overstatement or vice versa ('...it works').

"I was there", "I saw", "I would not otherwise have believed": these are the recurrent modes of the author's account of the Soviet Union. Observation, theory, facts and figures are *embodied* by the literary witness: he or she returns bearing what is at once experience, knowledge and vision and the passage to publication in book form as it were completes the author's journey. Indeed, the journey in one sense has taken place only for the sake of the book--it is "pre-textualised", the journey's pre-text as well as its text. The actual journeys are in many ways book-like in their organisation. They are structured almost into chapters, each coinciding with a sphere of social life, and each place visited, each character encountered, is designed to be "typical" in the fullest socialist realist sense of the term. Which is to say that the Soviet authorities shared the utopian agenda of the authors. My argument, though, is not one which concerns utopian elements in Soviet politics, administration or theory but rather utopianism in the discourse which 'sees' and organises perceptions of the Soviet Union into textual form. It was always open to see the utopianism of the USSR in non-utopian (and non-dystopian) terms.

How are the various utopian strategies present, together with 'travel' and autobiographical dimensions, in the works of Hewlett Johnson and Katharine Prichard? We can take their two texts as representative of the first, 1930s-1940s, phase of the genre I am describing. The pairing is useful because of the differences in structure and provenance: one book by a communist, one not; one Australian, one not; one author 'literary', one not. We can begin with Hewlett Johnson's *The Socialist Sixth* although it appeared later than Prichard's book, first because it works as a kind of limit case for our genre, and second because it is likely that Johnson's book was the more influential in Australia including among Australian communists.

The Socialist Sixth is not structured around the journey in the manner I have suggested

above. Its historical moment is the period of appeasement; the German-Soviet non-agression pact; the declaration of war; the invasion of the Soviet Union (in successive editions). As such, Johnson's account of the Soviet Union demands a long and broad historical perspective--and relatively slight *narrative* organisation--which differentiates the text from others constituting the genre. Nevertheless the aim of the book, stated in the Dean's own words, "to explain in simple non-technical terms a great experiment in a new order of society"[8], connects it to our central concerns. In particular, the authority of the author as witness is what makes the phrase "simple non-technical" a *positive* one in the sentence just quoted.

The journey element is present nevertheless in *The Socialist Sixth* though it is subordinate to the "objectivity" of the larger historical and social perspective. It emerges when the text shifts from what we might call an economic to an ethical focus (though, as suggested earlier, the whole point of the text in a sense is to say that the two are scarcely separable):

> What impressed me most in Soviet Russia was not her factories and material statistics, but her children.
>
> It was no happy moment for an Englishman, on returning to London, to contrast the physical, mental, or spiritual opportunities of English children with those of the Soviet Union. I hardly recall, during a journey through five Soviet Republics and several great Soviet towns, having seen a really hungry or under-nourished child; and my wanderings by myself, of many long hours on many occasions and entirely alone, took me into all parts of the various towns and villages and at all hours of day and night. There is, of course, no need for hunger in a land where unemployment has ceased, where wages rise and cost (sic) of commodities falls.[9]

There is also a sense in which we can say that the larger historical perspective is itself subordinate to an *autobiographical* frame, an autobiography that establishes Johnson's author-ity to narrate. The book begins with a section entitled "Excursus and Autobiography" which takes us through the author's "bourgeois boyhood", family life, formal education, "apprenticeship to life", and experience of living condtions for workers in industrial society. (More precisely, it begins, in the various editions, by an array of "autobiographical" framings: a Foreword, a Preface, a Message--and these are completed by an Epilogue.) The autobiography is progressively interleaved with an account of the wrongs of capitalism:

> the competitive system of every man for himself...with the profit-making motive as the chief incentive; men being used as means not end...
>
> Such is the moral aspect of contemporary economic society. Its scientific aspect is the wholly irrational wastage of wealth, the artificially induced shortage, the poverty amidst plenty, which is as patently foolish as it is grossly immoral. Frustation of science is the counterpart of denial of morals.[10]

This is a classic expression of the thirties liberal analysis of contemporary capitalist society, that which informed both the utopian projections of H.G.Wells, for example, *and* the dystopian projections of Aldous Huxley. What the autobiographical excursus adds is the authority of personal experience; but more than that, the authority of the *author* in the fullest sense of the term.

This is an ethical authority, located as it were in the whole person of the author rather than in profession, expertise or interest. The author is the "specialist non-specialist", a figure of cultural synthesis (Johnson interestingly took a science degree and worked as an engineer before being ordained) and of mediation between the immediate realms of everyday life and the abstract realms of society, politics or aesthetics. The figure of the author is itself a utopian one, a figure of the synthesis of sensuous and rational capacities, of work and pleasure; and it is this position, 'above' the divisions of contemporary society, that gives the author the authority to comment on that society--and to envision the future.

Such is the basis of the figure of the author as a privileged observer or rather a "seer": the "culture critic", the witness, the bearer of wisdom. However modestly, it is the presence of this figure which *enables* authors' accounts of the Soviet Union: enables them to range across the whole of social life from its most technical to its most domestic detail, to take all society as if it were culture, and to speak of new worlds or a "new order of society". In crude, but perhaps revealing terms, it is what enables these travellers rather than others to think that they have got something interesting to say--and indeed our interest in the text is a function of precisely the same figure.

We might characterise the figure of Johnson's narrator in *The Socialist Sixth* as that of "the clergyman who has *lived*"--the status of clergyman as presented here operates in much the same way as literary reputations or careers can operate to establish the narrator as a figure of "cultural" authority (a "mere" clergyman, on the other hand, would scarcely command this kind of authority, would be "author-ised" to speak only on a narrow range of matters). This narrator-figure is closely connected to the utopian framework of the book, centrally to the synthesis of economic and ethical imperatives which it argues. For example, the journey structure of the utopian fiction is echoed in the text's movement from autobiography and its description of

capitalist society (its here and now), through its account of the Soviet Union, to its "return" which here takes the form of an argument about the essential Christianity of communist principles. Moreover, the text is organised dialectically. The description of the Soviet Union in this schema is based upon a series of categorical oppositions: competition vs. co-operation, individualism vs. community, disorder vs. planning, frustration vs. creativity, and so on. Soviet society can thus be represented in a series of inversions of the principles or practices of contemporary capitalism; and in a series of syntheses which fuse those principles and practices and capacities which are otherwise antithetical under capitalism (production and distribution, self and community, necessity and desire, work and play, ends and means, society and culture...):

> In opposition to this [capitalist] view of the organisation of economic life is that of the Soviet Union, where co-operation replaces competitive chaos and a Plan succeeds the riot of disorder... The community rather than the self-seeking individual stands in the centre of the picture. The welfare of the whole and of each individual within it replaces, as the ruling factor, the welfare of a select class or classes. The elimination of the profit-seeking motive makes room for the higher motive of service. The rational organisation of production and distribution of wealth welcomes science as an ally...
>
> A new attitude towards human life is the natural counterpart of the new economic morality. Individuals, all individuals, become ends as well as means. The development of the human potentialities of each individual receives fullest opportunity...The mass of the people are inspired to play a creative role in life, and culture receives a fresh stimulation...[T]he removal of economic shortage, and the substitution of plan for chaos, promise to open up new avenues of freedom, liberty, and creative personality.[11]

The structure, the progression, of the book enacts the passage from economics to ethics suggested above, from the rational organisation of production to creative personality. Some chapter titles cited in order will indicate this briefly: The Drama of Socialist Planning, The Summons to Science, Harnessing the Rivers, Socialist Harvests, The Moral Results of Socialist Planned Production, The New Womanhood, and, ultimately, *Towards the Fully Developed Man*. As is characteristic both of utopias and of authors' accounts of the Soviet Union, politics scarcely features. It is replaced by administration and morality, that is, by regulation and self-regulation.

As in utopian fictions the transformed social order is thus present not merely in reformed economic or political organisation but in new moral, "spiritual", and indeed physical attributes and capacities *within* each individual and in the dailiness of their lives: labour becomes creative labour, education becomes "polytechnisation", leisure becomes culture. Indeed "culture" supplies the word to describe the proper sphere of the Fully Developed Man. The chapter bearing that title begins with the story of book publishing, wide-reading, literary circles and so on which is so

crucial a part of every author's account of the Soviet Union. But "culture" in such accounts can never mean just 'learning and the arts'. It means, rather, the fusion of art and "society", art and life, the aesthetic re-making of individuals:

> There is one word more than all others on the lips of Soviet people. It is the word "culture". It covers all that is here meant by the same word, and much more. It is uncultured, for instance, to walk into a house with dirty boots, to neglect to brush one's teeth or wash behind one's ears. It is uncultured to neglect books and art or ignore the achievements of science.
>
> If we are apt to smile indulgently at the strain that is put on so small a word, we might reflect on our own use of it... We speak of men of culture. We speak of the cultured classes. The Soviet people limit neither the word nor the thing for which it stands... They seek a wholly cultured people...[12]

The utopian journey describes an inversion of habitual expectations and norms which in turn, in the figure of its narrator, mimes the reader's conversion. The writer-traveller to the USSR is more likely to be "already converted"--not the innocent, resistant naif but a cultural figure with a prior, *known* interest in the journey. Typically, though, the author's communist or socialist sympathies are invisible in the narrative or at most implicit in the narrator-character he or she employs. In *The Socialist Sixth*, Johnson's socialist sympathies are made explicit in the opening autobiographical excursus, explicit as 'autobiographical' rather than 'political', but they remain buried throughout the rest of the text, that is, throughout its descriptions of the Soviet Union. In *The Real Russia*, Katharine Prichard's communism does not figure as part of an argument for communism. The "committed" writer-traveller, as presented in the text, is in fact rather more like the utopian traveller than we might have expected: a kind of naive or rather a "natural" observer.

To make the same point in terms already introduced in this chapter, he or she travels (writes) as an author rather than as a communist--that is, as an individidual in the heightened sense of the term that the notion of authorship entails. This is, of course, a rhetorical strategy, commonly a semi-effacement of the text's didactic purposes which shares something with the literary utopia--its emplotment of the didactic occasion--and something with realist fiction--its 'naturalisation' of plot to experience. The central category of these texts, their threshold of authenticity as it were, is indeed that of "experience" rather than theory or expertise. This is one reason why they are constantly returning from the "colossal scale" of the socialist experiment to the intimate sphere of everyday life and to the (miraculous) banal, the two 'ends' of a scale mediated by the cultural. Experience belongs to an ethical scale which is "generalised" into the

realm of culture.

By the time *The Real Russia* appeared, Katharine Susannah Prichard had already published six novels, including *Working Bullocks* and *Coonardoo*, plus collections of short stories and verse. Her literary reputation as a *contemporary* Australian author was thus as established as any--perhaps alongside that of Henry Handel Richardson--in the early decades of the century. On the first page of *The Real Russia*, without other introduction than her name on the cover, Prichard signs herself and in a sense recreates herself as an author:

> I want to write...in splashes of colour, gouts of phrases as Walt Whitman would have, or Mayakovski: paint...after the manner of the French symbolists, images seething and swarming over each other, as they lie in my mind.[13]

In the book's panoramic opening chapter, the writer and the traveller become one. After three pages of "images seething and swarming" the focus shifts abruptly to the conventional opening of the author's account of the Soviet Union ("The `Jan Rudzutak' left London for Leningrad on a murky afternoon in July..."). It is worth pausing briefly to ask why these books about the Soviet Union are so insistent at including the banal and accidental details of their voyaging. The answer lies, I think, in the role of the journey structure: the moment of departure is signalled as the moment of the text's departure for the 'other' place, and it thus demands a return. Its framing function is both to connect the journey (into the future) with the familiar world and also to mark it off as unique. At the same time as the writer becomes the traveller in Prichard's text she is distinguished from the mere traveller, the tourist (p.6).

In its foregrounding of the journey structure and the narrator-as-author Prichard's book is much closer than Hewlett Johnson's to the generic model sketched earlier. It is largely without the latter's historical and international political dimension. Its moment, in other words, is precisely the individual journey (of the literary witness). The structure of the text is governed by the logic of the journey except that it ends abruptly, its return left "outside" the text; but what might appear to be the randomness of travelling is in turn governed by the logic of the "typical" and by what I am calling a utopian logic.

As in the literary utopia, in *The Real Russia* the traveller tours the new society which is also, potentially, our present society transformed. She is present successively at centres of production and distribution, of education and culture, of public and domestic life. Every

discursus is governed by an "I saw..." or "I heard..." in the lengthy discussions and personal testimonies which are transcribed in the text.

The utopian themes of *The Real Russia* are present in its revelation of the application of science to everyday life; the convergence of "cultural development" and "industrial production" (17) or of education and work (even sport and work, 12); the planning and construction of new cities and collective farms; the principle of social *visibility* governing public and domestic life; and, as the point of all of these, the 'production' of a new kind of person:

> This way everybody has of addressing a child as "comrade" has its subtle effect in the relationship between grown-ups and children, and is one of the reasons, perhaps, why Russian children are such natural and fearless little creatures.
>
> The general attitude towards mothers and children is a reflection of Soviet administration in every department...
>
> "Life is different now. We [women] are happy. We dance, we sing, we play. We have music. Is that not happiness? Is it not freedom?"
>
> It is difficult to give any idea of the psychological changes brought about already by the new social and economic conditions in Russia...
>
> Through the lives of individuals, one caught a reflection of the life of the comunity; the lives of individuals taken, not as isolated examples, but to compare and assess values.[14]

As with Hewlett Johnson, citing chapter headings in the order in which they appear in the text reveals a utopian agenda in the apparently random progression of the journey, a movement from production to culture, from economics to ethics: Collective Farm Sketches, A Five-Year-Old City--How it Grew--and Storms on its Way, Iron Flows from the Furnace, Comrade Baby and his Mother Have Precedence, Sport in the Soviet Union, Every Day Life. How it Goes in the Soviet Union, Literary Culture in the Soviet Union, A Soviet Factory Celebrates Opening of a New Unit (this is a 'cultural' occasion), Domestic Happiness the Rule Despite Easy Divorce... The aspect these chapter headings have resembling newspaper headlines is more than coincidental--this is 'news', and no longer news from nowhere.

As in the nineteenth-century utopian fictions, the new order of social and personal relations is revealed in felicitous administration, and new institutions with new, 'stately' titles and stately architecture: the school on the model of a Greek temple (p.8), the Park of Culture and Rest, Stalinsk, the 'prophylactorium'. Things are not only more efficient but also more beautiful; the machine is also a work of art. And the new order is ultimately revealed in the new, "stately" bodies of Soviet citizens. The keynotes are seriousness and gaiety at once:

> Thousands of boys and girls, young men and young women, marched through Moscow to the Red

> Square one day last summer.... They swung along, headed by their standard bearers carrying the scarlet plush and gilt fronged banners won on previous occasions--swimmers in their brief suits, striding out with bare brown limbs...physical culture classes from all the factories, legions of full-bosomed bare-legged girls in white blouses and dark blue shorts. Singing and swinging their bare arms and legs in unison, they strode. A living demonstration of the vigour and beauty of working-class youth in the Soviet Union.
>
> ...[U]ndoubtedly this generation will surpass all others in fitness and physical beauty.[15]

There are traces here of the aesthetic of 'liberated creative energy' and the aestheticisation of politics described in chapter one. The latter effect can now reappear as a utopian characteristic.

2. Journey into the Cold War

This utopian argument, centred in the simultaneous socialisation of politics and aestheticisation of society, remained an option, an almost irresistible option for literary travellers to the Soviet Union throughout the 1930s and into the years of the Second World War (at least, after the Nazi invasion of the USSR in June 1941). However, after the war and throughout the years of the cold war, the options were reordered even, and in some ways especially, for communists and supporters of the Soviet Union. Two things change I think. First, the sheer amount of damage sustained by the USSR during the war, and then, perhaps more importantly, the politics of the cold war, have the tendency to break the nexus between 'culture' and 'politics' in the way that the Soviet Union is perceived and defended. There is an argument in support of the USSR from culture and an argument from politics but the connections are no longer necessary or absolute. Second, the Soviet Union no longer functioned so readily as a utopian paradigm, as the other of the writer's own contemporary society or as its future. To defend the Soviet Union as an independent nation that deserved to survive on its own terms or as peace-loving and resistant to American aggression, was not necessarily to be launched on the utopian trajectory.

There might also be an argument that the genre could not survive its own repetitions, not simply in a broad formalist sense, but because of the specific tasks it performed in these texts, the journey narratives of the literary witness. Perhaps there was a limit to how often and for how long the utopian dialectic of the texts could be repeated and its resolutions announced or predicted--it was typically a once-for-all synthesis--without the authority of the literary witness being undermined. There could continue to be *communist* arguments pointing in the utopian direction but these were at best on the margins of the literary field, with the partial exception of

Frank Hardy's *Journey Into the Future* (1952) discussed below.

On the other hand, in turning a socialist tradition into 'news' the texts of the thirties and forties were powerful enough to return, in later works, as both positive and negative models. The utopian ground had still to be negiotiated; it could still provide one way of representing the Soviet 'social experiment' even if it no longer provided an exhaustive textual dialectic. There are two rather isolated Australian examples of the genre, one from the early 1950s--Hardy's book just mentioned--and one from 1960--Manning Clark's *Meeting Soviet Man*--which illustrate both the persistence and the transformations of the genre. We can approach them via a brief glance at two 'marginal' texts from the 1940s to suggest some of the ways in which the utopian option was or was not possible in Australia during this transitional period.

In November 1941, five months after the invasion of the USSR, the NSW Aid Russia Committee held a one-day conference in Sydney, the 'Aid Russia Cultural Conference,' talks from which were published as *Soviet Culture* in 1942. The text is clearly very different from the single-author journey narrative, although five of the twelve speakers are indeed 'returned travellers'. Nevertheless it bears comparison with the works already discussed because of the notion of 'culture' through which the whole project is conceived.

The distribution of speakers is revealing: a 'disproportionate' number of literary figures (three--Prichard, Miles Franklin, Frank Dalby Davison), supported by individual speakers on music, ballet, art and architecture, *together with* speakers on medicine (two), science (one), and education (two).[16] The notion of culture, in other words, while privileging the 'high arts,' goes beyond them to embrace something like the whole of life; and yet the predominance of the literary tells us something of the limits, and something of the utopianism, of the conception of that 'whole of life'. The three literary papers come last and function as a general and inclusive discourse enveloping the specialist discourses which precede them; Franklin and Davison at least take upon themselves this generalising role, speaking of *culture* on the basis of their *literary* authority. Davison in fact criticises the formula of the conference as being organised 'as if aesthetic culture was the whole of culture...a cocktail of the arts, with a dash of science.'[17] His reformulation of culture, however, can be understood as already built-in to the project of the conference:

> More and more it is driven home to me that in these times the writer who is content to be a mere entertainer--even on a high aesthetic plane--is, as a social figure, on about the same level of importance as the performing poodle at the Tivoli.... Similarly, the scientist who is content merely to carry out his work, without stopping to ask himself, 'To what effect, for good or ill among men, is my work being applied?' is no more than a ditch digger with a diploma in his pocket. It is only when the artist and the scientist straighten their backs and look around them and try to determine where they stand in relation to humanity, and to have a say in what shall be the ultimate application of their labour, that they cease respectively to be an unthinking poodle and a heedless diger of ditches.
>
> .... In my view neither art nor science is the pinnacle of culture. Culture embraces all that differentiates us from the lower forms of conscious life: and at the very peak stands politics.... Politics concerns itself with the great problem of how to live together--the great question facing mankind to-day.... [T]he distressing state the world is in to-day is the result of man's technical achievements having outrun his political development. At its best politics embodies both art and science. It is a creative activity, working upon knowledge to produce a habitable future.[18]

Davison's paper is explicitly an argument for 'political understanding,' and includes a plea for the lifting of censorship restrictions on 'the more profound works dealing with [Russia's] political and economic foundations' and for the lifting of the ban on the CPA. The analysis is utopian nevertheless in its identification of politics with culture and, above all, with culture perceived as the synthesis on a higher plane of art and science.

Soviet Culture is in fact a revealing collection of views on the Soviet Union divided between those which do and those which do not organise their understandings around utopian figures. But it is something like Davison's notion of culture which gives the conference and the publication their coherence, and which is the primary mode for conjuring into being the presence of the Soviet Union (it is no accident that Hewlett Johnson is cited a number of times[19]). The individual chapters repeat in miniature the 'panoramic' logic of the journey narratives described earlier, moving from sphere to sphere of social life, from administration (central planning) to the domestic and from prohylactoria to polytechnicisation, focussing on education, science and health, and *children*. Focussing, in short, on the remaking of individuals in the socialisation of politics and the extension of the realm of 'culture'. A brief series of quotations from different papers can make the point: 'the principal object and duty of a Government should be to change drastically the human nature with which it dealt'; 'science [is] an integral part of a planned and orderly society'; 'Education in the SU aimed to make this cultural wealth available to all citizens...and at the same time to produce a new type of human being--social and co-operative instead of acquisitive and individualistic'; 'The old conception of a self-contained architectural unit unrelated to the city as a whole is replaced by the idea of the group merging into a general

plan. Soviet architects are faced with the problem of planning, not individual buildings, but a whole system of ensembles, connected by huge open spaces and embankments'; and Miles Franklin:

> Culture...is a state of gracious living which comes from the nurture and appreciation of all that is finest in politics and science, as well as in the arts and handicrafts....
>
> In the immediate to-morrow culture may not be able to re-establish itself unless it connotes the brotherhood of man...
>
> All cultures grow from experiments in living. Of modern cultures the most consciously and comprehensively planned is that of the USSR. It is the greatest in the numbers it affects and the widest in operation at present in the practical demonstration of egalitarianism as it is designed to embrace not only the workers but women, and it is giving the child a position it never before has had...[20]

As with Prichard in *The Real Russia*, programmatic utopian elements are worked into an aesthetic resolution and vice versa. The representation of the Soviet Union mobilises a utopian notion of culture; culture in turn mobilises a utopian representation of the Soviet Union.

In 1949, at the height of the first phase of the cold war, we can find evidence that when a different kind of political response is called for the category of culture is disaggregated and shrinks back to the discrete realms of the arts, leisure and education. Perhaps it is that the *dystopian* critiques which characterise attacks on the Soviet Union in terms of the cold war polarisation between 'freedom' and 'totalitarianism' do not allow a utopian response. Such polarisations also complicate the position of the author: the grounds of cultural authority are themselves under attack, especially in the claim to speak of 'freedom' and to envision social change.

1949 saw the publication of *Report on the Soviet Union*, a booklet which printed the text of a speech by John Rodgers, President of Australia-Soviet House in Melbourne, CPA member, and a prominent activist in the Australian Peace Council (which in 1950 would invite Hewlett Johnson to its Melbourne Peace Congress[21]). The text situates itself in relation to attacks from conservatice politicians and the daily press on the Soviet Union as authoritarian and as a war-threat. Its tactic in response is to outline the state of living conditions, work conditions, religion, culture, government and the individual as observed by Rodgers on a recent trip to Eastern Europe. What is noteworthy for our purposes is the *absence* of utopian figures in the text despite the possibilities that present themselves. What we have instead is a positive but, on the whole, modest account of social, political and industrial improvements in a range of discrete areas.

I have already indicated a number of reasons for the changes in representations of the Soviet Union, all aspects of cold war political attacks occurring largely in the mode of a dystopian critique. In addition, we can note a shift of axis in comparisons between the USSR and the west, from 'capitalism-socialism' to 'war-peace,' which further displaces the utopian option. In this specific case, it is also significant that Rodgers, though a traveller-observer in his text, falls far short of the status of the literary witness. The journey element is scarcely a structural feature of the text; and Rodgers is not present(ed) as an 'author,' either textually or through the circumtextual framing of his signature.[22]

I have worked through this otherwise ephemeral text, not only because it shows certain important historical changes, but also because it represents another limit case against which, this time, we can read Frank Hardy's *Journey Into the Future*. Hardy's work shows the effects of the same set of constraints on the utopian option as we have just described and yet, as its title indicates, it is a remarkable reworking--and repetition--of the generic features of earlier literary witness books.

Journey Into the Future was published in 1952 by the Australasian Book Society; a controversial decision orchestrated by the Communist Party via the Realist Writers' Group, which led to the resignation of the Society's selection panel of non-Communist literary figures, Leonard Mann, Alan Marshall, and A. A. Phillips. This sequence of actions reveals a great deal about the overlaps, but also the clear dividing lines, in the late-forties and early fifties between liberal, 'radical nationalist and communist positions in relation to literature, the national culture, and the sphere of operation of literary institutions.[23] For present purposes though our focus will be on the relations between utopian and 'non-utopian' (we might almost say 'political') elements in Hardy's text. Nevertheless the overlaps and divisions across the categories of literature, nationalism and communism will emerge as central to the analysis.

The utopian credentials of *Journey Into the Future* are, of course, boldly advertised in its title, drawn from Lincoln Steffens's famous quotation discussed above which is also used as an epigraph to Hardy's book. We could also assemble a telling array of quotations in order to indicate utopian themes and models: references to 'joy in work' (169) and the realisation of the worker's 'energy and creative vitality' (167); to 'a new kind of people' (54) or the 'new man

arising within the old' (202); a foundationalist sense of social systems (private vs collective ownership, 129)[24]; an ideal of 'simple cultured people' (313); and generally, a model of a planned but self-governing society (self-governing therefore planned). One quotation, bringing together a number of these points, will suffice:

> what impressed us most about the USSR was the new man emerging from the new society.... The Soviet people have thrown off the shoddy selfishness which the 'every man for himself' philosophy of capitalism breeds in people. They have a more stable family life and a healthier, deeper attitude to love and comradeship than people in countries of the West. They are free of racial prejudice. Their creative labor has been released, they have a stake in the country, play a part in all the great plans of their Government. Crime and mental illness are rapidly fading away.... The wide gates to the culture of this and past ages have been opened to them.[25]

We might also note the book's self-situation, its intertextual framing through references to Hewlett Johnson and other literary witnesses; indeed its direct reference to Utopia: 'Communism--the Utopia of material, cultural and spiritual plenty, as an immediate possibility' (207--the last phrase wrests Utopia from the utopianists). Finally, the book's chapters recall the pattern already discerned in Prichard's *The Real Russia* as they shift from children to education to culture to production--and back again.

Yet my argument is to point to the limits--or at least the disaggregation--of utopianism in *Journey Into the Future*. The utopian elements just outlined, although necessary in defining aspects of the text's political interest, are not sufficient in defining its structure, tactics or address. In ways I've been suggesting for this period, the dominant utopian elements of earlier texts here become subordinate to another political and cultural logic. In analysing this difference we can also suggest why utopian renderings of the USSR might pass from the account of a 'believer' like Hardy to that of a 'sceptic' (or at least a different kind of believer) like Manning Clark.

There are a number of dimensions to be discussed in relation both to the specific situation of Frank Hardy and the book's cultural and political occasion. First, there is an ambiguity in the presence of Hardy as author in the text. What would his proper name on the cover and the title pages have signified in 1952? Above all, of course, the author of *Power Without Glory*, but also the public figure in the trial for criminal libel which the novel provoked. For the moment, still probably the moment of *Journey Into the Future*, Hardy is Australia's most famous author and most notorious communist. *Journey* builds this doubleness into its own narrative and circumtextual framing--the 'story' begins with Hardy in the dock of the Melbourne Criminal

Court (10) and the book ends with an Author's Note which recalls the Author's Note of *Power Without Glory* and repeats the latter's promise of future novels. The consequence of this framing and of the extratextual circumstances--the reputation--which it can summon is that Hardy is always present as Communist as well as Author.

There is a disaggregation at this level of the text as well: Hardy writes as a communist--the public communist--and as a member of the working-class and as a 'writer' (the text quotes directly from his notebooks of the trip a number of times). The final item here is an important informing category in the authority that the text claims, but not that which contains and grounds all others; it is not the same *utopian* category of authorship which, I've argued, operates in *The Real Russia*.

The 'present-ness' of the literary witness is thus operative only in a weak sense in *Journey Into the Future*. We are addressed less by embodied wisdom or its processes of perception and recognition than by an *argument* the point and principles of which are made explicit. So too is the constructedness of the text. The inclusion of notebook passages, quotations (from other traveller-writers, from Stalin, etc), plus facts and figures from previous publications and political argument about Australian politics--all this locates the book as *after* the event, as part of another argument, in a way that the journey structure of the literary witness texts works to efface.[26]

The journey structure itself is also present in the book only in a weak sense. Despite the conventional marking of departures and arrivals, and the resemblance in chapter topics already noted, the effect in *Journey* is piecemeal against the kind of panoramic exhaustiveness of, say, *The Real Russia*. Rather than the accidents of the journey disclosing a utopian logic, a journey towards 'culture', the political interests of Hardy's text render the journey itself only incidental. Perhaps it is symptomatic of Hardy's late accession to the genre that he *begins* with the conventional chapters on children and education, and only later turns to the question of production. Anecdotes can remain mere anecdotes here, falling short of the effect of typicality registered in earlier texts. In a sense, facts also seem to remain mere facts: impressive production figures or scales of construction but without that desired/desiring transformative effect, the *ethical* dimension, of the earlier works.

It's not that Hardy doesn't want to convert his readers, of course, rather that a different

kind of comparative framework is at play. To caricature a little, the implied reader of *Journey* is a proud Australian working man (or his wife) who can also become proud of the achievements of the Soviet Union, and thus get angry about Menzies, politics in Australia, conditions for the working man--and the rest will follow. What we have, then, is a non-utopian scale of comparison and transformation. Things are bigger, better, brighter in the Soviet Union--and not always that (the beer is better in Australia, St Kilda Road in Melbourne is prettier than Leningrad Avenue, and it's even the case that the Australian worker is in some ways better off than his Soviet counterpart). But this is quite different from the strategies of inversion and 're-vision' of the utopian mode. Indeed one imperative of Hardy's text is to prove just how *like* Australia aspects of the Soviet Union are.[27] The reader is asked to be deeply impressed, to consider the facts, to draw the evident political conclusions; but this falls short of the peculiar mix of 'innocent' wonderment, arousal and liberated/liberating energy which the utopian narrator invites his or her reader to share. The arguments towards change and for the inevitability of change are largely confined to its final chapter, almost in a postscript.

In various ways, then, the political moment of the book's production is manifested in a disaggregation of its utopian possibilities. The utopian syntheses operate only in a weak sense, available still as a model for generalisation but otherwise dispersed into discrete parts of the text and discrete spheres of the society it discusses. We can, I think, detail a number of factors which constitute this political moment: the cold war politics of Peaceful Co-existence; local representations of communism in a context defined by Australian participation in the Korean War and the referendum to enable the banning of the CPA (defeated while Hardy is in the USSR); and the development of a specific form of populist nationalism within Australian communism. The first means a shift of axis, as suggested earlier, or an overlay of the opposition 'capitalism-socialism' with that of 'war-peace'. One of the primary imperatives of *Journey* thus becomes an argument for the Soviet Union to be left alone, to be allowed to develop independently and in peace: an argument that the Soviet Union is *not* a threat to the West (333-335).

The utopianism of the earlier texts was tied to an internationalist perspective imbued with a potent sense of the immediacy and simultaneity of world-historical forces. This is what

motivates the utopian scale of 'comparison' (the word seems too mild). Now a nationalist argument underlies the representation of the USSR and of Australia, part of the politics of separate national paths towards development which informs communist foreign and domestic policies in the period.[28]

In the Australian instance in particular this is a populist nationalism. The 'simple cultured' new men and women of the Soviet Union are as it were folded back into the *traditions* of the Australian 'common people'. Hardy is sufficiently anti-utopian to be a homesick traveller and to call his final chapter 'There's No Place Like Home'! The odd conclusion to be drawn is that Hardy's overt political interest and the text's explicit communist propaganda lead *away* from utopianism, to a form of moderation.

From one perspective Hardy 'blows his cover' as an Author by writing as a communist, and has to sacrifice (and willingly sacrifices) part at least of the authority of the literary witness, the utopian figure of embodiment, in order to replace it with the authority of the 'ordinary bloke'.

From a more external perspective, the contemporary local and international position of communists is registered in the text as a recurrent defensiveness. As in Rodgers's booklet, the text is motivated in part by the desire to argue against the 'lies and slanders' of the capitalist press and conservative governments. Again this postpones or disperses its utopian potential as the task becomes one of establishing that the USSR is not totalitarian, not inhuman, not drab and humourless, not warlike, and so on. Taking one step further a point suggested above, we might even say that one of the imperatives in *Journey* is to establish the Soviet Union's *bourgeois* credentials: to establish its 'more stable family life' (263), its 'tasteful' architecture (171), or the ability of its 'shows' to do well on Broadway (100). This is, of course, to ignore much of the book's argument for socialism, that these pleasures become available to all classes when there are no classes, and its utopian understanding of 'the new Soviet man' (315). But such arguments have to make their way in a different world, for the communist writer perhaps above all. The degree to which the utopian model is no longer available to Hardy as an argument for Soviet communism--the degree to which the nexus between culture and politics no longer holds--can be seen most clearly in the text's 'shrinking' of the realm of culture to that of entertainment.[29]

3. Meeting Manning Clark

Journey Into the Future is the last *Stalinist* traveller's account of the Soviet Union by an Australian writer. This is not so much to characterise its 'dogmatism' as to characterise the occasion of its publication. Between its appearance and that of Manning Clark's *Meeting Soviet Man* there occured that series of major events--the death of Stalin, Khrushchev's speech at the 20th Congress of the CPSU, the Hungarian uprising, the ostracism of Pasternak--which again altered irreversibly the possibilities of thinking and writing (and travelling) about the Soviet Union. The added interest of Clark's text for us is that it is an account of his trip to the USSR in 1958 with Judah Waten, and we can make some comparisons with Waten's own accounts of the same journey.

What we find in turning to Clark is this political moment announced as the book's occasion (it's there on page one). But the text also distances itself explicitly from any *political* interestedness in Soviet communism; and, of most significance for our present purpose, this very distancing allows the return of a 'deep' utopianism.

To put this in other terms, the *ethical* ground of *Meeting Soviet Man*--that suggested in its title--performs something of the same function as the socialisation of politics, the dissolving of politics into culture, traced in earlier texts. This ethical ground includes dimensions other than the utopian, above all in a 'non-utopian' tragic mode. But the text is structured precisely as a dialogue between the tragic and the utopian perspectives, in a way that *diminishes neither* and which asks us, in Clark's own words, 'to take Soviet Man seriously' (1). The text is deeply sceptical or, better, pessimistic in the face of Soviet Man, but also deeply moved: the 'depth' in a sense is the point, as I will explain below. For the moment, though, we can suggest at least that the terms in which Clark poses his questions about Soviet Man are familiar ones from the history of utopian and dystopian literature.

Apart from a booklet on Abel Tasman, *Meeting Soviet Man* was Clark's first published monograph. He had previously edited two collections of documents on Australian history, and he was Professor of History at the then Canberra University College. *Meeting Soviet Man* is a fascinating rehearsal of the questions and themes which would later characterise Clark's multi-volume *History of Australia*: the clash of great faiths and the absence of faith, a clash embodied

in the lives of 'great men with flaws'. But the book also foreshadows the degree to which Clark's authority as historian, cultural commentator, and public figure depends not on his 'expertise' as a professional historian but on a particular appeal to the category of the aesthetic.[30]

More precisely, the figure of the historian is taken up into the figure of the 'writer'. Clark was perhaps most widely known at this time as the author of the 'Letter to Tom Collins: Mateship' (*Meanjin*, 1943) and 'Tradition in Australian Literature' (*Meanjin*, 1949), two 'writerly' interventions in the field of culture--a kind of middle disposition between literature and history. My point is that Clark can write his account not just as a traveller but as an author: he can 'do' the literary witness in different voices. It is significant that he travels to the USSR as a member of a Fellowship of Australian Writers' delegation and at the invitation of the Soviet Writers' Union.[31]

More significant is the way text and narrator are situated. There are a number of references to the practices of historians which place *this* text and its narrator elsewhere: 'one of those broad, vague, ambiguous generalisations historians are used to making, and which are not very helpful' (11). What do we get instead in *Meeting Soviet Man*? The first version is 'one man's impressions... the comments of a boy from the bush on Soviet Man' (Preface). There's a sort of modesty here, but also a grand claim to authorial status, claiming significiance for this one man's impressions which in turn involves claiming the voice of a man of vision, the man who knows 'the secrets of the human heart' (21). *Meeting Soviet Man* from its title onwards claims a literary authority not present in Hardy's *Journey Into the Future*, and the journey-narrative returns to significance as the trail and testimony of the literary witness (in a more reflective mode: not 'I saw' so much as 'I thought', 'I felt').

Such a claim is manifested in the narrative itself in its focus on ethical and philosophical realms which are understood as 'deeper' than government, politics and power. The book wants to know 'the very heart' of Soviet Man, the 'inner man' (21). It wants to discover how the philosophical basis of the Soviet system is *lived*. Further, in the book's own definition, this is the true realm of great art, of culture; it is the realm where the truths, the 'very heart', of the society will be discovered, in a living culture. The unsolved problem that the book leaves us with--finally, the greatest question--is whether the current vitality of Soviet cultural life is a product of pre-revolutionary or post-revolutionary activity (116).

The book's aesthetic scale is also revealed in the recurrence within it of the figure of Dostoevsky: there is a chapter on Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, another on Dostoevsky and Lenin, and further references throughout the narrative. Dostoevsky stands as a figure of the tragic--or pessimistic or religious--view of life: 'the tragic pessimistic view of the world, and man's place in it, has been washed out of their [the Soviet people's] minds. They are exiles from, and strangers to, the religious view of the world' (81).

It could readily be argued that *Soviet Man* is written wholly from within this tragic, existential perspective. The scale of Lenin is, as it were, read off against the scale of Dostoevsky; the 'Enlightenment' is held up against the 'secrets of the human heart'. Thus the book is deeply sceptical of any planned, programmatic governmental organisation for human happiness--not its unfeasibility but its humanity: 'in their leisure moments men and women and children did not necessarily do the things that they wanted, but what *the Establishment* decided was good for them' (91, my italics). The very separation of 'the Establishment' from the citizens is anti-utopian. Utopian ideals are subject to a dystopian critique which dissolves any vision of the good life in its insistence on suffering or fate: 'Soviet Man is dedicated...to that very creed, that belief in reason, in progress, in perfection, which Dostoevsky had predicted would end in murder and degradation' (79). The scale of Dostoevsky, then, provides the book's 'deep' notes and those which resonate in its finale.[32]

Yet such a one-sided reading would simplify the book's argument, reducing its dialogue between perspectives to a single voice. Soviet men and women might be childlike and naive in their faith: 'the innocents of the Enlightenment' (111). But the narrator defines himself by his capacity to contain not only the Dostoevskyean depths but also the high-mindedness, the nobility, the joy, the 'reverence for life' (114) of the communist ideals which express the key utopian resolutions: 'when the distinctions between brain and manual labour disappear, when the freedom of one is the condition of the freedom of all' (5). As the book makes clear: 'That is the whole point: that no one whom Dostoevsky had caught by the throat and the heart could be indifferent to Lenin' (87).

The two perspectives are defined at the book's outset as 'a metaphysical difference, a difference stemming from two fundamentally opposed conceptions of the nature of man, the

meaning and purpose of his life' (5). This defines the limits and the dynamic of its 'inquiry' and of the *kind* of impressions that will impress themselves upon this traveller. In this metaphysical opposition are described the book's motivating 'problem' and (from the outset) its available resolutions. The two 'views of man' are held in suspension to the very end. *This* is the book's aesthetic rather than political nature. The argument, for all its doubleness and its awareness of contemporary politics, is in a strict sense a thoroughly conventional one: tied to a conventional *literary* thematics.

To this extent it is also an argument held within the limits of the utopian terrain (which includes its dystopian inversions): the final test of the social system, or rather the philosophical system, is its ability to remake the persons of its citizens. The book reveals the mutually-defining, mutually-dependent relationship between utopian modes and their dystopian critiques: one cannot help producing the other, and in *Soviet Man* we are never outside this close relationship except perhaps at a few moments where Clark mounts an argument from history, placing the USSR in the context of its own Russian past or of revolutions elsewhere. But the utopian focus is guaranteed by the text's argument through 'foundational' ethical-philosophical principles: the two options are the complete remaking of man or his eternal incompleteness (his remaking of politics into culture or his eternal irreducibility to politics). *Both* options, the utopian and the tragic, are opposed in the text to the narrator's contemporary society, to the bourgeois, commercialist, technological world 'of gadgetry and creature comforts' (7).[33] And both are made to speak to a present condition of 'alienation', the tendency of capitalism 'to split or separate off home life from work life, to deprive the worker of the sense of fulfilling his personality in his work, ...in this sense Marx was as much a pupil of Aquinas as Leo XIII showed himself to be in *Rerum Novarum*' (88). Finally, given this *dialectic* between two opposites contained within human nature, it is impossible for the text and for the reader not to imagine a resolution 'on a higher plane.' That it might be politically--and philosophically--impossible does not inhibit the text's ethical effectivity. To return to the contrasts established at the very beginning of this chapter, what we meet in *Meeting Soviet Man* is scepticism towards any form of programmatic utopianism, but scepticism based on an aesthetic utopian dialectic. It is not surprising, then, to find Clark repeating the terms of Prichard's *The Real Russia* in being struck 'above all...by the

combination of high seriousness with gaiety in the Soviet people'.[34]

Meeting Soviet Man can be understood in the context of what John Docker has called the 'metaphysical ascendancy' in the field of Australian cultural, and especially literary, studies.[35] Even the book's utopianism depends upon Clark's liberalism or, to put it more awkwardly in order to make the point, on his *non*-communism. But his cold war discourse is not that of *Quadrant*. In its argument through pessimism to optimism it recalls a contemporaneous set of terms being developed in *Overland*, an argument from 'individual pessimism' to 'social tragedy' articulated by two of Clark's former students, Ian Turner and Stephen Murray-Smith, then fresh out of the Communist Party. The argument functions in *Overland* precisely to 'acknowledge' the existential realities of individual lives--which communism had forgotten--but to incorporate these realities into a larger reconciliation in terms of human solidarity. Once more we find an argument moving away from politics towards culture, and towards utopian resolutions.[36]

Judah Waten by this time was again a member of the Communist Party, after having been expelled in the early forties. He rejoined in 1957 in the very period when many 'intellectuals' had begun to find their politics elsewhere. His accounts of the 1958 trip to the Soviet Union were published as three articles in the CPA newspapers, the national *Tribune* and the *Guardian* from Victoria. There is clearly little use for the journey structure in organising these texts; but what holds them together and what is offered to readers is certainly the figure of the literary witness and of the author. Waten is advertised as an 'author' with a brief publishing history and a Counihan portrait at the head of each article.

This figure of authorship, however, has very particular valencies in this place, at this time. Waten was still a relatively 'new' author and an even newer communist author. He was, in a sense, in the early stages of a new career as a communist novelist and cultural commentator: in 1957 he begins to publish regular articles on cultural affairs in the Party press and in 1961 he would publish his most overtly communist novel, *Time of Conflict*. At the same time his claims to authorship rested primarily on the 'non-political' stories of *Alien Son*. In a way that could not be the case for Frank Hardy because of his 'scandalous reputation', Waten was a figure of great significance, at least for the communist left, in local cultural politics. As a respected literary author, he was a token of the Party's seriousness and *humanism*.

Waten's presence thus draws on the general categories of authorship but he is (re)created as an author for and within communism. He can become part of an argument--as a literary witness--for the defining presence of those same qualities of seriousness and humanism (and, thus, of freedom) in the Soviet Union itself. To understand the political meanings of this argument, we need to recall developments in the 1950s both in the Soviet Union and in Australia. Following the death of Stalin in 1953, and then again the process of 'de-Stalinization' announced by Khrushchev in 1956, the cultural field in the USSR went through a series of 'thaws'--each one interrupted by new attacks on 'liberal' artists and intellectuals. Literature, more than any of the other arts, had always been assigned a key role in the Soviet Union as a means of motivating and moulding populations. In the period following Stalin's death, as Abraham Rothberg has argued, 'the role of the writer became more subtle, ambiguous, and difficult, yet more important than ever to the ruling elite'.[37] Writers had a major role in defining the 'liberalisation' of the post-Stalin period and in exposing the wrongs of Stalinism. This accorded with the Party line and could help to make clear distinctions between the Stalinist and post-Stalinist regimes; this required less stringent regulation of artistic styles, subject-matter and publication. But at the same time such a liberalisation had its dangers for the regime: exposure of Stalinism could readily turn into a critique of the practices of the current rulers, a questioning of the Party's right to exercise any control over artists, or even a questioning of the revolution itself. Thus the fifties and sixties are marked by a series of moves and counter-moves, liberalising gestures (publications, changes of personnel in cultural posts) followed by 'exemplary' attacks on writers and publications (and further changes in personnel).[38] The attacks on Pasternak and *Doctor Zhivago* are only the most famous case of the latter.

Khrushchev's cultural policy was thus aimed at following a 'middle course' between liberalisation and control, on the one hand encouraging those criticisms of Stalinism, bureaucracy, and so on, which would mark off the new regime from the old and assist in certain kinds of political and social modernisation; while on the other hand, drawing the line at critique, or that which could be read as critique, which questioned the basis of the Party's authority. The result of this newly-mobilised function for literature--and the relative absence of a public sphere for the discussion of political ideas--was that in an unprecedented way the liberal writers were

becoming an 'opposition', whether they consciously thought of themselves as such or as 'instruments of the Party in implementing the decisions of the Twentieth Congress'.[39]

It is important, then, to see the ambiguous, subtle role that criticism and exposure could play as either the implementation or the interrogation of Party policy. In Australia and in western countries generally, literature and the treatment of writers also came to occupy a central place in debates about the USSR and communism. This was partly a result of what was happening in the USSR and partly a 'reading' produced by that particular ideological opposition between 'freedom' and 'totalitarianism' so fundamental to cold war politics and intellectual politics. Literature carries with it all its traditional authority to stand 'naturally' on the side of freedom.

In addition, in Australia, literature had become perhaps the key contested site in a struggle over the 'national tradition', a struggle over cultural authority between those groups Docker has painted very broadly as the Radical Nationalists and the New Critics.[40] This was a struggle between populist and conservative liberals, and the communists had to work hard to participate in it in any significant way. Both within communism and within the larger cultural sphere, both as a defence of the USSR and a claim to cultural authority, the question of 'literature in the Soviet Union' thus had a new and increasingly volatile status. It was no coincidence that it was the Artists and Writers Section which erupted into controversy at the 1959 Australian and New Zealand Congress for International Co-Operation and Disarmament in Melbourne.[41]

Waten's status as an author and literary witness in his--modest--series of articles is informed by each of these complex developments which explain the sequence and subjects of the articles. The first piece in *Tribune* is the most general, and its subject is 'culture'; the second deals with literature more narrowly, the third with Jews and Yiddish culture. In addition, significantly, the three articles are interrupted by a piece in which Waten argues that the Soviet authorities 'were right to reject *Dr Zhivago*' (the subtitle continues, 'just as British publishers rejected *Lolita*'; the article is wrongly described as the third in the series on the USSR).[42]

It is only in the first piece that culture plays something like a utopian role, reaching out to embrace the whole of society--'in the Soviet Union culture and the people have merged into one'--and taking developments in specific fields as evidence for the development of the whole:

> The remarkable achievements are the product of the entire social organisation of production and

> resources for human benefit, which alone could make such an unparalleled level of educational and cultural development of the entire Soviet people possible.[43]

Culture, then, can still provide the generalising category that contains and unifies social, political and ethical 'revolutions'. But in a way this move is now preliminary to a set of further steps which, however positively and optimistically they conclude, have inevitably to proceed through the negative and defensive. Even within the Party Waten now has to argue--and as a literary witness, he is in a privileged position to argue--that the Soviet Union is not or at least no longer authoritarian in relation to its writers and not anti-semitic.

Waten's article on 'Literature and the writer in the Soviet Union' thus forms the centre-piece of the series. It is carefully aligned with the liberal tendencies within Soviet literature; but it is also carefully wholly within the bounds of official acceptability. Except for the 'eccentric conservative' Sholokhov and Writers Union first secretary Surkov, all the writers mentioned can be placed in the camp of the liberals--Ehrenburg, Dudintsev, Granin, Kaverin, Yashin, Katayev, Nekrasov, Tvardovsky, and others.[44] The burden of the argument stays within the bounds of the officially sanctioned, however, because, for all its celebration of 'criticism and conflict', its story is that of the break between past and present: '...the Soviet reader will no longer accept poor writings, schematic novels with lifeless characters and fake situations'; 'the latest work...show (sic) the progress made in recent times'; 'never in history, has the writer been as free to write what he wants as he is today in the Soviet Union'. With arguments such as those summed up in the final quotation the Soviet Union not only leaps over its own past but over the West as well--the Soviet writer does not have to write of 'sexual violence and perversion' in order to be successful. The evident 'vigour and variety' of Soviet cultural life is taken as a sign of the writer's freedom.

Waten, Clark and Devaney were in the Soviet Union at the height of the campaign against Pasternak and his *Dr Zhivago*. The novel had been published first in Italy in November 1957, after having been rejected by the board of *Novy Mir* in 1956. The award of the Nobel Prize to Pasternak was announced on October 23, 1958; on October 25, the criticisms of Pasternak in the Soviet literary press commenced and they continued for most of the rest of the year; by November 5, Pasternak had made the required self-criticism in *Pravda*. The Australian

delegation left Australia on October 30 and remained in the Soviet Union until mid-December.

Meeting Soviet Man includes early in the book a whole chapter on the case, 'A Conversation about Pasternak'. On the basis of knowledge gained before the journey (it seems), Clark concludes that the 'Establishment and the Writers' Union were now in harmony'. The main 'event' of the chapter is Clark's reading of the letter from the *Novy Mir* editorial board, published in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* in September 1958. This Clark reads as 'spiritual popery...like all the documents in which an élite has claimed the right to impose its vision of the world on others':

> What came out of the letter to Pasternak was the conviction that they, the Establishment, had answered the big questions, that men were no longer pilgrims for truth nor athirst for belief, but that the whole world was a classroom and the Establishment its teacher.

The chapter is like an interlude in the journey, the point at which the Establishment and the 'religious view of the world' are forced into opposition. The rest of the journey is about that opposition and its possible transcendence.

There is no reference to Pasternak in Waten's article on literature. It is not known whether the separate item on the novel was already planned or whether it was a sudden tactical response. It is difficult, though, to see how the argument for the banning of *Dr Zhivago* could have been accommodated within the earlier argument for literary freedom: 'all that is expected of the writer in the Soviet Union is that he should write truthfully and with art, of the life he knows best, about those things which move him deeply'. Waten mobilises all the forces against *Dr Zhivago*: quoting literary critiques of the novel (*New York Times*, the Sydney *Sun*) plus anti-communist praise from western sources (the Sydney *Telegraph*, J.F. Dulles, the West German press, Malraux and Camus); aligning it with *Lolita* ('the most diabolically pornographic book ever written'); accusing it of 'war propoganda for the American imperialists'; pointing out the persecution of progressive writers in the west; stating also that Pasternak had not suffered materially, and that his other works were still supported. Each way Pasternak is caught: 'For a Soviet citizen, particularly a writer of the eminence of Pasternak to contribute to anti-communist, and war propaganda is contemptible, far worse than the obscenities of the author of *Lolita*'. The excess of Waten's article tends to confirm Rothberg's suggestion as to why *Doctor Zhivago*

became such a target: it did not merely expose past crimes and present difficulties but argued that the whole revolution had been a disaster. Perhaps of more direct concern to Waten, though, are the 'anti-Soviet' uses made of the novel in western countries including Australia.

4. The Journey of an Australian Writer

Between the articles in early 1959 and the appearance of Waten's *Odessa to Odessa* in late 1969, 'stress' on the category of the literary in the Soviet Union and thus for the communist writer in Australia had intensified still further. The very calmness of *Odessa* could be interpreted as a response to this intensification. The book appeared in October 1969, but the trip it describes occurred in late 1964-early 1965 although this is never made explicit. This double time frame--the time of the journey, the time of the writing--is of account in how we understand the structure of the narrative. In this particular literary-political context, the meaning of an event in 1965 might have changed significantly by, say, 1968, at the time of writing.

1961 saw the beginning of what has been described as a second wave of 'de-Stalinisation'.[45] In the literary field this was marked by the publication of Ehrenburg's memoirs in *Novy Mir*, Yevtushenko's poems 'Babi Yar' and 'The Heirs of Stalin', Nekrasov's *Both Sides of the Ocean*, and in November 1962, Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Conservative critiques of these authors continued, however, with Khrushchev intervening personally, usually to suggest the limits of liberalisation. Early 1964 saw the trial and sentencing of Josif Brodsky, who drew a number of significant artists and intellectuals to his defence. Solzhenitsyn--along with Yevtushenko, Tvardovsky, Ehrenburg and Voznesensky--increasingly became a target for conservative attacks.

After the resignation of Khrushchev in October 1964, the new regime seemed initially to be favouring a liberal approach once more (suggested again by personnel changes in official posts etc)--throughout the period of Waten's visit.[46] Debate on both sides was intensified, until in September 1965 the regime as it were declared its hand with the arrest of the two writers Sinyavsky and Daniel. Their case was to become famous across the world, and was to produce petitions and other forms of protest from western writers, including communists. Over the next three years, Solzhenitsyn would become the central figure of controversy in both the USSR and

the west. In the former, the liberal intelligentsia increasingly became *dissident*: 'demands for intellectual freedom were gradually being escalated into demands for greater political freedom';[47]while the regime had clearly aligned itself with the conservatives in a way not seen during the Khrushchev period. In the west, and through a potent mixture of motives on all sides of cultural politics, no *intellectual* discussion of the Soviet Union was possible outside of the question of 'the writer's or intellectual's freedom'. The tendencies in both places were intensified rather than interrupted by the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968--though for lack of a reliably dated manuscript of Waten's book, I think we need to proceed as if the text were completed before this date.

The point of this brief outline of events over the course of the 1960s is to mark those developments which, most likely, informed the discussions and perceptions narrated in *Odessa to Odessa*; but also to mark those further developments which could have informed the *narrating* up to the final form of the text. In the local context the most important of these further developments are the controversies surrounding the Daniel-Sinyavsky case and, later, Solzhenitsyn.[48] *Odessa to Odessa* in fact effaces the difference in time between journey and narration: there is no mention of Daniel and Sinyavsky, and Solzhenitsyn is mentioned only as the author of *Ivan Denisovich*--published with Khrushchev's approval against the wishes of many conservatives. *This* is the moment Waten records, and he does so, of course, not just because it happened (although the narrative acts almost as if nothing more was at stake).[49] It defines the politics of the text, politics 'stretched' as it were from the mid- to the late-sixties.

The double time-scale of Waten's book operates both in the text's political 'self-situation' and thus also in its narrative strategies. But the politics, in one sense, are the last thing we meet as readers following the narrative. We can think of *Odessa* in terms of the different kinds of 'generic contracts' it establishes, or seeks to establish, with the reader. The first is the autobiographical contract: the book's opening words are 'I was born in Odessa...' The first chapter is a memorable account of memories of Odessa--stories of Odessa rather, told to the child or overheard or later gathered through fiction, through Babel and Gorky. But at the same time the story of Odessa in the life of the author is the story of the *author*, of the desire to be a writer prompted by the stories of Russian and Yiddish literature.

In the same trajectory, the autobiography does also introduce the book's political theme: childhood stories of the Tsar, the revolution, the pogroms, the civil war, Labor politics, Irish politics. 'This was only the beginning of what was to be a recurring crisis in my mind--the choice between politics and literature' (5): innocently, then, as part of life-experience, the relationship between politics and literature is established as a theme. Similarly, as *literary* autobiography, the chapter establishes the author's credentials in the literary field. The figure we meet is that of the known author--no longer the 'new ' communist writer of 1959, but the established, respected novelist and, just as important, literary figure. The book's subtitle, accordingly, is 'The Journey of an Australian Writer'. Otherwise the literary reputation is never more than implicit; it doesn't need to be more a function of tone and address, indeed of implied audience.

In fact this is quite a significant point because of its bearing on how the text addresses its politics. The audience is no longer primarily a Party audience or even a 'political' audience. It is a literary audience, not in a narrow sense but the kind of audience that might include readers of 'serious fiction' or books of 'ideas'--or indeed literary autobiographies and author's travel books (we can take such terms seriously, as they do in fact organise the cultural field). *Odessa* was published in Melbourne by Cheshire, then one of the most important publishers of Australian books, not by the Australasian Book Society as had been Waten's first three novels (*Distant Land* was published by Cheshire but also issued to ABS members; *Season of Youth* was done by Cheshire). Indeed the book appears at what might well be considered the height of Judah Waten's literary career. He writes--and his narrator travels--with the authority of someone wholly integrated into the literary field. Communism might even get to be one kind of distinguishing *literary* characteristic in the public sphere. (Waten had appeared on national television in 1966, interviewed as the 'Australian novelist and short story writer' but in a program about 'Commitment'.)

From the opening chapter of *Odessa* the reader receives already a 'guarantee' that this won't be a 'political' text. It won't be propagandist, or indeed utopian; it won't be about 'communism' as such; it won't be another *Journey Into the Future* (and one expects that Waten was in a position to know all about that). The title makes this much clear: its motif is the autobiographical one of the return, a journey into the past not the future. What could be less

utopian? But having established itself in autobiographical terms, the text as it were renegotiates its contract (and perhaps its guarantees). It starts again, this time as a writer's travel book describing at the very least a journey to another place. Chapter two, 'To the Soviet Union', is a substantial forty pages; the story of departure and arrival is thus extended beyond the framing or 'marker' role it has in most of the texts examined so far. It becomes indeed the story of journeying, full of the apparently inconsequential details of travel that mark the passing of time and place ('On the quiet water there were several catamarans piled high with goods...', 10).

The journey structure in *Odessa* is thus not a function of the exhaustive utopian account of a whole society. But as with all travel writings the story of the journey is always more: it has to have a point and an interest (not only something to interest the reader but also a sense of what the author has invested in the text--we need to feel that the teller has an interest in the outcome of his story-telling). The effect of narrative organisation if nothing else assures that the accidental and the exceptional encountered on the journey tell more than the story of their own contingencies.

In *Odessa* this initial journey is organised around a number of themes: what we might call 'meeting East German man' (understanding socialist social relations) and culture in the socialist countries (to this extent, the narrative is organised as a *literary* journey). Waten, with his wife and daughter, travelled from Goa to Rostock, East Germany, on an East German ship. The crew and the social relations on board ship are 'scrutinised' for their Germanness and their socialism--unemphatically, almost accidently, as is the mode in this text: 'He [a steward] showed no constraint in the presence of the Captain' (11); 'the officers' lounge...was actually used by all the crew' (12); 'You could not help concluding that he thought of the Nazis as a foreign force, not Germans at all' (15); the crew read factual book and poetry but little fiction and even less politics (19); and, in a nice traveller's anecdote, Waten defends Wagner against the Germans (19). Literary and cultural references are throughout on the side of humanism. These concerns also lead to the question of attitudes to the west. The crew listen to the Beatles and dance the twist ('You could see he was enjoying himself thoroughly, but apparently not without a sense of sin', 16).

Most important, the narrative is organised as a journey through the past, especially the

anti-semitic Nazi past of East Germany and Poland, and then the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. These are the recurrent threads: Nazism and the story of the Jews (linking to the story of the Soviet people): 'We were running through country where the Nazis had set up death camps' (35). The journey through or 'out of' history--and culture--can then become a journey towards socialism, a socialism defined by this specific historical and cultural interest.

Nevertheless, the travel writing works like the earlier autobiographical writing as a 'guarantee' against (certain kinds of) politics. Places embody history rather than the future. The autobiographical contract is also kept in view, as it were underwriting the travel narrative, as the narrator recalls his arrest in England in 1932 or summons places via literary (or family) associations--and their associations with Jewish or Nazi history. His own Jewishness is thus also consistently present.

This is the complex of themes and generic 'acknowledgments' established in the opening two chapters of *Odessa* and carried into its account of the Soviet Union. But the moment of arrival in the Soviet Union also makes a difference. There is almost a third beginning to the story. Both autobiographical and journey ('touristy') elements, although they continue to underwrite the narrative, are subordinated to the single theme of *post-Stalinism*. As was virtually inevitable--in terms of the autobiography, in terms of Waten's literary status, in terms of contemporary political debate--this theme is addressed in two spheres, the question of Jews and the question of literature in the Soviet Union. As Waten writes, he wanted 'to meet Jews and writers' (57). We will focus on the latter, but the politics of the text in the former case point in much the same direction.[50]

The discourse on literature in *Odessa* is focussed in a number of discussions with Soviet literary figures. The discussions are 'reported' with a minimum of commentary so that there is scarcely a 'final word' or an explicit, 'extra-deigetic' analysis. Nevertheless, as in the 1959 article, there appears to be a clear alignment with post-Stalinist liberalization:

> After the death of Stalin in 1953 some of the worst rigidities were jettisoned, but could it be said that the Stalinist concept of Socialist realism had been laid to rest? Otherwise how could you explain the sharp, discouraging criticism which faced novelists who came to grips with modern life and the praise bestowed on those who gave a rosy picture of life. The almost complete absence of meaningful novels of contemporary life, I said,...was surely one of the reasons for the current vogue for many novelists of the 1920's and 1930's frequently unpublished for over thirty years.
>
> .... In the West even left-wing writers were saying that for the genuine artist

> subordination to the Stalinist concept of Socialist realism could well be too high a price to pay for economic security. The powerful Writers' Union, they believed, should protect the non-conforming writer and support a much more flexible cocept of Socialist realism. This would also involve rejecting the Stalinist type of literary criticism that is hardly more than ideological polemic and jargon, a travesty of Marxism no better than Maoism in literature.[51]

What might look like blandness in such reported speech (until the final flourish) can probably be re-read as the subtle positioning of narrator in relation both to the immediate Soviet audience and the audience of the book's readership. These are the questions that need to be asked from the viewpoint of the latter (from the viewpoint of the writer from the west), but they are carefully grounded. There is no ultimate critique of socialist realism only of its Stalinist forms. What amounts to a serious charge levelled at the Writers' Union is delivered as someone else's. Elsewhere in the book we find critique of the specific treatment of 'unorthodox' writers but not necessarily of the Writers' Union or Party's right to 'treat' writers at all (154-155).

This is not to question the book's 'liberal' purposes or accuse it of duplicity (as duped or duping). Post-Stalinist liberalisation is what makes the book possible, its very condition of 'utterability'. The liberals--Ehrenburg, Polevoi, Granin, Yevtushenko, Voznesensky, Aksyonov, *Yunost* and *Novy Mir*--occupy centre stage and clearly bear the burden of present and future. Waten agrees with Yevtushenko that "'A poet is not a politician or legislator...and he should not be judged as such'" (92). Once-discredited writers such as Tsvetayeva and Achmatova are presented in positive terms; Pasternak is also mentioned positively a number of times (though not *Doctor Zhivago*). The book is full of critical remarks on Stalinist--and post-Stalinist--institutions, from architecture ('the grandiose wedding cake style of the Stalin era.... indifferent, ponderous and wasteful', 50-2) to the Lenin Museum with its 'many embarrassing gaps' (78).

In addition, through the words of Ehrenburg, Waten family relatives and others, there is also a good deal of criticism of Khrushchev--and beyond. Paraphrasing Ehrenburg's words:

> There had been little improvement in the situation of artists since Khrushchov [sic] had gone. Criticism was perhaps less violent. Only the official kind of socialist realism was really tolerated. The present leaders, no more than Khrushchov seemed to understand that art would not flourish until there was a genuine variety of concepts and forms.[52]

The text, in short, is more than ready to announce that there was 'no shortage' of 'heretical views' (52).

There are a number of further points about the 'literary situation' which we can note

before attempting to draw them together. First, American literature has a strong and surprising presence in the text. Not only do we discover Allen Ginsburg having lunch in the Writers' Union (Waten and his interpreter swap appreciative comments, 62); we also meet a number of writers and critics who have an up-to-date and positive appreciation of American letters (more positive than our narrator, 64). Second, the point is repeated that there have been no great novelists (at least), except for Sholokhov, during and since the Stalin era: 'I couldn't think of a living Soviet writer who was capable of anything a quarter as good as *War and Peace*. We would have to wait for a new generation of writers' (82). As the quotation suggests, pre-revolutionary literature by contrast figures strongly and positively. Tolstoy, Pushkin, and Chekhov can lead into early-revolutionary figures, Mayakovsky or Babel, even Pasternak--but somewhere along the way the stream all but dries up in the barrenness of Socialist realism.

Third, there are two extended moments where the literary conservatives get to put their side of the argument. Waten meets Kochetov from *October*, 'the leading journal of the die-hards' (115), plus two of his editorial assistants. Kochetov is witty and a generous host, not the 'ogre and fanatic' portrayed in 'Congress for Cultural Freedom publications' (116).[53] The two assistants defend their actions: 'Why should the purveyors of Western influences be treated with kid gloves? Some of the young poets were affected by mysticism, misanthropes... A revolution that couldn't defend itself didn't deserve to survive' (117). Waten also presents a discussion with 'an elderly editor and critic, a man of the old school' (89) who also attacks what he sees as the cultural politics of American imperialism:

> Pessimism and scepticism are the ideas they would like our writers to adopt. To destroy their belief in socialism. In art and music they would have our artists and composers follow their artists and composers, paint nonsensical abstracts and compose music that is only disorganised noise. And why? Because such music and such art destroys recognisable reality and creates a mad, incomprehensible world. They would like to drag our people into this world of anxiety, to divert them from the real problems of the world, to make them an easy prey.[54]

Without necessarily disagreeing with this assessment Waten defends the need for experimentation and critical writing, as in Lenin's time. Waten catches 'a note of intense dislike for the young poets' and argues that there 'is no contradiction between believing in the Soviet system and wishing to get rid of old authoritarian and bureaucratic practices' (90). The elderly critic's answer might be understood as an expression of the 'secret Stalin worshippers' (92), and

thus belonging to the past; or perhaps as an expression of the official post-Khrushchev line, in which case its status is more ambiguous. It is the final speech of the discussion, and is presented without further immediate commentary:

> 'The party exposed the errors of Stalin. That is an epoch which is finished. But some people think it is not finished and keep repeating themselves. It is quite unbalanced. Not everything under Stalin was evil. He was the leader of the Communist Party and the Soviet Union for over thirty years and enormous progress was made in that time.... We have in totality a great Soviet literature regardless of what bourgeois critics say about it. And it didn't begin with Yevtushenko and Voznesensky and it won't end with them either.'[55]

Again it is not clear that our narrator disagrees with this statement, although it is clear he--our narrator--does not agree with the hostile attitude to the liberal writers which underlines it.

What can we make of this array of utterances and suggestions, and the mode of their narrative delivery? Apart from the questions posed to the different literary figures, Waten as a narrator is scarcely a *character* in his text in the sense of a fully-dramatised figure who acts and talks in a way that, in the act of reading, we can distinguish from the narratorial function. Neither the autobiographical self nor the literary witness is fully mobilised as an 'experiencing centre': the mode of the text we might say is 'recording' rather than 'experiencing'. This means that the most volatile of issues--literary 'freedom', anti-Semitism--are presented in a rather curious way: overtly, straightforwardly, but also 'non-controversially', in much the same manner as a trip around the Kremlin or a night at the opera might be presented. There is an unusual privileging but then effacing of the *politics* involved.

This is one effect of the text's 'liberalism'--or perhaps vice versa. On the other hand, we can read this effect in a more determinedly political and contextual manner. The emphasis on the break with the Stalinist past as we've already noted operates both to allow, indeed necessitate, criticism and also to allow, to secure, a positive representation of the Soviet present: the country resuming or continuing its revolutionary process of remaking itself. This history is *en gros* the emphasis, the point of political interest, of *Odessa*. It can be qualified or muted in a number of ways--by emphasis on continuing problems of modernity or by a long historical perspective that might establish the credentials of the Soviet state in part by its deep continuities with the Russian past. Both of these dimensions are present in *Odessa*. But what this particular history cannot incorporate, of course, is criticism which challenges the fundamental legitimacy of State or Party,

their identification with the revolution, with history and the people. There is a point to Leon Cantrell's suggestion in *Australian Left Review* that Waten's objection to the imprisonment (etc) of writers goes no further than the suggestion that it is not 'good policy'.[56]

The politics described above is one the liberal writers in the Soviet Union itself practised, putting forward their arguments in the name of communism or citizenship. But if I am correct in suggesting that *Odessa* positions itself similarly, the meaning of the politics must be different in the context of the text's local, Australian occasion. *Odessa* legitimates the liberal and 'non-conforming' writers; it opens a space for them and identifies them with dominant or emerging forces. But in the Australian context, in an important sense, this task scarcely needed to be done--except perhaps for some residual forces within the Communist Party itself. If we accept this point, then the text's privileging of the liberal position becomes more an act of recuperation, a testimony not to the fundamental problems within the Soviet Union or within communism (as many then and since would have it) but to the fundamental solutions to problems which they provide--or at least more modestly, as we might expect in this text, to their solvability within Soviet communism. The narrative is motivated by liberalisation, but it can have nothing to do with dissidence--even as it goes about anticipating and meeting the desires of its western 'serious' readership.

This process of recuperation works by accommodating as much as possible within the onward historical progression of the USSR: the younger 'unorthodox' poets, the modernist sculptors, the pre-revolutionary writers, Stalin's victims, the contemporary interest in American (and Australian) writing, even the 'die-hards', leaving their Stalinist tales behind them. This enables the book's final, optimistic conclusion:

> The discourse could not work as a prescriptive argument except in realist terms broad enough to incorporate a Tolstoy or a Yevtushenko.[57] Perhaps what we have instead is an argument for peaceful co-existence in the cultural sphere.

In *Odessa*, Waten assumes the liberal status of literature and the literary author which had become such a powerful token in arguments about the Soviet Union and communism in the sixties. Established initially through both the autobiographical and the travel-writing aspects of the book, this literariness--its 'natural' identification with humanism and freedom--discovers its own likeness in the Soviet Union (not everywhere, but in the main in the places where it

matters). It is above all perhaps a disarming narrative, disarmingly plain, 'with the charm of simplicity', disarmingly personal and 'too honest to get sentimental', and disarmingly cultural (not least when the author can calmly say 'Speaking as a Communist writer...', 155): 'Waten's return to his birthplace was as an Australian...a writer and as a Jew, rather than as an apologist for the communist regime'.[58] Perhaps it was bound to be a work that would either disarm its reviewers--into accepting one or all of its generic threads which might then be ordered according to the critic's lights--or leave them unimpressed by its political blandness. If we can make the distinction for the moment, it is as we might now predict the 'literary' reviews which fall into the first category, the more 'political', from both right and left, which make up the latter.[59]

Perhaps we can now also understand what must be seen as a conscious narrative--and political--decision to limit the book to the period of the actual journey rather than to 'update' it, for example through accounts of the Kuznetsov defection, the Daniel and Sinyavsky trial, and the Solzhenitsyn case, through the time of its writing. Its politics are certainly more happily located at the moment soon after Khrushchev when liberalisation could again be seen to be in the ascendant, and before the arrest of Daniel and Sinyavsky made the new conservative alignments clear. The 'present' (1968-69) can thus be rendered optimistically, despite everything the text makes explicit and its subsequent readers will know. This is further naturalised by the framing of the politics of the book within the autobiographical and travel-writing codes. The return to Odessa when it comes towards the end of the book comes as an anti-climax, although even this has its point as the relative lack of nostalgic associations that Odessa turns out to hold for the narrator lends some support to his overall conclusion that he 'had been in a new society' (197). The distance between this use of the phrase and its full-blown utopian sense is marked by how little it is prefigured in the text (perhaps the distance from utopia is also marked by Waten's unfussed comments on how plump the Russians are!).

If we had approached *Odessa to Odessa* solely from the grounds of the Waten biography or reputation we might have expected a literary and Jewish traveller, certainly, but perhaps also a communist utopian or propagandist journeyer 'into the future'. The traces of this figure are indeed still present, if only at the very end of the book. Approaching the text through a particular genre history, however, and through the specific political contexts which give the genre its meaning,

we can understand why the utopian option is scarcely an option after all--even for the *communist* literary traveller and especially for the communist *literary* traveller. Books about the Soviet Union will nevertheless continue to be written in ways that can be seen to constitute a specific genre--apart from the standard histories and text-books--just as long as the Soviet Union can continue to function in any way as the other of 'western' society or culture.

1. At least until the appearance more recently of a number of "communist" memoirs. See my

2. Author of the enormously influential *The Socialist Sixth of the World* (London, Victor Gollancz: 1939) Left Book Club selection? Reprinted in an abridged version in Australia by the Australian Friends of the Soviet Union/Current Book Distributors (who printed all CPA booklets). visited Australia in

3. The account which follows derives from work done on a co-written text, *Culture and Utopia*, produced at Griffith University as part of its BA (Australian and Comparative Studies) programme. Programmatic utopianism is analysed through examination of writings by Owen, Saint-Simon, Fourier and Bellamy; aesthetic utopianism through work on Schiller, Ruskin, Marx and Morris.
I would like to acknowledge in particular the work of colleagues Ian Hunter and Jeff Minson. See also my,; Ian Hunter; Jeff Minson; Kain.

4. ref

5. mention Americans and Webbs mayber, plus key Marxist texts

6. Why I am a Communist

7. If I can't find a source mention it as epigraph to Hardy

8. p.5

9. p.54

10. p.5

11. p.6.

12. p.84.

13. p.1.

14. pp.146 & 148.

15. p.159.

16. *Soviet Culture* (Sydney, NSW Aid Russia Committee: 1942). The contributors and contents are, in order of publication (which seems to follow the order of the conference talks): 'Medecine', Dr J. Grahame Drew; 'Medical Plans and Progress,' Professor J. V. Duhig; 'Science,' Professor I. Clunies Ross; 'Education,' Elsie Blackshield; 'Education,' John Dease; 'Music,' Dr Cyril Monk; 'Ballet,' Raia Kuznetsova; 'Art,' Bernard Smith; 'Architecture,' Henry Pynor; 'Literature and Drama,' Miles Franklin; 'Literature and Drama,' Katharine Susannah Prichard; 'Literature,' Frank Dalby Davison. The booklet also prints a message from 'British scientists, artists, actors, poets, writers' plus the resolutions passed at the initial conference.

17. *Soviet Culture*, p.87.

18. *Soviet Culture*, pp.87-88.

19. For example, on pp.22, 36, 41. Bernard Smith quotes William Morris, p.57.

20. Quotations from *Soviet Culture* respectively Drew, p.7; Clunies Ross, p.23; Blackshield, p.29; Pynor, p.68; Franklin, pp.73-75.

21. John Rodgers, *Report on the Soviet Union* (Melbourne, Australia Soviet House: 1949). The Melbourne City

Council refused use of the Town Hall for the delivery of the speech. A civil liberties campaign was organised around the issue, and the speech was eventually delivered at the Unitarian Church, Melbourne, 23/2/49. See Don Watson, *Brian Fitzpatrick: A Radical Life* (Neutral Bay, NSW, Hale & Iremonger: 1978), p.227; Malcolm Saunders and Ralph Summy, *The Australian Peace Movement: A Short History* (Canberra, Peace Research Centre: 1986), p.32.
1949 was a crucial year, with the federal Labor Party's loss of office and the formation of the Australian Peace Council.

22. Rodgers does mention that, among the sponsors of his talk, are 'four of Australia's best-known authors'.

23. See Jack Beasley, *Red Letter Days: Notes from Inside an Era* (Sydney: Australasian Book Society, 1979) 62-64, 137-138.

24. 'I asked myself: "What is the fundamental diference between capitalism and socialism...?"
...'The first fundamental difference between capitalism and socialism exemplified in Soviet Russia is that, while in capitalist countries the means of production, distribution, information and exchange...are owned and controlled by groups of rich individuals, under socialism as in the USSR, these are owned and controlled collectively by the working people. From this fundamental difference others arise--and they are many.' Hardy, *Journey* 129.

25. Hardy, *Journey* 263-264.

26. This is no less true of those passages where Hardy shifts to the present tense. The shift is a way of underlining that this is how it happened *then*. *Journey Into the Future*, perhaps surprisingly given the genre, is the first example of something that becomes recurrent in Hardy texts, the 'splitting' of the narrative into text and meta-text (and, however briefly here, the retelling of the *Power Without Glory* story).

27. For example: "'Change the rules and the language and I was at the football in Melbourne,'" (110); talk at the trots in Moscow (!) 'was reminiscent of conversation on trial nights on Thursdays at the Melbourne showgrounds' (123); and one worker met was 'like a really friendly Australian working man' (231).
It is no accident that this kind of comparison tends to occur in 'populist' situations. The category of 'the people' is a key one in Hardy's text and, as elsewhere, it functions differently from, say, 'the proletariat'.

28. Hardy quotes Stalin's definition of a nation--'a historically evolved, stable community of people, based upon the common possession of four principal attributes, namely: a common language, a common territory, a common economic life and a common psychological make-up manifesting itself in common specific features of national culture'--and adds: 'Of all the definitions of a nation given through the years, that is, to me, the only satisfactory one' (261).
The CPA in 1951 announced its policy in terms of 'Australia's path to Socialism': see Alastair Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia: A Short History* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1969) 117-118. Hardy quotes extensively from this policy, *Journey*, 328-332.

29. *Journey*, Chapter 4, 'Entertainment Galore' and Chapter 5, 'At the Football and the Races'.

30. My article at least

31. Other members (though this should really come earlier); The dust-jacket blurb helps the reader to acknowledge the authority of the historian taken up into the larger category of the author: 'Manning Clark is a historian who wen to Russia with an Australian writers' delegation... For him, meeting Soviet people was like a reunion with oldest friends--the men and women of Russian literature, whom he had known intimately for years'.

32. The book concludes: '...for months after the return one felt a nostalgia not so much for Soviet Man but rather for the tragic grandeur of Russia--and for Russians'.

33. The opposition between the tragic and the Enlightenment views of 'man' is overlayed by another in the text

between the 'gloom,' despair etc of western culture versus the optimism of Soviet culture. Clark's position here is the reassetion of an older aesthetic mode in the face of contemporary developments in literature and philosophy.

34. Clark, quoted in 'Writers back from USSR talk of cultural "vigor", quality', *Tribune*, 22 December 1958. Clark's picture at the end of a society without book's and history equals Morris in News fron Nowhere.

35. Docker

36. my piece

37. Abraham Rothberg, *The Heirs of Stalin: Dissidence and the Soviet Regime 1953-1970* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1972), p.12. The account which follows draws largely on this work.

38. Some of the key texts around which debate centred in the 1950s were an essay by Ilya Ehrenburg, 'On the Role of the Writer' (1953); Ehrenburg's novel, *The Thaw* (1954; sequel, 1956); Dudintsev's novel, *Not By Bread Alone* (1956); and most famously, of course, Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* (1957, in Italy; 1958 in English).

39. Rothberg, pp.15-20.

40. Docker, Buckridge--see my comments on Dr Z in Overland

41. Anti-communist Catholic radical, Vincent Buckley, and recent ex-communist and radical nationalist, Stephen Murray-Smith, introduced exiled Hungarian Dissident writer Tibor Meray to the conference and supported a resolution about the lack of freedom of writers 'in a number of countries'. This phrase was blocked in the final resolution, largely because of communist organisation against it. See 'What Happened in Melbourne', *Outlook* 3, 6 (December 1959), pp.3-4.

42. 'They were right to reject *Dr Zhivago*', *Tribune* 2 March 1959, p.7.

43. 'How People's Culture Flourishes in USSR', *Tribune* 14 January 1959, p.7.

44. The description of Sholokov is from Rothberg, p.15; the alignments of the various writers are also drawn from his work.

45. Rothberg

46. Rothberg, pp.140-145.

47. Rothberg, p.197. And for this period, see chapter 12-18 passim.

48. Waten's correspondence includes a sheaf of documents on the D-S case, apparently sent to him by Dorothy Hewett as part on an appeal for writers' signatures protesting their imprisonment. This is after Waten had reprimanded Hewett in a letter, on receiving news from East Germany of an extremely critical letter she had written to one of her hosts about the treatment of writers, on her return from that country (NLA MS4536/2/1021-5, 1029, 1039-48).
In addition, Waten himself wrote a document in 1966 or 1967, probably for a Party audience (possibly for a Realist Writers' conference in 1967). The document entitled *Report of Literary Trends* argues that the Stalinist-Socialist Realist past is behind the Soviet Union, and that the changes introduced at the 20th Party Congress will not be reversed '...despite the Sinyavsky and Danil case'.

49. *Odessa to Odessa*, p.108.

50. For contemporary CPA thinking on the question of anti-Semitism in the USSR see *Soviet Jewry: A Reply to I. Leibler* (Sydney: Current Book Distributors, 1965). This issue would consume a good deal of Waten's

time and energy over the course of the 1960s and make him a controversial figure in the Jewish community.

51. *Odessa*, pp.59-60.

52. *Odessa*, p.111.

53. Rothberg describes Kochetov as a literary Stalinist and a particular 'liberal *bete noir*', pp.37, 42, and passim for accounts of his various 'literary' activities.

54. *Odessa*, p.89

55. *Odessa*, p.91.

56. Leon Cantrell, *Australian Left Review* December 1969, p. 75.

57. Also the argument in Trends in literature document

58. The quotations in this sentence are from reviews of the book, respectively: Clive Turnbull in the *Age* 11 October, 1969, p.13; Geoffrey Dutton, *Australian Book Review* November 1969, p.20; Brian Kiernan, *Australian* 25 October 1969, p.23.

8

An Australian Jewish Writer

I do not regard myself as a Jewish writer but as very much an Australian writer who happens to be of Jewish extraction.
(Judah Waten, "My Two Literary Careers," 1971)

1. Beyond the Migrant Writer

During the last decade in Australia a significant body of critical and theoretical work on migrant writing has appeared. I have referred to some aspects of these developments above, particularly in relation to Judah Waten's *Alien Son* and the location of the migrant writer in the immediate post-war period. Here I want to turn first to recent critical work on migrant/non-Anglo-Celtic writing and then to read a number of Waten's "migrant" fictions against the categories and perspectives it supplies. In addition I want to discuss examples of Waten's own critical writing which examine questions of migration and migrant literature.

After *Alien Son* and *The Unbending* Waten departed from the migrant story, if we can use that phrase for the moment, in his two subsequent novels *Shares in Murder* and *Time of Conflict*. He returns to it in 1964 with the publication of *Distant Land* and in 1971 with *So Far No Further*. The former also marks Waten's return to mainstream publication and was his most critically acclaimed work after *Alien Son*, winning the Moomba Festival Best Australian Novel award. Over this period Waten also published short stories and memoirs, many concerning migrants and migration, collected in 1978 in *Love and Rebellion*.[1] The alternation in Waten's career between works which focus on non-Anglo-Celtic migrants and works which locate their heroes as Anglo or Celtic "ordinary Australians" itself has bearing on the question of how we theorise and historicise the field of migrant writing. What status do we give to experience and autobiography (as categories in different fields); what distinctions need to be made between writing *of* migrants and writing *as* a migrant? What status indeed do we give to *migration*?

We can begin with a problem: Judah Waten's writing does not *prima facie* fit well with many of the current notions of migrant/non-Anglo-Celtic writing. In a theory field that is post-structuralist and post-modernist in one sense or another,

Waten's realism presents a surface resistant to the play of critical desire. In a criticism that valorises excess, his self-denying prose is not likely to be fashionable or theoretically viable. Manfred Jurgensen, for example, has argued of Waten that "there is no multicultural imagination at work in any of his writings."[2] What the notion of a multicultural imagination might entail will be discussed below. But if it is the case that "multicultural aesthetics," in Jurgensen's term, has little to say about Waten, we need to ask not only how this absence reveals "absences" in Waten's writing but also how Waten's writings reveal absences in the theory.

The first point in theorising a cultural field in terms of migration or ethnicity is to argue the necessity of *reading for cultural difference*.[3] The analogy, though it is much more than that, is with those practices of reading in terms of class, gender and "colonial" difference which, unevenly but irreversibly, have affected the institutions of reading in the last decades. Reading for difference in this sense is to read against the grain of the universalist or monist assumptions which support the culture of "normative," though never singly dominant, groups: male, middle-class, white, Anglo/Anglo-Celtic. It should no longer be possible to read as if there were one literature unmarked by cultural specificity surrounded as it were by minority literatures which are so marked, as working-class, female, Aboriginal or, for our purposes, "migrant." Minimally, such an argument calls upon the reader to acknowledge that Anglo-Australian literature is indeed an ethnic literature. It thus also alters our sense of what constitutes the national literature, which must be something *other than* an ethnic literature.

This theoretical shift aims, further, to make "readable" in new ways texts which might otherwise be understood simply in terms of lack in relation to the dominant (lack of order, style, literariness, national characteristics or, indeed, universality). We can begin to read their stories as always in part the story of the text's own minority relationship to a majority tradition. This is the kind of reading of *Alien Son* which I hope to have provided above. Again feminist, Marxist and post-colonial criticism can provide analogies and more, a set of theoretical and political motivations and problematics: for example, a strategy of resistance against the homogenisation of the minority or marginalised groups as singly migrant, "ethnic," Other. In Sneja Gunew's terms, "the sameness about the oppressed and marginal voice is largely the

result of the undifferentiated way it has been situated by the dominant culture."[4] In a later essay she elaborates the point through a quotation from JanMohamed and Lloyd to the effect that "minority individuals are always treated and forced to experience themselves generically":

> At the moment, very different ethnic groups are cooperating to achieve certain goals because they have been assigned a particular (often negative) place within the culture. But this is to be distinguished from the homogenisation which is imposed upon them by those who position themselves outside multiculturalism, those for whom the ethnicity of England or Ireland is invisible.[5]

Sneja Gunew has been the most prominent and sophisticated theorist of migrant and non-Anglo-Celtic writing in Australia, and my focus will largely be on her work in a series of essays from 1981 to the present.

Gunew's arguments enter this writing into the critique of the subject which characterises the projects of both post-structuralism and post-modernism. Drawing on the language of Lacan and later Kristeva, she discusses the migrant as a specific form of the decentred or fragmented subject, fragmented to the power of two as the migrant is forced to renegotiate his or her entry into the symbolic. The definition of "migrant" becomes less a matter of birthplace or passport than of positioning within discourse, "not so much a question of *being* a migrant but of writing from a migrant position"[6]:

> By "migrant" I mean those who construct their subject-positions in terms of those who have had to renegotiate an entry into the symbolic. "Migrants" are those whose initial socialisation has taken place in a language and culture other than the hegemonic one, so that when they enter a new culture they are repositioned as children renegotiating language and the entry into the symbolic.[7]

The emphasis on the repositioning of the migrant as child recalls our earlier reading of *Alien Son*. It also suggests why Gunew feels compelled to complicate the notion of migrant writing until it can never appear except alongside the notion of the non-Anglo-Celtic: "the term `migrant writing' is commonly used without any awareness of the differences it contains within itself, not simply those that exist amongst the various non-Anglophone groups but also the differences which have nothing to do with migration itself but everything to do with the fact that the writer is non-Anglo-Celtic."[8] To emphasise migration can be to delimit the space from which "migrants" may speak to that of ethnicity or the trajectory towards assimilation; non-Anglo-Celtic, by contrast, foregrounds the question of positionality within language and culture.

This is an appropriate point at which to expand the differences between what we might call pre-structuralist and post-structuralist readings of migrant/non-Anglo-

Celtic writing. The former is grounded in the categories of individual experience, the authentic voice and, therefore, an expressive notion of language. It privileges the first-person mode as the site of authenticity and so reads migrant writing in a limited and reflectionist sense as autobiographical or sociological (in which case third-person omniscient conventions might be appropriate). Against these constraints Gunew returns the migrant story to the realm of textualisation: "The use of the first-person mode is no guarantee of anything but that a literary convention has been mobilised.... That `I' guarantees nothing, just as the fact of being born into a language other than English does not guarantee that one speaks from a position different from that taken by writers placed within the host language."[9] Migrant writing is often read as analogous to oral history, itself misunderstood as the authentic testimony of "speaking subjects" but not "writing subjects."[10] This in turn, Gunew argues, privileges two master plots for the migrant experience, the migrant success story or the migrant as problem (thus the host culture as refuge or promised land): "In the unified narrative of official history the first-person account has been returned to us as the collective migrant success story."[11] Waten, as I have argued earlier, presents an ironic version of these stories particularly in *The Unbending* with its recurrent promised land motif.

In the pre-structuralist scenario migrant writing can be percieved as an unproblematic addition to or assimilation into the majority culture. As such its primary function is to affirm the host culture's own depth and breadth, even if at sub-literary levels. In the post-structuralist scenario, by contrast, migrant writing is (potentially) a site of the transgressive, of resistance to or subversion of a dominant culture. As both inside and outside the majority language, inside and outside its hierarchy of discourses, it is likely to transgress the limits by which that culture defines itself. In particular, Gunew argues, "migrant writing registers a reading and interrogation of the nexus between culture and nationalism."[12] Writing from a marginalised position in relation to a dominant although not necessarily unified Anglo-Australian culture, the dis-location of the "migrant" represents a position (between two positions) which itself dislocates the majority culture's normative assumptions regarding the oneness of nationality, identity, common sense, place or home, language and experience.

This dislocation in relation to language and subjectivity might be represented as "an augmented awareness of the eruption of the semiotic into the symbolic."[13]

Gunew focuses on migrant women's writing:

> [which] signals more clearly than most the ideological loadings of interpellation, precisely because they register that interpellation as involving a split. Migrant writing carries within it, to put it another way, the dead or repressed or fading subjects created by other and sometimes former interpellations....
>
> Some (not all) of this writing breaks down any obvious reading of a unified subject (according to gender, class, culture) because these texts register clearly their dissonance with traditional meaning processes. Some, not all, because some migrant writing also plays the game of mimicry, of "passing" or of creating familiar facsimiles of the subjects we all know.... [W]hile one is never fully interpellated as a subject (there is *always* a misrecognition), when one is interpellated in ways which fall so totally short of other reflections, that is, where the gap between imaginary relations and real conditions becomes an abyss, then one reaches as a matter of survival for the first person in order to establish some kind of foothold. And it is precisely here, under those conditions, that "truth" (in the sense of a reality beyond our experience) is signalled as contingent, as historically and culturally specific, and that the subject is fragmented into contradictory positions which are also historically and culturally specific.[14]

The transgressive is that which exposes the exclusions and repressions, the contingencies and contradictions, of hegemonic discourses. It exposes as it is exposed to the limits of discursive limits. Thus the valorisation of excess and extravagance, hybridity and alienation, in recent criticism of migrant writing.[15]

The transgressive power of the marginalised is now a familiar trope in critical and theoretical writing. As a mode of criticism it will find itself drawn to *non-realist* forms, to writing — and speaking — which foregrounds its writerliness thereby rendering and thematising as problematic the first-person mode, subjectivity, the migrant experience, ethnic identity, and their representations (how they represent, how they are represented). Classic realist narratives, by contrast, will be seen to collude, by adding to their circulation, in the very systems of representation and subjectivity which marginalise minority voices. Thus they are easily recuperated or, to return to Jurgensen's discussion of Judah Waten, they offer "little resistance to their integration into mainstream Australian literature."[16]

In this moment, however, the critique approaches more dangerous ground where theories of discourse and subject-formation carry a disguised aesthetic imperative, moreover an aesthetic imperative which it is difficult to anchor specifically to "migrant writing." Charged with having to make historical sense of specific forms of subjectivity and authorship, this aesthetic imperative is misrecognised as an historical or political imperative.

Gunew's work lies within this theory field and so carries forth its aesthetic

imperative towards the non-realist work. At the same time her readings, her foregrounding of "transgressive" texts, situate themselves as strategic. In other words, the essays are situated overtly through questions of positionality and the deployment of texts:

> The question is always: for whom? If one asks how these texts differ from other kinds of non-realist or experimental writing in Australia, an answer is: only in so far as they foreground historical, cultural and socio-political questions concerning pronouns and positionality: who, from where, when and to whom? The reminder, to those who have eyes to see, is that the enunciating positions are partial and outside (or overlapping with manifestations of other cultural codes).[17]

Such a scheme allows for what we might call a thick description of certain forms of migrant writing, and indeed of the disposition of certain readers and critics towards them.

Elsewhere, however, "multiculturalism" becomes just another word for what post-romantic aesthetics has always claimed as the power of Art, its transformative and transcendent capacities. Wholeness and resolution might no longer be the goal for contemporary dispositions, but the dialectics of transcendence are never very distant. If we return to Jurgensen, we can see why he finds Judah Waten unreadable as the expression of a "multicultural imagination":

> A multicultural imagination is a transformational imagination, involving a transference of imaginative speech, in content and form, in semantics and grammar, in vocabulary and semiotics. It is recognisably "open," volatile, incomplete, in a state of becoming.... A multicultural work of literature is not carried by the safety of an established "mainstream" literary culture. Instead, it is perceived by that culture as a threat to the canon, and so defined as a failure or as marginal....
>
> The unique contribution of the multicultural artist is more than a combination or rearrangement of native and second-language literature. A new quality of imagination asserts itself, realising visions which could not have been expressed in any other form.... A truly multicultural aesthetics articulates new imaginative relations; it explores original concepts, ideas, images and experiences. Multicultural writing is the art of conveying a new consciousness; it is a different kind of imaginative thought.... The written work must possess a quality of originality capable of creating its own imaginative space in Australian literature; it does not aim for integration into a literary culture but strives to extend its range and concept.[18]

The category of the aesthetic stands at the beginning and end of Jurgensen's analysis as a realm of "new consciousness." Despite apparent similarities to Gunew's position, we might well ask what more we get here than the characteristically over-excited claims for originality, imagination and "becoming" that mark any number of aesthetic enthusiams. No doubt certain kinds of migrant writing are operable in this way for certain readers and writers, but Jurgensen's claims are more ambitious. The problem is that "multicultural" is in danger of appearing redundant in relation to literature or art or imagination. Almost inevitably that Jurgensen concludes that "*all* literary art ... is

multicultural whenever it extends beyond the boundaries of a national culture. In this sense, the classical works of world literature have conveyed to their diverse readership a multicultural imagination."[19] Cutural difference disappears in the undifferentiated world of Art (and its cultured citizens).

My scepticism towards this kind of argument in relation to migrant or multicultural writing is one that has also been voiced in relation to certain feminist aesthetics based either on Kristeva's notion of the semiotic or differently on notions of *l'écriture féminine*. As Rita Felski argues, "the theory of a subversive textual politics reveals an overemphasis on the transgressive function of the experimental text in modern society." The equation of the aesthetic conventions a text employs and its politics is "ultimately formalist in its failure to theorise the contingent functions of textual forms in relation to socially differentiated publics at particular historical moments." Such a critique has two consequences: it takes us beyond the formal properties of texts to their "frameworks of reception"; and it enables realism (for example) to return as a possible cultural politics depending, as Gunew might say, on the questions of who, from where, when and to whom. In Felski's words:

> the necessity and importance of a feminist avant-garde must be balanced against an equal need on the part of oppositional movements for texts which address the particularity of their social experience more explicitly and unambiguously, a need that has often resulted in a preference for realist forms which emphasise the denotative rather than aesthetic dimension of the text. One of the strengths of feminism has been precisely this partial reintegration of literature into the everyday communicative practices of large numbers of women by describing and commenting on women's experiences of gender relations.[20]

The same argument has its point in the context of migrant/non-Anglo-Celtic writing. Realist *representation* (of the migrant/non-Anglo experience) has its political occasions and effectivities, governed by specific reading formations. The politics of address will not be exhausted by the politics of style. Further, as readers, we cannot surrender these realist texts either to the "pre-textual" or to the "merely" literary. To be assimilated into a conservative aesthetic tradition through the intertextuality of conventional markers is not necessarily to be equated with the conservative cultural politics of assimilation which seek to efface cultural difference.

The notion of a multicultural imagination might not tell us about much more than the critic's taste and ability to align certain local works with a conventional late-romantic aesthetics. This can be distinguished from concepts of hybridity or cultural

difference which, rather than operating as figures of transcendence, define constraints, the "very limited space from which to speak" which migrants are assigned within the majority culture.[21] Nevertheless, as Gunew herself as remarked, in certain mobilisations of linguistic or psychoanalytically-based theories of discourse there remains the danger of a universalised grammar of transgression blind to specific historical and indeed discursive contexts.[22] More acutely, what announces itself as a theory of discourse operates in effect as a generalised aesthetics of literary taste, an aesthetics that can also affect political statements in the field: "[Fifth World (migrant) people] have in common a range of cultural experience that allows them to see all cultural and political systems as temporary structures that are infinitely changeable and open to question. [They] have a great advantage over those who are monocultural - they are suspicious of *all* systems."[23]

I have argued through this critique because it shows the tendency in certain theories of migrant writing towards anti-realism, towards linking realism and assimilationism, towards claiming migrant writing as a form of minority literature and hence a form of post-modernism.[24] In other words, it shows those tendencies which are unlikely to find Judah Waten's fiction an object of theoretical interest or value. My argument is not to defend realism, especially not on its own terms, nor to discount the power of the theory I have described. Nor is it to pose "history" against "aesthetics" as real to unreal (or as political to non-political): the point is rather to identify distinct discursive and hence operational realms. Although I will remain sceptical of the merely-conventional aesthetic claims of a critique such as Jurgensen's, the arguments towards post-modernism can indeed define the limits of Waten's discourse and its implication in the politics of assimilation (in a way that is not the case for other, mainly later writers). My resistance is against the over-generalisation of certain theoretical insights, of their "operability," and a consequent misrecognition of aesthetic categories.

More positively, the theories of migrant/non-Anglo-Celtic writing can provide a set of concepts and perspectives through which to read Waten's migrant fiction in quite specific ways *as* migrant fiction without reducing it to the quasi-autobiographical or sociological categories of "the migrant experience." The literariness of Waten's fiction, and hence its literary realism, however unfashionable, can become objects of

interest as strategies within migrant writing which we can address without assuming in advance that they are politically retrograde. We can ask, for example, how Waten writes "from a migrant position" and we can thus "examine the conditions under which it becomes possible to clear a space in which to speak migrant."[25]

Before turning to Waten's writing directly there is another, specific case argued "against" it which I want to address. In an investigation of literary evidence about the migrant experience, Bosworth and Wilton place Waten with David Martin as writers "with claims to the title of `high literature', [who] have dealt directly with migration." Their conclusion is that the novels of both "remain portraits painted by an outsider and delineated by a man who has turned himself into an English language writer." Thus they are "limited" despite their "considerable realism."[26]

I could take each of these remarks as a useful starting-point for my own analysis: there is indeed a sense in which Waten has turned himself into an English language writer (and we certainly want the notion of limits). But the merely negative force that these characteristics have for Bosworth and Wilton emerges in their nearly offensive, inaccurate discussion of Waten's assimilationism:

> Some of Waten's writing is mildly critical of Australia's unpreparedness for non-Anglo-Saxon migrants.... But Waten is also a confortable writer, a serene revolutionary who is not sad that Australia is such a "tranqil country," who even loves his mother ... and who devotes much of his writing to assimilation. In *Distant Land*, for example, Waten traces the conversion of the Kuperschmidts, a family of pious Polish Jews, into the materially successful Coopers. He makes much of generational differences, but the children of migrants always emerge as "Australians" and "do well" (indeed, there is much apparent endorsement of the cliche: "Every Jewish boy becomes a brain surgeon.") Assimilation is at least effective for the second generation although, invariably for the parents, the actual migrants, there is more agony or pathos and no assimilation.
>
> Waten, in part, is writing about his own experiences. He fits very much into the mould of his second generation migrant characters.[27]

To find one's voice within the bounds of Australian culture and the English language is seen as a virtual act of betrayal. Waten is indeed an "assimilationist" writer or at least a writer who in his contemporary context is compelled to engage with the rhetoric of assimilation. But his engagement with assimilationism is certainly more complex than Bosworth and Wilton allow. For a start, in the history of the Jewish diaspora assimilation has quite another range of connotations which in Waten's case must be articulated with the term's contemporary, Australian meanings.

This critique of Waten's assimilationism is argued naively. The same cannot be said of the analysis in Hodge and Mishra's *Dark Side of the Dream* which nevertheless reaches a similar conclusion.[28] I will delay my discussion of this more sophisticated case until the end of the chapter, and by way of conclusion.

2. Ethnicity and Assimilation

In order to address the issues raised above I want first to look at a series of non-fiction writings by Judah Waten spanning the period 1948 to 1983. The project here will be partly biographical, tracing the formulation of Waten's publicly-expressed attitudes to migrant communities, migrant writing and migrant politics over the course of his writing career. But the aim will not be to ground Waten's opinions in a set of propositions which might then govern our reading of his fiction. Each of his essays marks a writerly occasion, an act of positioning within a debate and clearing a space in which to speak — "migrant" or not remains to be seen. They intervene in the same cultural debates as his fictions but not necessarily with the same voice, from the same place, for the same readers.

Waten's critical writings here can be understood as falling into three groups: first, articles from the 1940s on Yiddish and Jewish literature in Australia; second, from the mid-1960s to the late-1970s, essays and reviews on Yiddish culture, Jewish migration to Australia and migrant writing *before* the appearance of a stream of publications consequent upon multiculturalism; third, writings from the 1980s which appear as it were in the midst of multiculturalism.[29]

In the late 1940s, while working for the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, Waten published several articles on Yiddish/Jewish literature in Australia.[30] There was a political dimension to the consideration of these issues, soon after the Second World War and the beginning of a new wave of Jewish migration from central and eastern Europe. The question of Yiddish historically was at the centre of Jewish debates about assimilation (versus separatism), for Yiddish was one of the clearest marks of Jewish difference, and then a mark of Jewish immigration, in whatever culture/majority language Jews lived. Yiddish also had class connotations (poor, immigrant, working-class) and it had helped divide the Australian Jewish community into Anglo and immigrant "factions."[31] It was also commonly argued that the war had proved that assimilation was no guarantee of safety for the Jewish people, an issue debated in Waten's novels.[32]

Waten's discussion of Yiddish literature is as much an intervention in these concerns as it is literary history. In focusing on Pinchas Goldhar and Herz Bergner, Waten mounts an argument *for* Yiddish literature but also for the notion of a literature inevitably in transition. It can thus, at the same time, be an argument for *Australian* literature. His language is organicist in its understanding of the relationship between literature and place or culture. Contemporary, immigrant Yiddish literature represents a continuation of the cultures of Russia and Poland; but "a living literature must not remain static: it must adapt itself to the new environment if it is to survive."[33] The argument is thus on the side of adaptation and transition but a clear line is drawn before assimilation at least in the "Jewish" sense of the term, the public disavowal of Yiddish/Jewish culture for the sake of social or political acceptance. Some form of linguistic and cultural assimilation (transformation or adjustment rather) is seen as inevitable, and as with other of Waten's post-war writings this sense of historical inevitability is *anti-nostalgic* or, in positive terms, modernising. Against this trajectory, mere social or class assimilation is truly reactionary, "capitulating to the so called superior culture of the ruling classes of [the] adopted country."[34]

If not altogether an original argument, this might nevertheless be the *first* such argument in Australia in which an ethnic minority literature stakes a claim on Australian literature (for this is its claim). The point is not its originality but its sense

of political occasion. Waten makes a number of nice distinctions that few other cultural commentators of the period would have been bothered to make. First he argues that in Australia Yiddish "has as yet been the only vehicle through which the Jew has expressed the deepest feelings and aspirations of his people"; second, however, he notes via Goldhar that "Polish and Russian Jewish literature could not be transplanted undisturbed"; finally he points out that it cannot be assumed that Jewish literature in Australia will always find expression in Yiddish: "As English becomes the language of Jewish people of the second and third generations, it is probable that there will arise an *Australian Jewish literature in English*."[35] The transitions between these three different perspectives cannot be reduced to a simple assimilationist trajectory, certainly not one that effaces cultural difference.

The immigrant Yiddish speakers with whom Waten identifies were marginal linguistically and culturally in relation not only to Anglo-Celtic (Protestant or Catholic) Australians but to the Anglo-Australian Jews as well. As Waten comments, again via Goldhar: "Not only the non-Jewish world, but the customs of their Australian brethren ... seem foreign and hostile to the newly arrived immigrant." Waten defines a "process of *vulgar assimilation*":

> The community dies not only because its people are scattered by changing economic conditions, but because they fall victim to the myth of the superiority of the culture and way of life of the non-Jewish upper classes. The life and vigor of the community disappears and there remains a tiny handful of Jews with only a lingering attachment to the religion of their forefathers.[36]

The argument is not particularly complex, perhaps, yet it is subtle enough that we cannot easily assign a value to the final sentence quoted above or to the probable loss of Yiddish as a literary language in Australia. Yiddish is necessary (and more), its passing is inevitable; separation and assimilation, the maintenance of the old culture and its "vulgar" abandonment are equally impossible alternatives.

Waten's constituency in these articles is overtly a Jewish one, but it is interesting that he can position himself within this Jewish readership/community as something like an English-language interpreter of Yiddish culture, an "outside insider."[37] His positioning leaps over the assimilated Jewish community, which operates here as (part of) the majority culture, to identify on one side with the minority Yiddishers and on the other with "Australian literature." It is a position of mediation that we will frequently meet (and have already met) in Waten's writings, mediating here between Australian and Jewish, English and Yiddish. He is arguing first towards a Jewish readership in the attempt to create a community of readers for these "Australian Yiddish" writers — to create Australian-Yiddish mentalities — which even amongst Yiddish speakers scarcely existed. He does so partly by reporting back to Jewish readers the progress of "their" literature in the field of Australian literature.

Waten's willingness to adopt such a position comes from a cultural politics that

does in some respects resemble assimilation. He wants "a Jewish literature, which *in a sense* is also part of Australian literature" (my emphasis: the hesitation is interesting). He celebrates the acceptance into Australian literature of translations of Goldhar and Bergner.[38] By contrast he draws a line, at least for the sake of argument, at "Yiddish writing which does not concern itself with life in this country, but is merely produced here by accident and is thematically and in spirit simply a repetition of Yiddish literature in older countries" (this is worthy of separate consideration but not as Australian literature). He writes enthusiastically of Goldhar's stories, that "they breathe the Australian environment, the Australian Jewish community and its relations with the non-Jewish world."[39]

The proper relation between Australian and Yiddish/Jewish cultures, for Waten and for his Yiddish and Australian literary friends, was, as we have seen earlier, one of alliance not antagonism or incongruity. Australian literature, in the fullest sense of the term we might say, was understood not as a neo-imperialism but as a potential anti-imperialism. As such, Australian literature in this period could scarcely be constituted as a *centre* or an oppressive dominant especially in relation to commercial, academic or for that matter popular cultural tastes (leaving aside for the moment how far a "radical nationalist" literature was itself already implicated in dominant and ethnist forms). An alliance with a popular, suppressed literature such as Yiddish could seem the most natural thing in the world.

There is, then, a species of assimilationism, or at least an anti-separatism, in Waten's argument. It is based on a broadly humanist and organicist notion of the relationship between a literature and a people: "for a Jewish literature to grow in this country it must have close links with the literature of the country."[40] But read with a slightly different emphasis, Waten's project is no less grounded on a sense of cultural difference and the hybridity of the migrant — Yiddish within Jewish within Australian. These are communities and speaking positions each of which Waten himself partially inhabits, each of which is itself divided. At its blandest perhaps the argument suggests simply a trajectory from one to the other (Yiddish *plus* or Australian *plus*). But it is not spoken just from the centre. In Gunew's terms, Waten's discourse is better thought of as "clearing a space" for the migrant or non-Anglo-Celtic voice within Australian literature, a voice that can talk to Australian literature, talk *as* Australian literature,

without losing the marks of its cultural difference. The markers of difference in his texts are never just those of "subject matter."

In his argument against *Jewish* assimilation, expressed in an approving summary of Goldhar, Waten foregrounds ethnic difference but does so in a rhetoric of universalising humanism that seems to render ethnicity a secondary rather than primary category. Anti-semitism is seen as part of the larger problem of racism confronting "all the democratic forces of the world." Its end "would not be found in the assimilation of the Jewish people, but in their independent existence in equality with all other peoples of the world."[41] As in an earlier phase of feminism, the emphasis falls on equality rather than difference (but it does not fall on essence). It is perhaps impossible to decide philosophically whether such a global multiculturalism inscribes or simply dissolves cultural difference. It might instead be a local, political question; it is certainly one that recurs throughout Waten's career as a commentator on ethnicity and assimilation.

The large-scale assimilation of non-Ango-Celtic migrants had yet to become a major item on the political agenda in the late 1940s when Waten addressed the issues of Jewish literature and Jewish assimilation. By the mid-sixties, however, migration and assimilation were critical issues culturally and politically. Waten reviews — he is *invited*, one supposes, to review — a number of academic studies of Jewish settlement and works of "migrant" biography or fiction. He also writes significant essays: two in overseas journals on international Yiddish culture and one in the Australian weekly *Nation* on non-English-speaking writers in Australia. These works coincide with the writing of *Distant Land*, *So Far No Further*, and many of the stories in *Love and Rebellion*.

In the book reviews relating to Jewish migration and settlement the persistent interest is the link between ethnicity and assimilation: the process whereby assimilated Jews "disappeared as Jewish ethnic entities" and the sociological and economic trajectory of assimilation, from the "traditional pattern of Jewish migrant occupations" to post-war middle-class professionalisation.[42] "In the English speaking countries," Waten suggests, Jews "have become more integrated into the general community than was ever thought possible." This migrant success story has both positive and ironic dimensions. First, a positive insistence on the contributions Jews have made in

academic and other professional fields (a familar trope of Jewish settlement history, but here less a communal pat on the back than an argument against the anti-semitism which accuses Jews of separatism). Second, an ironic account of contemporary Judaism among the successful second and third generations (they "are not immersed in Jewish culture, although they may be ardent supporters of Israel," Waten comments without comment).

Waten is also ironic towards a naive representation of Australia Felix: "Australia is truly the golden land; every Australian is `kindly' ... Australia is without a bureaucracy ... the apotheosis of Australian mateship. If only it was quite like this!"[43] It is no surprise to find him insisting that there has indeed been a "subdued anti-semitism" in Australian society. Waten also speaks of the "genuine loss" which is the decline and near-disappearance of Yiddish literature and theatre in the English-speaking immigrant communities.[44] He celebrates Yiddish culture but again without nostalgia, reminding readers of the conditions under which it developed in the Pale of Settlement. The *shtetls*, he remarks, had become "the object of exaggerated reverence in some American-Jewish literature."[45] This newly-popular American Jewish literature was one significant co-ordinate in the formation of Waten's position in this 1960s-1970s period; the Australian sociological studies provided another; an important third was the contemporary debate about anti-semiticism in the Soviet Union.[46]

Waten's essays on Yiddish culture, published in Australia and overseas, enter this latter debate by invoking a comparison between east and west:

> Often when anti-Soviet propagandists assert that today Yiddish culture is in a serious plight in the Soviet Union and that soon the Soviet Jews will be without a literature and language, they appear to try to leave the impression that conversely in the West, the Yiddish language and literature are flourishing. Actually the reverse is true. Yiddish is at a very low ebb in the USA and is virtually extinct in Britain, but in the Soviet Union there is still considerable creative activity in the Yiddish language.[47]

The argument is a detailed one which need not concern us except as it has bearing on questions of ethnicity, assimilation and separatism. Its point might be summed up, reductively of course, in the following way: assimilation is good in so far as it means Jews becoming part of the general democratic social(ist) movements in their country of habitation, in so far as it can be perceived as part of a progressive, modernising history (against this history, separatism is mere anachronism). Assimilation is bad when it means a sheer loss of culture, of a popular and high culture, for the sake of

wealth and social status in the non-Jewish community. One way or another, the movement of history is against Jewish separatism whether as ethnism, religion or Zionist politics:

> [T]he whole question of integration or assimilation which as a rule was accepted and encouraged by the European socialist movement, was increasingly discussed in the Yiddish press that arose in Odessa and Warsaw. Even then Russian culture was beginning to exercise a profound influence on Jewish intellectuals and workers, largely because of the *universal* character of the ideas that animated it, the ideas of writers like Tolstoy, Plekhanov and Lenin. At the turn of the 20th century significant numbers of Jews were turning to the Russian language and Jews began to enter Russian culture and literature. However, Yiddish remained the language of the Jewish masses....
>
> [In Britain] the Yiddish labour and general press declined as Jewish Labour gradually became part of the general labour movement.... Except as a private family language, generally imperfectly spoken, Yiddish has disappeared from the Anglo-Jewish world.... Jewish life in England has gradually found expression in an expanding Anglo-Jewish literature precisely because English has become the only language of the English Jews....
>
> Yiddish literature and culture have catastrophically declined in the USA in the face of the integration of the American-born Jews and powerful Americanisation campaigns.[48]

The rhetoric is historical rather than political: the (global) inevitability of integration with its "genuine losses" is to be grasped nevertheless as a modernising history. Waten is committed to the secularising of Jewish culture.

The rise and fall of Yiddish culture is tied — as it were *non-ethnically* — to the social conditions of its existence: "Yiddish literature was the specific product of Jewish life in Czarist Russia and tended to whither away under socialism with its *full facilities for integration*, or even when Jews were transplanted to the countries of capitalist democracy where they enjoy educational and civil equality."[49] Whenever, wherever, Yiddish ceases to be the vernacular language, Yiddish literature will decline.[50] In the Soviet Union, however, Yiddish is institutionally supported hence, Waten argues, its continued (modernising) viability:

> Soviet Yiddish literature has adapted itself to the new life and does not draw on a Ghetto sensibility which is still the case with Yiddish writers elsewhere.... [There] is a tremendous encouragement to Yiddish writers to continue writing in their native language, for they can express one area of the *Soviet-Jewish* spirit and at the same time address the vast Soviet world.[51]

If the dissolution of Jewish separatism occurs more slowly in the capitalist countries this is not only because anti-semitism persists but also because of Zionism which "virtually [denies] to Jews national citizenship in the countries of their birth and upbringing, relegating them almost to the position of aliens."[52]

Waten's arguments are thus pro-"integrationist" (as well as pro-Soviet and anti-Zionist). While this has nothing manifestly to do with assimilation into a local capitalist or ethnic status quo he nevertheless provides an argument on the model of assimilation into a *national* project (Soviet for example) in which *ethnic* difference becomes secondary. Zionism, ironically, might well be drawn to the selfsame model. It is only possible for Waten, of course, when the national project can be aligned with the trajectory of a larger progressive history. But it is not difficult to see the possible complicity of Waten's arguments with those of an exclusive nationalism or, at least, his defencelessness against such an ideology without recourse to the categories of class. Waten's own immigrant Jewish experience, refracted through the modernist, communist and nationalist discourses discussed in previous chapters, would likely render him both sensitive and sceptical towards the claims of ethnicity. Ethnic difference is asserted against the universalising, absolutist "myths of cultural superiority" in the majority culture; but a universalising rhetoric in turn is asserted against the absolutist claims of ethnic difference in the form of separatism or *imperialism*. This is where we must locate Waten's arguments, on the axis between ethnicity and universality which, in an important sense, he shares disputatiously with his cultural and political opponents.

In a review of Medding's *Jews in Australian Society* Waten disputes the very claim that Jews "constitute some kind of *monolithic ethnic group*, with a belief in a common destiny" (my emphasis). We can see why it might be important for a communist, anti-Zionist Jew to resist such a claim, in order to claim his right to speak Jewishness (a right that was in fact denied to him more than once[53]). Waten insists on the differences within the category "Jew":

> I do not believe Catholics or Protestants are ethnic groups nor are the Jews. Jews are many things, national, religious, secular and cultural.... The Jews in the Communist Party of Israel are Jews ... and not even the most pious rabbi in Israel would doubt it.[54]

The end of Waten's argument can be just glib in its universalisation of difference ("There are great differences among Jews as among all people here and everywhere"). But it might also be read as an early moment of resistance to the "monolithic" homogenisation and essentialising which can be conducted under the sign of ethnicity. National, religious, secular and cultural identifications cut across each other and across any single ethnic identity; singly or together they cannot provide ethnicity with an

essence. The argument thus also undermines assimilationism, a *form of* "ethnism" rather than its opposite, grounded in the notion of an homogenising, normative ethnicity.

Again we need to differentiate specific political (and writing) occasions rather than over-generalising an ideological structure. Waten's writing occurred at the height of official assimilationism which, as Hodge and Mishra show, affected the cultural as well as the political sphere.[55] In mid-1958 Waten was advised by the editors of *Span*, an Australian-Asian anthology, that his story "Mother" would not be included despite having been accepted. The reason: "it was really unsuitable for this anthology as a story about an alien *not* being assimilated and running into difficulties here — completely wrong as a picture of Australia to distribute to our Asian friends." Waten replied:

> Your point that `Mother' is actually unsuitable as it is about an alien not being assimilated doesn't seem very valid. Many aliens are not assimilated and nobody knows that better than people in Asia who have read about the White Australia policy ... and the discrimination against many foreign migrants and coloured people. Or do you really think the book will be a success in Asia if it merely provides a sugary Good Neighbour Council picture of the lives of foreigners in Australia?[56]

A little later Waten also describes the subtleties of assimilationism in fiction, the problem of "reinforcing stereotypes, thus sustaining the politics of assimilation."[57] Of an American Jewish novel he writes, it "suggests that the sense of Jewish difference still remains in the US but is now acceptable, easily accommodated to the non-Jewish middle-class point of view on foreigners. The Jews provide fun for all."[58] Later still, "after" multiculturalism, he remarks that certain commentators have endowed migrants with "an excessive exotic nobility"; and he interrogates the concept "ethnic," noting its curious Australian use, its awkward history, its dicey politics:

> *Ethnic* is misleading as it is used only to describe migrants from non-English speaking countries, from Europe or Asia, although it can as well be applied to Australians of Anglo-Saxon or Celtic origin and their customs and characteristics. Once it was a put-down word, as having to do with peoples not Christian or Jewish, heathen in fact. Something of that odium still hovers around *Ethnic*: it implies inferiority, at the best it is patronising.
>
> Yet in Australian history, *Ethnic* represents an advance in Australian thinking.... Only a few decades ago newcomers from European countries were variously described by such offensive terms as wogs, reffos, ikey mos and, of course, dagos. Few novels or short stories ... presented these migrants objectively, as other than stereotyped characters, often unpleasant stereotypes.
>
> So now there is some reason for the use of the term *Ethnic*, as it is generally used, but this hardly justifies the inclusion of Aboriginal stories ... in a volume of stories titled *Ethnic Australia*. Ethnics they may be, but they are the original

> inhabitants of this country with an entirely different culture and deserve a volume to themselves. They are not newcomers.[59]

Of course the politics of the final point remain double-edged.[60] For the moment, though, we can note Waten's conjuring of ethnicity against a continued suspicion of *ethnism* as both marginalising and homogenising. Here the politics of inclusion which still define the larger project are held in suspension between the two impossible alternatives.

Post-structuralist interest in migrant writing is self-evidently "interested": it has an investment in discovering writing which "contributes to the formation of resistances to the absolutist claims made on behalf of any culture ... [and] a healthy scepticism towards any bid for universal truths."[61] As far as absolutist ethnic (and in this sense national) definitions of culture are concerned we can say that Waten largely shares this sceptical project. Of course he deploys a pre-structuralist language or, to use a different comparison, in this field he writes from a modernist rather than a post-modernist position. Waten is perhaps the earliest commentator on Australian literature to make non-Anglo-Celtic writing in Australia visible as a topic *for* Australian literature. Much of his writing thus prefigures more recent arguments about ethnic difference, hybridity and marginality. While migrant writing is not seen as a radical disruption to Australian literature — here as elsewhere the project is reformist — it is located as a site from which an "Anglo-Saxon" (and class) cultural dominance might indeed be disrupted.

But sooner or later we find ourselves up against nothing less than a "bid for universal truths." Ultimately Waten's pre-structuralism and modernism make all the difference. It is difficult to push his arguments beyond the level of cultural *diversity* to that of cultural *difference*.[62] Beyond mere diversity, for Waten, lies the universalist notion of a progressive history, anti-nostalgic but also wholly optimistic, wholly positive (in both the philosophical and ethical sense of the term). History, in other words, has a goal. "Australian literature" is not perceived as a site of oppression just because (but also just in so far as) it is perceived as aligned with this positive history. The migrant subject too has a goal. Waten's migrant subjects, his own migrant subjectivities, may be double, divided, even stranded between two selves, but they are still subjects in transition, subjects on the way to somewhere. *Authenticity* is still an end (if not, interestingly, an origin).

A teleological history in this sense will almost certainly be "assimilationist," absorbing or dissolving all differences as it progresses towards its goal. Therefore, despite his insistence on the migrant voice, Waten's position is arguably available for recuperation by the dominant culture with a minimum of disruption, for it continues to identify (with) the nation as a site of positive meaning. Migrants, non-Anglos, are different but perhaps the differences are "inessential." But rather than reduce Waten's arguments to this final position, I want to leave my readings between the two possibilities: anti-ethnism and anti-assimilationism on one side, assimilation (or assimilability) on the other. It is the shifting space between the two that defines Waten's cultural politics in this field.

There is no fundamental change in Waten's discourse in its final phase, but we can note the shifting construction of his position from, as it were, Jewish to migrant to "non-English" or non "Anglo-Saxon-Protestant."[63] As early as 1970 Waten recognises in his interest in Yiddish/Jewish immigrant culture the larger question of "foreign migrant writers" and then non-English speaking writers: Greek, Turkish and Italian-language writers, Carboni, Wenz, Stefan von Kotze, Velia Ercole and more recent writers join Goldhar and Bergner as exemplars.[64] The task is no longer to bring forth the few migrant writers and place them alongside Australian literature but rather to take a position among the many migrant/non-Anglo-Celtic writers past and present. The links between "all writers of non-English backgrounds" are defined in the very same phrases Waten uses to define his own writing: "Loneliness, homesickness, language and cultural barriers, misunderstandings between the newcomers and the locals, divided families or the sharp conflicts between parents and their children brought up in Australia and representing different worlds and social and cultural mores."[65]

This self-situation goes together with a more developed concern to name the ethnicity of Australian literature as "Anglo-Saxon-Protestant."[66] Still, the insistence in these later essays is on the inevitable integrative dominance of English rather than foreign-language literatures: "the language in Australia for the expression of national identity is English."[67] The goal is to become an "Australian writer" however much one writes from inside one's community (and however much the category itself is tranformed).[68] Waten's 1970 essay is again perhaps the first such essay, on non-

English language writers, to appear in the mainstream cultural press. It strains at the very limits of a nationalist discourse within which, however, it is finally constrained:

> It is my belief that all these foreign language writers have contributed to Australian literature, although they are far from the Australian or wider English tradition. They should not be ignored if Australian literature is to further develop its individual quality. These writers describe, among other things, elements of character which are bound to become part of the Australian character when the foreign components in present day Australian society have been absorbed.
>
> Certainly there is no renewal of foreign language literatures in Australia. They stop with the first generation migrants....
>
> The foreign language literatures in Australia remain enclosed in their communities, but English writing is the main thread linking the lives of the widely different peoples living here. English has proved to be able to express the different national identities which now make up the Australian people. The increasing presence of the foreign migrant in Australian literature is evidence that it has grown up and that Australia is no longer a country of people of exclusively British origin.[69]

Multiculturalism *avant la lettre* or "foreignness" delivered to the dominant culture merely as evidence of its own maturity? The Australian tradition and Australian character still represent the outer boundaries; there is still an organicist conception of the relationship between literature, character and people which defines the nation. Yet within these boundaries, within the nation, we find multiple traditions, multiple characters, indeed multiple national identities. Then again, perhaps all these are launched on the one historical trajectory.

The later essays are caught between assimilation and appropriation. It is possible for the non-English speaking migrants to make English "their own";[70] Waten thus celebrates the "moment when a particular literature is enlarged by new groups in the population finding their voices, through writers that have emerged from these groups. The moment can be determined when the writers begin to use the language of the country rather than the language of their origins." Even more optimistic, and more assimilationist: "the `ethnic' writers will come of age and take their work a stage further when they begin from where they are, when they start to look with real perception and love at the landscape around them."[71]

We are a long way from the micro-politics of transgression and marginality, for here it is the fate or duty of the margins to enter the mainstream. Nikos Papastergiadis's description of the orthodox reception of migrant writing seems to apply to Waten no less than to the literary establishment:

> Literature written by "migrants" has often been described as literature *between* cultures, as if it unproblematically occupied the liminal spaces outside, the transitional space from one and towards another, or was the keystone that marked the

> boundary between two separate spaces.... It was either in the process of *becoming*, that is immature, or registered as that small and slightly odd item at the edge of sight. Hence the virtue of literature by migrants was limited to the "natural" or unmediated expressions of exotic or childish authenticity....
>
> Such conceptions sought to incorporate migrant literature selectively and domesticate it within a more stable and greater unity. In the last decade the monolith of Australian identity has prospered by pointing to new entrants in the formation of its *being*. Contradictory origins have not posed a contradiction to this evolution in identity - possibly because the contradictions have been wittingly or unwittingly erased in order to secure entry as a symbolic or real contribution to the national identity.[72]

This catches Waten's arguments in a number of its threads (the notion of a literature in a state of becoming, the project of securing entry into the national identity). Otherwise, and significantly, it just misses: migrant writing for Waten is always more than odd, exotic, marginal; it is always a political question; and the question of hybridity (and racism) is never erased by nationality.

Waten's arguments on migration, ethnicity and assimilation reproduce an orthodox liberal humanism that argues for equality and tolerance (for democracy and reason). This liberal humanism is scarely a unified field however. In one direction it could indeed produce the politics of assimilation: "we" give everyone an equal chance to become Australian. In another direction it undoes the cultural centrism at the heart of assimilation. Waten's sense of the mainstream tradition is, at least, an increasingly inclusive one. That its Anglo-Saxon-Protestant ethnicity has been decentred — historically passed by — is virtually taken for granted. Thus while minority writers are urged into the mainstream, there is little suggestion that they (nevertheless) remain its perpetual supplements. Migration and foreignness become, rather, *constitutive themes* of contemporary Australian literature.

As these points suggest, it is not possible to write of Waten's views on migrant writing as if his discourse were merely innocent. He has a gate-keeping role, a considerable authority (present in the modesty of his critical demeanour) as an Australian-migrant writer. He has his own stake in Australian literature and in defining its centre and its margins as here rather than there: the "here" is clearly not Anglo-Saxon-Protestant, yet it clearly is "Australian." His prescriptions for migrant writing are those which allow his own fiction to figure unambiguously as part of Australian literature. Waten's critical interventions were clearly enabling for his (and for others') fiction; and yet their commitment to positive notions of both "Australia" and "literature" render them part of an oppressive discourse for later migrant/multicultural

writers.

The question of positionality is crucial. Waten writes from a position at home in the majority culture, and this can produce the argument that ethnic writers must "begin from where they are," as if this were one benign place. At the same time he can show that this "home" is never ethnically pure or stable. Waten identifies himself — sometimes from *outside* — with the migrant, ethnic or non-Anglo writers. He clears a space to speak migrant or Jewish; but he refuses to speak only migrant or Jewish. The terms of Waten's criticism do make migrant writing available for recuperation by the majority culture, but it is a recuperation that can only operate against any notion of "monolithic" ethnicity.

3. "Facing the Different and Indifferent Australian World"[73]

In their introduction to *Striking Chords*, Gunew and Longley outline a "very generalised view of non-Anglo-Celtic Australian writing." Their three categories are not evolutionary and may occur in the one writer:

> The first ... deals with those texts which juxtapose the old and new cultures. Such writing, often nostalgic and elegiac, is usually perceived to be the only form that so-called migrant writing may take. And indeed, this is the only group which can properly be termed *migrant* writing.
>
> The second group often corresponds with the second generation after immigration and may be described as taking up the position of translation and mediation.... At home in both languages and cultures, these writers translate one reality into the other and mediate between the two....
>
> The third group is made up of those who forge new languages and new representations.... They foreground the transgressive possibilities of incorporating elements from other languages and other systems of representation into the more conventional forms, not least in their blurring of the traditional boundaries between speech and writing.[74]

Waten's fiction can be located across the first and second of these groups. *Distant Land* juxtaposes old and new cultures, but here as elsewhere the juxtaposition does not generate nostalgia for the old culture, at least not without irony. It does generate the elegiac, almost inevitably one might say for a story of a Jewish family across the course of the twentieth century, but here too elegy is almost always accompanied by *anxiety*.[75] It is, in other words, rendered symptomatic of a present lived contradiction whose resolution lies in the future rather than the past. The narrative of an "irrevocable" history is at once deeply elegiac — for whole ways of life are lost — and unavoidably optimistic — for new ways of life are created.

Although born outside Australia Waten can also be positioned with the second

generation immigrants, as he positioned himself: "For writers like myself a second childhood was unnecessary and we were able to write about our foreign communities as Australian writers ... knowing those communities from the inside."[76] Not only can we say that Waten is "at home" in both cultures, much of his work, both fictional and non-fictional, represents an *argument for* this possibility. His writing and his career, as emphasised above, can be understood exactly in terms of translation and mediation.

The third category is the least applicable, in ways indicated in the first section of this chapter. This is a good reason to begin my analysis of Waten's later "migrant" fiction with this very question of language, representation and realism. It is important in the context of migrant writing to focus on the *literariness* of Waten's realism, for the alternative is to understand it merely as lack, as the pre-literary speech of the migrant. But to narrow the question: how can we read Waten's utterly conventional realism *as* migrant writing, as strategic within the politics of cultural difference?

First, it is important not to underestimate the text's self-inscribed, self-inscribing function of "doing something for the first time." Naively or acutely, this is how Waten constructed his own "migrant" career and thus the occasion of his texts. Perhaps the very notion that there are *stories as yet untold* is exclusively realist. In any case it brings an additional weight to the burden of truth-telling, the burden of history, already inscribed in realism. The first-person semi-autobiographical stories of *Alien Son* become the third-person "chronicles" of the subsequent novels, "a chronicle of non-Anglo-Saxon migrant life in Australia."[77] There is a (realist) burden of representativeness which carries its own consequences for representation. If Waten shares this perspective on migrant writing with "majority" criticism, there is nevertheless a different politics at stake in the act of chronicling.

Second, Waten's realism participates in the universalising humanist discourse described earlier. Let me take as read the overwhelming deconstruction of both realist and humanist meta-narratives. Still I want to articulate their specific significations for the migrant occasion in Waten's writing. The point is to emphasise the political charge that these impossible positions could seem to bear, for in the context of migration and ethnicity, realism could be part of an anti-racist, anti-"ethnist" argument. Here realism functions as the sign of a "universal" language (beneath languages) in which "all things worth saying may be said."[78] In a particular sense it is therefore the language of

translation in which cultural difference can be uttered in terms of the essential human truths (beneath cultural difference). Truth, reason, ideals are translatable across cultures and languages to the extent that they participate in this universal humanity. As with every theory of language, this is also a theory of subjectivity. In realism the subject may be divided between languages but not *in* language: there remains an essential self for which it is always theoretically possible to find the right words.

Finally, the meaning of realism for Waten's migrant writing is its self-situation in a deep novelistic tradition and an Australian (realist) tradition. To make these claims is to argue that migrant histories are national history. Rather than approaching a "strange" or exotic sub-culture in order to report back to the centre, Waten's texts speak on the assumption that here, within the culture, there is a story to be told — which can be told like any other story. There *is* a primary sense in which the story is related for the majority culture to hear. The implied audience is "Australian." But rather than an "anxiety to please the more powerful on whom life depends,"[79] Waten's writings are calculated to resist ghettoisation as simply migrant or even Jewish writing; they resist that "very limited space" assigned to the migrant voice.

Linguistically, formally, Waten's fiction is not marked by difference. On the contrary, its realism is a powerful signifier of *belonging*, first to the realm of "serious writing," second to the realm of serious Australian writing:

> One can confidently assert that in the future there will be much more writing about the non-English communities in Australia.... Of course I only mean serious writers and serious writing. There is already plenty of caricature writing, mostly produced from the outside of the non-English communities.[80]

One aspect of this aesthetic is that Waten renders the "foreign" speech of his characters in what one critic calls "flat standard English."[81] It is easy to forget that they are not speaking English or to be uncertain what language is being spoken. But here as elsewhere Waten is less nostalgic about authenticity than his critics. He does introduce Yiddish words, Yiddish syntax and phrasing, for example, but rather than mimicry it is a matter of slightly inflecting English, strategically placing non-English words or proverbs, shifting the register slightly away from the idiomatic. This is a difficult point to establish economically through short quotations, but let me select a passage from each novel, one narration, the other dialogue:

> None of them could make conversation with Joshua after they had shaken hands with him and wished him long life after the custom. He sat in a corner

> with his head bowed, sighing loudly, seemingly oblivious of the others who spoke in hushed voices among themselves. If sighs could remain hanging in the air, thought Mr Mandel, Joshua Cooper's sighs would remain hanging in his son's house until the end of all generations. (*Distant Land*, 153)
>
> Falkstein repeated to himself something from his father and grandfather: "`Who is rich? The man who is content with his fate.'I am content with my fate, the fate of a rich man," he thought, a bleak smile breaking out from the ends of his mouth.
>
> When he came home he quoted from the Book of Zohar:
>
> "Men fall only in order to rise."
>
> Then he added:
>
> "I rose and so did you, Sofie. We have risen to riches. Now I am content. I shouldn't care if I died next week. I don't imagine I have very long to live."
>
> She coughed sceptically.
>
> "You behave like a man who expects to be here in twenty years time," she said. "You're reaching out for more all the time. To take it with you? You know, Joseph, I think it gives you pleasure to be alive."
>
> He shrugged his shoulders. The hearts of men and the bottom of the ocean are difficult to fathom, he said to himself, recalling an old Jewish proverb. (*So Far No Further*, 68)

In both quotations a relative sense of "non-Englishness" is suggested through minor shifts in syntax and diction, through an unidiomatic formality or proverbiality. The second passage is also deeply ironical in its traditional references (the language of the dialogue is Yiddish or Polish). There *is* a "standard English" omniscient narrator against which foreignness can be gauged, yet the narrating voice shifts easily inside that otherness ("...after the custom") and between indirect discourse and dialogue. The English might, then, be less standard than the critic implies. Its task is indeed to give the majority culture access to a foreign culture, but it avoids the "excessive exotic" by playing subtly across the borders of familiarity and unfamiliarity. There is a point to the (Australian) reader's recognition of the foreigners as both the same and different.

The "flatness" of the prose also warrants comment. In an analysis of Yiddish as a sub-cultural vernacular, as an "affront to the dominant tongue," Maria Damon lights on the "hyperverbalism" of certain Yiddish-influenced English-speaking performers whose rhetoric "consistently undermine[s] a teleological narrative that would privilege a `moral of the story'.... The point of the story is to keep telling the story."[82] Nothing could be further from Waten's writing, perhaps, than hyperverbalism and anti-teleology. But the very contrast, with what we might take as a latent possibility in Waten's own Yiddish-influenced English, re-figures the novels' rhetoric as a form of disciplining, a rigorous ordering and bringing into complementarity of volatile cultural differences so that the moral of the story can indeed be brought to a conclusion (even in the later novel which only goes "so far"). The construction of his

novels through very short sub-sections is one mark of this disciplining.

Part of the contrast is that Waten does not articulate his cultural politics in terms of defensive survival on the margins but rather of expanding his own inwardness to the majority culture, clearing a more generous space for the non-Anglo story *within* the Australian story. Perhaps this does demand controlled subtlety and a sort of commitment to the mundane (which is at times merely banal). Still, against the dislocating language that Damon analyses, Waten's own prose starts to look a little less stable, less self-evident, than it wants to. Cultural difference, we might say, leaks out from under the story's moral.

Let me turn to the level of theme and character, reading to this extent *with* the grain of Waten's realism. *Distant Land* is the story of a family from pre-first world war Poland/Czarist Russia, their migration to Australia (1925) and then their post-war "success." *So Far No Further* focuses on the children of post-war immigrants from two families, one Jewish, one Italian; it ends with a romantic attachment between the Italian son and the Jewish daughter. It will be evident that Waten is interested in the "migrant success story." But *pace* Bosworth and Wilton, while there is virtually always "successful" assimilation, worldly success is accompanied by contradiction, pathos and anxiety, often grotesquely. The novels work, as we might expect, by posing one form of assimilation against another.

In *Distant Land* Shoshanah Kuperschmidt successfully becomes Susan Cooper as she works to ensure the economic, social and professional success of her family. In the process she readily abandons religious practices and what her husband Joshua would call "ideals." Her voice becomes "strident and harsh and her eyes ... hard and rapacious" (66). At the markets she offends her fellow Jews by price-cutting and working on the Sabbath:

> Mr Leibel Schwartz lost his temper and said bitterly: "Your parents would die of shame if they knew you desecrated the Sabbath by working on it, let alone taking the bread out of the mouths of your fellow-Jews."
>
> "What did you all come here for?" she asked. "To make a success. To make money. You can't in this country unless you turn your back on the old ways. Haven't you all done that?... So it is here; so I must be. I don't feel I have to apologise to anyone about it."
>
> And that was that and her competitors knew it....
>
> "Better to stay poor than to become a lunatic chasing the pound," Israel Cohen said.
>
> "With a pound you can buy things, without it nothing," said Joseph Gold. "I'm afraid we'll all have to become lunatics." (65)

She sacrifices any of the "old ways" that impede her success, even as she clings to "traditional, even superstitious beliefs" (73). This contradiction is significant thematically in the novel in marking the course of (vulgar) assimilation. Judaism for Shoshanah becomes superstition and social climbing, with not much in between except cooking. The contradiction she lives, by suppressing, is suggested by her death from cancer.

Yet, as the quoted passage shows, the novel does not allow any single position of moral superiority towards her. This is magnified throughout by the way the text distributes reader sympathy. She has her own pragmatic integrity ("Shoshanah has no shame; she is frank: `God loves the poor and helps the rich'"[83]); the idea of "being realistic," moreover, is a self-reflexive figure in the text. She continues to be *Shoshanah* for the reader and for Joshua and to command his love, a desirability it is difficult for the reader to resist. Joshua, by contrast, is easily ashamed and for the most part ineffectual, but also for the most part the centre of judgement for the reader.

Australia as the promised land is also treated ironically. The novels are happy to show — as a matter of fact — that economic and social success is available to Jews in Australia in ways that it was not in the old (pre-revolutionary) countries. But this is scarcely due to anything "Australian" in Australia, only to a relative absence of institutionalised anti-semitism (there are limits here too: a "successfully assimilated" Jew is denied membership of an exclusive golf club in the story "Three Generations"[84]). As Carl Harrison-Ford comments of *So Far No Further*, although the second generation is moving out of the "closed, racial world of their parents" they do not move into an "open, Australian life ... an egalitarian, free alternative."[85]

In *Distant Land* assimilation turns Jewishness into something that Joshua, for one, scarcely recognises. For him the promise, not of wealth but of a place where Jews can be Jews without fear or discrimination, means turning himself into a "half-clown, half-trader" (37), half-thief, half-comedian (61). The novels return memorably to this scene of self-consciousness, absurdity, grotesqueness, to an *assigned* identity and double dislocation — as the phrases suggest, between one thing and another neither of which is originary.[86] Joshua's new "career" means changing his name, turning himself into a German goy rather than a Polish Jew, and shaving off his beard, the very mark of his Jewishness. Instead of the intellectual he had aspired to be, he becomes an

unqualified travelling optician ironically known as the Professor. The question the novel poses, in its own terms, is whether these excruciating violations of identity do, necessarily, violate anything "essential."

Both sides of the question are emphasised (indeed the dislocations of identity can be fatal). Split subjectivities are distributed over different "character sites": Saul Greenberg, the onetime unionist who despite himself becomes a factory owner, alongside Berel Singer, a secular Jew: "His concept of Jewishness was a kind of secular Judaism which he held with the same fervour as a religious Jew" (42). Berel claims that Australia has given him everything he wanted short of a fortune: "`A living, no Jew-hatred, and the kind of freedom I dreamt of in old Russia when I was a young man and belonged to a Socialist group'" (32). But in the same breath he declares that the "`Australian world plays havoc with Jewish life.... If you get too deeply into it you are lost and you become like the Australian Jews, suspended between two worlds'" (33).

Joshua remarks on Berel's "desperate battle to preserve Jewishness in surroundings completely goyishe, far more so than the country they had left behind" (33). It is Berel who takes Joshua into the travelling optician business ("`There's only hawking left for a Jewish intellectual.... There's hawking and hawking of course,'" 35). For all his apparent optimism, Berel himself is the figure suspended between two worlds. His own children refuse to speak Yiddish and they find Jewish food inappropriate to the climate, though still better than cold mutton! As Berel talks, Joshua observes his face slip from one expression to another, from candour and earnestness to "a sly, smirking smoothness" and yet sadness (36). The novel invites us to read these as character attributes, certainly, but there is always more than personality at stake.

Berel dies soon after the Second World War of "some wasting disease" (120) and his death signals the irrevocable passing of the old Jewish world:

> "This is the first time I have been in the synagogue for a long time.... And now I come to mourn the death of Europe's Jews. Joshua, the Jewish world we knew is dead. It can never be recalled...."
>
> Truly he was mourning for the end of his own life as well as for the dead of Europe....
>
> Joshua glanced curiously at the man who for so long had been an unbeliever.
>
> "Now for the rest of my days I shall treasure everything that belongs to us," Berel continued. "These houses of worship as well as our culture." (120)

At the service for the Jewish dead which follows, Joshua experiences a moment of

bitterness towards the Name of God: "What good was this Kaddish they were intoning with such fervour?" (122). The web of beliefs sustaining the culture, at once religious, communal and intellectual, has been irrevocably dispersed. But, for better and worse, the separate strands are available for the invention of new identities.[87]

As critics have remarked, the pattern of generational change and conflict structures all of Waten's migrant writings. The children become "Australian" no matter how traditional their migrant parents (*willy nilly* is a recurrent term, significant of Waten's particular historicism). There are positive and negative versions of this process of integration and, less remarked, a recurrent pattern of relationships: of a number of children (usually three) it is the youngest and least "ethnic" who becomes the authentic bearer into the future of the ideals of the old culture. The youngest child also reconciles mother and father, following the latter's ideals but with the former's looks! The point is to establish the continuities beneath the discontinuities of migration: "Jewishness" itself guarantees nothing especially as it is reshaped through the Australian social or political system. Again the pattern is a self-reflexive figure, here of the novel's capacity to carry forth the positive values of the old culture into a transformation of the new.

Berel has three sons: Joseph and Nathan, partners in a clothing factory, and Morris, a medical student. Berel feels certain of the two eldest, for "they were traditional Jewish business men even without Yiddish" (42), but not the youngest. Yet he is closest to Morris:

> who had fewer dealings with Jews and spoke less Yiddish than his brothers, [yet] was nevertheless more sympathetic to his father's strivings. He respected his father's intellect.
>
> .... The medical student was realising Berel's dream of studying and becoming a professional man, a doctor, of all things, and not a business man. In his heart of hearts Berel despised business men, only respecting men of learning. (41-42)

The pattern in Joshua's family is similar: Ezekial, the eldest, becomes a barrister, a business man, a very devout Jew and Zionist. His Jewishness, in the argument of the text, is both too much and not enough. In the book's historical argument he is one figure of modern Judaism: aggressively ethnist and political under the sign of religion. We observe him from Joshua's perspective:

> Ezekial had grown heavy and pompous with his success. Since he had become his father-in-law's partner his conversation was almost entirely about business, take-overs and expansion. On Saturdays he went to synagogue with Mr Mandel and returned home full of communal affairs and severely critical of those members of the

> board of the synagogue who failed to attend the service.... Ezekial had become very devout since his mother's death.... Let him be a religious Jew if he wants to be; it gives him solace and uplift as well, Joshua said to himself. He was not Joshua's idea of a religious Jew nevertheless. To his mind his father's uncle, Reb Moishe Eliazar, was the criterion of a religious Jew and not his son, who was like a convert, more holy than the holy, yet whose religion seemed very synthetic indeed. (155)

Ruth, Joshua's daughter, is a more sympathetic figure but also marked by ambition, in her case for the success of her doctor husband. Because of her absorption in Jewish society, Joshua finds her "more of a stranger to him than some of the people he saw every day in the country with whom he discussed the latest news" (156). The contrast is with the youngest child Benjamin, also a lawyer but of left-wing sympathies. Joshua describes him as "an Australian, a goy more than a Jew, only interested in Australian affairs, without any Jewish feeling" (156). Yet it is to Benjamin finally that Joshua feels closest.

These conflicts are played out in the novel's "climax" when Benjamin announces his intention to marry out, to marry a "shiksa." The event is used in the novel to draw its argument to a close and assign its characters to their final positions. Joshua's immediate reaction is shock, but as he sorts through his responses he can find nothing to say against the marriage that is not based on superstition or emotions "having their origins not in reason but in obscure feelings stemming from the dark past and the history of his people" (165). The passage towards this conclusion is difficult, for Joshua has a deeply-ingrained "suspicion of gentiles"; Benjamin's children "would be lost to the Jewish people" (165). In addition, the narrative underscores the mundane "Australianness" of Thelma, Benjamin's partner. Her speech, her attitude, her very glances are non-Jewish, the food she cooks is gentile food with "an alien smell" (164). What wins her to Joshua are her views on anti-semitism and racism: "Perhaps in our time racial inequality will be abolished all over the world and all people will mingle freely" (165). She has "ideals" (164). Even so, when he reflects on what Shoshanah would have thought of the marriage, he is disquieted by a feeling of disloyalty towards her.

Ruth is caught in between. She is scarcely religious, "nor did she have her mother's collection of traditional beliefs and superstitions" (162). Yet for her inter-marriage "`means the end of Jewishness'" (163). For Shoshanah marrying out had been "a genuine fear as though of death itself" (132). Ruth's fear can never quite be separated in Joshua's mind from her social and professional ambitions. Earlier in the

book Joshua remarks that inter-marriage is "the only tenet of Judaism, or what they believe is Judaism, which the community clings to. Everything else has gone by the board" (132).

There is no ambivalence for Ezekial. He cuts Benjamin completely and argues with his father ("`[H]e won't be dead for me,' Joshua said. `I'm not a religious fanatic.' `You're a Jewish father.'" 171). Further, Ezekial attempts to persuade Joshua to sell the family home in the country, and to live in Melbourne amongst Jews. Joshua decides to sell but also to stay in the country, indeed to board in the Wimmera Hotel ("After all he was not a stranger to living with gentiles," 174). For Ezekial this amounts to "choosing to live a Christian life in preference to a Jewish one" (177).

The question of living in Israel is also raised, but Joshua hesitates before the Jewish life Israel offers, perhaps the Jewish life of which he had always dreamed:

> He really did not know what he wanted; none of his old ideals satisfied him any longer. They had become shadowy, intangible like his own past which seemed lost in mists. Perhaps the truth was that unbeknown to himself he had formed deep ties with the new land, he had become part of it, and it was from it that new ideals would arise. (157)

This is the novel's unambiguous assimilationist argument (the "perhaps" is merely conventional). Joshua's "new" life, his ideals, are to be found here and now (for better or worse, willy nilly), not in the past, in secular Yiddish culture or traditional beliefs; not in their contemporary hyper-orthodox politico-religious forms; and not elsewhere, in the promised land of Israel. This amounts to an argument against Jewish separatism *and* "vulgar assimilation" (virtue scarcely resides in "Australia") in which the two are rendered virtually equivalent. By the end of the novel Ezekial strikes Benjamin as "`much closer to an extreme Christian conservative than to a Jew like myself or even [Joshua]'" (185). Joshua demurs, forseeing the possibility of anti-semitism once again compelling Jews to come together. But Benjamin's is closest to the final word: "`It's different now.... Now we are divided on the same lines as all other people'" (185).

The tendency of the argument is consistent with Waten's critical writing and much of his other fiction.[88] Jewishness (and, despite Waten's own warnings, ethnicity) is not an essence but an "evolution"; it is religious, cultural, social and political and so closely determined by time and place. We could emphasise Waten's insistence on "a multiplicity of ways of being Jewish, on the right to self-definition and the right to refuse definition" (in Damon's terms).[89] On the other hand we could emphasise the

texts' programmatically-opposed progressive and reactionary ways of being Jewish or being assimilated. There is a multiplicity of ways of being Jewish but they are not all equal. In *Distant Land* as elsewhere a singular, unambiguous argument is complicated only by the number of instances across which it is dispersed (thus the dispersal of the reader's desire).

The point is neither to abandon Jewishness/ethnicity in the pursuit of mere assimilation nor to cling to mere ethnicity in the face of historical change. Ethnicity, we might say, is necessary but never sufficient. To argue which, the novels must figure an authentic form of integration (which will figure their own integrative form). The optimistic resolution goes something like this: ideals which can be expressed as a form of Jewishness can be translated without loss into other cultural and political forms, and without compromising Jewishness:

> [H]e thought of his life, from the ealiest days when he had excelled in the Talmud and when he played the violin and later when he became a good linguist, serving a useful purpose during the war against the Nazis. Now he never played the violin and he had almost forgotten his languages, except the English he spoke. Even his Yiddish and German were now imperfect. He had not achieved what he had wanted; he had not ralised his ambitions. But he had not lost his ideals, he told himself. Once he thought only of Jewish causes. Now he believed that his people and the rest of mankind could not be separated into different worlds. It did not make him less a Jew. It made him more a Jew. For him a Jew was one who respected all mankind, loved justice and believed in intellect. He would give expression to his ideals in this town which he now believed he was destined to stay in. (187)

Joshua successfully "re-invents" his Jewish identity. What was loneliness for him becomes "perfect rest" (188), a significant phrase in a novel of Jewish migration.

In many ways, as we have seen, Waten is resisting Jewish essentialism rather than Anglo-Australian assimilationism. Hence his concern to argue against the primacy of ethnic difference (or of what he argues elsewhere is not really an ethnic difference at all). There is only an indirect concern with the politics of group survival, perhaps the principal trope of Jewish fiction and history. At the same time the texts do work to identify the kinship between ethnism and assimilationism, and to name the ethnicity of the Anglo-Saxon-Protestant or Celtic-Catholic host cultures. In *So Far No Further*, for example, Paul Avanzo's relation to his Italian/Catholic identity is juxtaposed to the Irish-Catholic Australian (itself dominant-dominated). Certainly the textual politics are not directed primarily at "resisting integration." But perhaps we can rewrite Jurgensen's terms to claim that the texts are designed to resist *exclusion* (the actual effect of assimilation), indeed to *demand* integration. The question then is: on

whose terms?

The narrating position in Waten's fiction, I have argued, can never be located (wholly) outside the minority cultures. One effect of this is to suggest that the "migrant" culture does not depend upon the gaze from outside for its self-definition (we might foreshadow a contrast with *They're a Weird Mob*). Waten's anti-essentialism, but also his realist universalism, is present in his assumption that he can "do" Italian or Greek just as well as Jewish migrants. "The Knife" suggests what is enabling and disabling in this assumption. Waten takes on the stereotype of Italian With Knife and rewrites it from the migrant's perspective; but (in the terms in which realism poses the issue) he might only land on a further "stereotype." In this sense the story may not get beyond "sympathy,"[90] although the series of transpositions whereby it signifies *migration*, rather than Italian-ness, is more complex. The knife is not the Italian migrant's weapon but his link with his homeland. It becomes a weapon through the generic typing of Plinio by his Australian antagonists. A story about identity, "The Knife" is also a story about masculinity, for the father and grandfather's knife has been passed on to Plinio by his mother. But the knife - as home, law, phallus - can never reassert the masculine identity disrupted by migration. Its rise as a weapon is its fall from meaning. Used by his father for wood-carving, "his mark of self-sufficiency," its use as a weapon by Plinio marks his ultimate loss of self-sufficiency. Waten dramatises the process whereby all "foreign migrants" are "forced to experience themselves generically" as foreign. In "A Child of War and Revolutions" the narrator remarks ironically on being taken for a German — a "Squarehead as well as Ikey Mo" — during the first war: "All foreigners were Germans" (*Love and Rebellion*, 13).

Serge Liberman has suggested that the history of Jewish migration is paradigmatic of "ethnic minority" migration. The argument, from a writer more securely within the post-war Jewish community than Waten, (nevertheless) nicely suggests the thematic ground of Waten's fiction:

> [The] issues involve matters of adaptation in a new environment.... For the Jew, the matter of adaptation is reflected in the question: What is home? Is home the place the Jew has had to abandon? Is home the place he has come to? Is it Israel, both the symbolic and the tangible geographic home of the Jew? Or is it the world of the memory on the one hand or of anticipation on the other, ... a place suspended in inner fantasy and in physical limbo?...
>
> Adaptation, too, is reflected in the striving after physical security along with attempts to rise socially, economically and professionally.... by the search for an identity in an alien environment, in an environment variously hostile, indifferent or

> accepting, with the corollary issues and tensions that this raises: the opposing attractions towards assimilation and towards increasing isolation and separatism from his sources; one's relation to ... one's tradition with its values and forms, sometimes at the expense of living in the wider social/cultural/political milieu ... the converse being no less a dilemma; the conflicts between the generations as a reflection of these tensions...; and, at the extremes of the identity conflicts — and of belongingness — questions such as intermarriage.[91]

For Liberman, the emphasis falls on the balance between survival and "success" (the conventional trope). For Waten, by contrast, the emphasis falls on what we might call the problem of modernity. This is a significant difference of interpretation, a different politics, which I want to consider before concluding.

From the beginning of *Distant Land*, the Jewish community is shown to be in transition and, in a sense, hybrid. This is the novel's very starting-point. Joshua is a prodigy in Hebrew and Talmudic studies but he is also attending a Russian school: "Without knowing it Mr Kuperschmidt, although devout and conservative, had been affected by the break-down of the old ghetto world, and had set his mind on giving his son a secular education, an education that would bring a university degree and a profession" (5). Joshua learns Russian, Ukrainian and Polish, as well as Yiddish and Hebrew. He reads the Russian writers, Chekhov, Gorki, Lermontov, Tolstoy, and contemporary Yiddish writers such as Aleichem: "Always he oscillated from one world to another — from the small Jewish world to the mysterious, fascinating greater outside world and then back to the Jewish again" (6).[92]

An enigma in Joshua's mind — the meaning of the Christian or gentile world in relation to the Jewish — is thematised in the novel as an opposition between the progressive and regressive forces of history. Of course the oppositions are not interchangeable, for the latter cuts across the former. To Joshua, the Christian world means anti-semitism and inhumanity. Yet it also provides learning: "there were teachers and pupils who were dedicated to the highest ideals, to the love of all peoples and the betterment of humanity" (8). Judaism provides him with his ideals but also with a mistrust of gentiles which, however justified locally, is ultimately irrational:

> During his last years at school he had read many Russian writers, from Chernyshevsky to Gorki and he had steeped himself in the modern Yiddish and Hebrew writers. They had shaken his belief in the traditional religious attitudes of the Jewish ghetto world which had been further undermined by the war and the Russian Revolution. Even Yiddish culture seemed to be the culture of the ghetto, yet he could not embrace the culture of the non-Jewish world, much as it drew him to it.
>
> In the Beth Hamedrash he had first talked about all these matters and he had cast doubts on the Holy Books. Then he had attended Zionist meetings where the future of the Holy Land was discussed and he found himself siding with those Zionist

> Socialists who believed their socialist aims could only be realised in the Holy Land. In general he was affected by Socialist ideas, yet because he felt a kind of hostility to the gentile world, a hostility that was at odds with his sympathy for the culture and the ideals that emerged from that world, he could not think of Socialism as something to be achieved in the land where he lived. For all his shedding of Jewish religious beliefs he still retained a traditional Jewish view of the non-Jew and could not come to terms with him. (12-13)

Elsewhere Waten describes the relationship between the two cultures, and between culture and commerce, tradition and modernity, in terms of the distribution of physical space. Joshua climbs a hill overlooking the town:

> From there he could see the two districts, the Christian and the Jewish, that met in the town square and market place with its town hall, two-story houses and shops with white, grey and green shutters, a kind of neutral territory for Christians and Jews for most parts of the year. He loved his own house in the square and he loved the town. In the centre of the Christian section, by far the largest with nearly two-thirds of the area and population, stood the Catholic church, the tallest building in the town with its steeple and pointed spire. And in the Jewish part the vaulted synagogue dome stood out. For the rest most of the houses in both parts were low-roofed, especially in the streets leading to the railway station where the mud never dried, where only the Christian workers lived. (15)

Here the question of class is entered into the problem of modernity, as is the question of Eretz Israel. Joshua rejects becoming a rabbi; he is unable to go to university in Poland or Germany; he decides then to go to Palestine (he is contemplating this decision as he looks over the town). The Holy Land offers itself as a reconciliation of his contradictory attitudes towards the non-Jewish world, for Palestine in this time and place is dangerously aligned with modernity. Joshua's father "believed it was a heresy or at least a piece of gross impertinence to want to anticipate the Messiah" (16); Reb Chaim Avremal is blunter: "`They start with the Holy Land and finish up Bolsheviks'" (18).

Joshua's idealistic dream of Eretz Israel, where as a linguist he could be a "human bridge between peoples ... Arab, European Christian and Jewish" (22), where he could "help to construct a new Jewish life" (26), is deflected by Shoshanah's sheer determination and "driving ambition" (27) for their economic and social success. Shoshanah too, in her own way, is a sign of modernity and change, unconcerned by the prospect of "migrating to a country where [she] would be surrounded by gentiles, where there was a tiny handful of Jews" (31). Her impatience with the old ways — in business especially — has been learnt in the war years "when the family had wandered from town to town, fleeing now from one army, now from another, now eluding pogromists" (19). This Jewish diaspora history is also the history that initiates

modernity:

> As Shoshanah did not ever go out on her own, did not belong to any society or organisation, but lived within the four walls of the house and the shop and in the women's gallery of the synagogue, she did not object to the fact that her suitors would be chosen or at least approved by her parents. In this respect she was the same as most conventional daughters of religious parents.... [But] she wanted to be in love with the man she married. That was very much a new-fangled idea, almost approaching a heresy, but Mr Weissenberg could not argue her out of it. (19)

The place of Palestine/Israel changes in the course of the novel (or perhaps its historical meaning emerges more clearly). From the perspective of post-war Australia it can no longer be a place of reconciliation, an ideal — in Israel too, it is implied, the Jews are divided "along the same lines as all other people."

Ezekial disapproves of the secular politicians in Israel: "He really believed in a theocracy for Israel, a religious state led by rigidly orthodox rabbis. He admired the Catholic Church which combined religion and politics" (183). Benjamin, by contrast, resists Joshua's suggestion that he develop an interest in Jewish affairs, in Israel:

> "You surely wouldn't want me to cut myself off from Australian life. I am an Australian."
> "Yes, yes," said Joshua, "but you're a Jew."
> "Australia's my country," Benjamin said. (125)

To return to our earlier terms, the course of a modernising, emancipatory, progressive history is in one sense *beyond* ethnicity, certainly beyond religion, and towards "mankind." It can thus afford to be truly mundane, anchored in the here and now, the everyday, the empirical. Waten will always seek to clinch his most ambitious arguments in the most ordinary terms.

Modernity is approached in a rather different manner in *So Far No Further*. In bringing together the daughter and son of Jewish and Italian families respectively, Waten is making the same sort of argument beyond ethnicity even as he registers the force of ethnicity for all his characters. Further, this post-1968 novel is involved in a heavy-handed (that is, excessively disciplinary) argument with the politics of the student New Left and new avant-garde — portrayed as play-acting for middle-class kids or a not-so new version of Trotskyism, now anarchism and Maoism. The task of the novel is not only to consign the old superstitions to the past and to reconcile Deborah's Polish Jewishness and Paul's Italian Catholicism, her radicalism and his conservatism (which is idealistic, genuine). It is also to win back the history of human progress and modernity for what I have called in earlier chapters the "long historical perspective." Despite this, or rather because of it, the novel's resolution (its

"assimilation") remains incomplete. Deborah has the last word, as she resists Paul's proposal of marriage: "`Then we will have to live in our separate houses'" (224). Waten's strong teleology produces a narrative emphasis on ongoingness rather than closure.

To conclude I want to consider the "post-structuralist" critique of *Distant Land* mounted by Hodge and Mishra.[93] They read the novel alongside John O'Grady/Nino Culotta's *They're a Weird Mob* as assimilationist. They are correct, of course, to argue that writing by "real" migrants (their quote-marks) can be no less assimilationist than that by Anglo-Celtic Australians and that certain positions within multiculturalism were not always historically available. What I find theoretically interesting is that they fail to distinguish Waten's text in any way from O'Grady's. Behind this failure is the aesthetic excess, the ultimately formalist critique of realism, defined in the first section of this chapter. It produces some remarkable "over-readings." Waten's memoir "A Writer's Youth," they say, "is silent about his migrant experience." Unfortunately the passage they quote comes from the end of the memoir where Waten comments, with an irony they seem to miss, that his failed novel *Hunger* included "everything" — except his migrant background. The memoir begins: "The first writer in my life was Sholem Aleichem, the great Yiddish comic writer."

The novel's realism is the first thing Hodge and Mishra note. They align it with other, canonical emigrant family sagas including *The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney*. Waten would not have minded this location at all, for his work is indeed designed to address the literary tradition, to be considered in its space. For Hodge and Mishra, though, this can only be a shortcoming or worse a "suppression" of the migrant voice. Thus they read *Distant Land* as an "unacknowledged narrative of assimilation." But on one level at least, nothing could be more acknowledged in this novel which begins with debates *within* a Jewish community between Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian cultural options, and ends with Zionism, anti-Zionism and "Australian-Jewishness" juxtaposed. What Hodge and Mishra mean, of course, on a different level, is that Waten's voice is indistinguishable from majority voices. This has its point, as I have shown, but their criticism finally depends upon a sheer aestheticisation of "voice" which even has them forgetting to distinguish between the levels of story and discourse.[94] If they imply an answer to the question of who Waten is writing for, they

fail to ask who he is writing against.

Waten's fiction, I have argued, gives nothing to the overt politics of assimilation (it would not have been handed out to arriving immigrants[95]). Not least at the level of discourse, and in contrast to *They're a Weird Mob*, there is no position from which a distinctive Australian way of life is offered as a singular good thing (affectionately "weird," that is, unique, authentic, native). O'Grady's plot, as Hodge and Mishra show, can only be a kind of "first contact" narrative in which the boundaries of inside and outside remain as firmly delineated as ever. Waten's migrant story, by contrast, begins before migration, and the borderlines to be renegotiated are largely those within the Jewish community (whose own boundaries are always in transition). "Australia" has only a weak presence in the text, not as a goal so much as a kind of historical accident. There *is* a positive goal, as I have suggested, in the reconciliation of Jewish and Australian identities figured at the end of *Distant Land*, but again Australia is only a contingent, and so transformable, site for this process.

I have also argued that Waten's migrant writings can be read as strategies of resistance to the "othering" of the majority culture: again, the fiction offers no position from which the "foreigner," the migrant, can be taken generically as exotic or as pure Other. The strategy is to show that the foreigner/migrant both is and is not the same, and the fictions locate the power to make these differences on the migrants' own ground rather than on the grounds of the majority culture. If in their bid for cultural respectability Waten's texts are more assimilationist than he knows, it might also be the case that they are more wrought by cultural difference than their strong teleology admits. Again the critics can be more anxious about the authentic than Waten himself. Hodge and Mishra in effect render Waten's migrant writing illegitimate, "inauthentic" against "genuine multicultural writing" or "authentic voices" (their words). They exercise their own suppression of anything less than the "traumatised response of multicultural writing proper." But by reading cultural difference as firstly a formal difference, they fail to read for cultural difference after all. They are left in the awkward position of defending post-modernism in the name of authenticity.

In Waten's fiction diverse ethnic histories are argued into the course of Australian history and as constitutive rather than as supplementary, despite his strong commitment (elsewhere) to a national tradition and even as ethnicity emerges as a

secondary category relative to the universal categories of mankind and history. This is an argument against ethnic essentialism, but also against assimilation. It is, we might say, an assertion of universal values against the assumptions of universality made by a single culture, by any single culture, Jewish or Anglo-Saxon-Protestant as the case may be. There are no chosen people in Waten's novels except perhaps the *people* (but that's another story).

This is the most optimistic case *for* Waten as a migrant/non-Anglo-Celtic writer. He writes from a "migrant" position, he clears a space within the majority culture for the migrant/non-Anglo voice. His disarming assumption is that there is an "other" story to tell which can be told like any other story. Here we might want to resist the merely impossible concept of a multicultural aesthetics by insisting on the novels' "success" in specific frameworks of reception and a specific local politics. Very few of their contemporary reviewers, to stay within a limited sphere, were able to find the migrant theme merely documentary-autobiographical; the novels posed questions to the critics about Australian literature, modestly reworking their sense of the culture's boundaries.[96]

At the same time the positions articulated in the post-structuralist, post-modernist — and post-assimilationist — criticism do enable us to define the limits of Waten's texts, their recuperability. The points can best be made negatively in terms of what the texts *cannot resist*. Waten's realism, in implying the translatability of all cultural difference, cannot finally constrain or proscribe readings which will merely efface those differences. Similarly it cannot altogether constrain readings of the texts as mere chronicles or migrant spectacle in so far as the third-person omniscient narrator participates in an authoritative empiricism.

In short, there is indeed a limit to how far the texts can constrain their co-option to a position within the host culture. They can be read so as to deliver migrants to that culture, now with the guarantee of being "good neighbours" (or good migrants and bad migrants). Further, despite their socialist inflection, the humanist universals through which the fiction mounts it critique of ethnism are the values claimed for literature itself in the majority culture. The texts cannot resist their being read as *merely universal*. But the point of my argument is that these will be assimilationist or "aesthetic" readings, not readings for cultural difference.

1.. Judah Waten, *Distant Land* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1964); *So Far No Further* (Mount Eliza, Vic.: Wren, 1971); *Love and Rebellion* (1978; Richmond, Vic.: Hodja Educational, 1983). *Distant Land* was also an Australasian Book Society selection, and a *Herald-Sun* Readers Book Club choice! Further references to these books will appear in the text.

2.. Manfred Jurgensen, "Multicultural Aesthetics: A Preliminary Definition," in *Striking Chords: Multicultural Literary Interpretations*, eds Sneja Gunew and Kateryna O. Longley (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992), p.33.

3.. Gunew and Longley, Introduction to *Striking Chords*, pp.xvi-xvii.

4.. Gunew, "Migrant Women Writers: Who's on Whose Margins?" in *Gender, Politics and Fiction: Twentieth Century Australian Women's Novels*, ed. Carole Ferrier (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1985), p.165.

5.. Gunew, "PMT (Post Modernist Tensions: Reading for (Multi)Cultural Difference," in *Striking Chords*, pp.42-43. The quotation from JanMohamed and Lloyd is in "Introduction: Minority Discourse — What is to be Done?" *Cultural Critique* 7 (Spring 1987), p.10 (an issue prompted by Deleuze and Guattari's *Kafka*, discussed in Chapter 3 above).

6.. Gunew, "Migrant Women Writers," p.168.

7.. Gunew, "Framing Marginality: Distinguishing the Textual Politics of the Marginal Voice," *Southern Review* 18, 2 (July 1985), p.144.

8.. Gunew, "PMT," p.43. For further discussion of the meanings and politics of the different terms see Gunew, "Home and Away: Nostalgia in Australian (Migrant) Writing," in *Island in the Stream: Myths of Place in Australian Culture*, ed. Paul Foss (Leichhardt, NSW: Pluto Press, 1988), p.35. Gunew also discusses the dangers and the usefulness of "Anglo-Celtic" which, she argues, does not commit us to the notion that "Anglo" and "Celtic" are homogenous.

9.. Gunew, "Migrant Women Writers," pp.165 & 167.

10.. Gunew, "Authenticity and the Writing Cure," in *Grafts: Feminist Cultural Criticism*, ed. Susan Sheridan (London: Verso, 1989), p.117.

11.. Gunew, "Constructing Australian Subjects: Critics, Writers, Multicultural Writers," in *Diversity Itself*, ed. Peter Quartermaine (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1986), p.55; also "Framing Marginality," p.148.

12.. Gunew, "Framing Marginality," p.144.

13.. Gunew, "Framing Marginality," p.146.

14.. Gunew, "Authenticity and the Writing Cure," pp.118-19.

15.. For example, the following essays in *Striking Chords*: Efi Hatzimanolis, "Speak as You Eat: Reading Migrant Writing, Naturally," pp.168-77 and Ivor Indyk, "The Migrant and the Comedy of Excess in Recent Australian Writing," pp.178-86.

16.. Jurgensen, "Multicultural Aesthetics," p.33.

17.. Gunew, "Authenticity and the Writing Cure," p.120.

18.. Jurgensen, "Multicultural Aesthetics," pp.30 & 32.

19.. Jurgensen, "Multicultural Aesthetics," p.30.

20.. Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp.4-7 & 160-162.

21.. Gunew, "Framing Marginality," p.146; and see Nikos Papastergiadis, "The Journeys Within: Migration

and Identity in Greek-Australian Literature," in *Striking Chords*, pp.149-61, for an account of Antigone Kefala's work as transgressive but less than transcendent.

22.. Gunew, "Authenticity and the Writing Cure," p.119. See also Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), pp.170-72.

23.. Longley, "Fifth World," in *Striking Chords*, p.23.

24.. Gunew, "PMT," p.37.

25.. Gunew, "Migrant Women Writers," p.168; "Framing Marginality," p.144.

26.. Richard Bosworth and Janis Wilton, "Novels, Poems and the Study of Europeans in Australia," *Teaching History* 15, 2 (July 1981), pp.45 & 50.

27.. Bosworth and Wilton, "Novels, Poems," p.48.

28.. Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), pp.188-93.

29.. The policies of multiculturalism were established in the early-mid 1970s but it was some time before literary publications expressing this new sense of ethnic/migrant groups began to appear. For example: Manfred Jurgensen's *Ethnic Australia* (Brisbane: Phoenix Publications) appeared in 1981; Sneja Gunew's *Displacements: Migrant Stroytellers* (Deakin University Press) in 1982; R.F. Holt's *The Strength of Tradition: Stories of the Immigrant Presence in Australia* (University of Queensland Press) in 1983.

30.. Waten, "Yiddish Literature in Australia," *Unity* (July-August 1948), pp.4-5; "Contemporary Jewish Literature in Australia," *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal and Proceedings* 3, 2 (1949), pp.92-102. See also "Pinchas Goldhar," *Voice* (February 1947), p.13.

31.. See for example, Hilary L. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Victoria 1835-1985* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986), chs 10 & 11, esp. pp.152-63.

32.. *Distant Land*, pp.79-87; "Three Generations," *Love and Rebellion*, pp.113-14.

33.. Waten, "Yiddish Literature," p.4.

34.. Waten, "Yiddish Literature," p.4.

35.. Waten, "Yiddish Literature," p.5 (my emphasis).

36.. Quotations in this paragraph from "Yiddish Literature." p.4 (my emphases).

37.. Maria Damon, "Talking Yiddish at the Boundaries," *Cultural Studies* 5, 1 (January 1991), p.17, where she defines her own relation to her American Jewishness as a "reinvention and recognition of ethnicity."

38.. Waten, "Contemporary Jewish Literature," p.92.

39.. Waten, "Contemporary Jewish Literature," p.94.

40.. Waten, "Contemporary Jewish Literature," p.95.

41.. Waten, "Yiddish Literature," p.4.

42.. Quotations in this paragraph are from Waten's book reviews: "The Kosher Caper," rev. of *Jewish Settlers in Australia*, by Charles Price, *Australian Book Review* 4, 2 & 3 (December 1964-January 1965), p.27; "Melbourne Jewry," rev. of *The Fortunes of Samuel Wynn*, by Allan Wynn, *Australian Book Review* 7 (September 1968), p.202; "The Jewish Contribution to Australian Society," rev. of *Jews in Australian Society*, ed. Peter Medding, *Age* 18 August 1973, p.12.

43.. Waten, "Melbourne Jewry," p.202.

44.. "Portrait of the Jewish Home," rev. of *The Walled Garden*, by Chiam Berman, *Sydney Morning Herald* 21 February 1976, p.16. See also "Yiddish Heroes and Themes," rev. of *Portraits of Yiddish Writers*,

by Yitzhak Kahn, *Age* 28 July 1979, p.26, where Waten describes Yiddish as "a tough travelling language, refusing to die despite wanderings and genocide and the adoption of English as the first language of American, English and Australian Jews."

45.. Waten, "Portrait of the Jewish Home."

46.. Waten's extensive newspaper and periodical cuttings collection reveals his interest in the Jewish writers in the USA: Bellow, Roth, Potok, Singer etc. There is also a large collection of cuttings on Jews/Yiddish in the Soviet Union. As well as communist papers, there is a good deal from *Time*, *Newsweek*, the *Bulletin*, the *Times Literary Supplement*. Judah Waten Papers, NLA MS 4536, Boxes 30-36.

47.. Waten, "Yiddish Culture in West and East," *Labour Monthly* (August 1966), p.374; repr. in the journal of the Communist Party of the USA, *Political Affairs* (October 1966), pp.51-61. See also "Will Yiddish Culture Survive?" *Labour Monthly* (September 1966), pp.440-46; "Yiddish Culture in the West," *Australian Left Review* 3 (October-November 1966), pp.52-57; and "Setting the Record Straight," *Political Affairs* (March 1967), pp.58-61.

48.. Waten, "Yiddish Culture in West and East," pp.376-78. In "Will Yiddish Culture Survive?" Waten adds that the "State of Israel offers no hope to Yiddish" (p.445).

49.. Waten, "Setting the Record Straight," *Political Affairs*, p.59 (my emphasis).

50.. Waten, "Will Yiddish Culture Survive?" p.445. Elsewhere he adds: "I myself would grieve at the passing of Yiddish literature in the Soviet Union, just as I do at its passing on other countries. I have always been a protagonist of Yiddish writing from which my own work as a novelist draws inspiration," ("Setting the Record Straight," p.61).

51.. Waten, "Will Yiddish Culture Survive?" p.446 (my emphasis).

52.. Waten, "Setting the Record Straight," p.60.

53.. For example, in 1967-68 invitations to address Jewish organisations were withdrawn: from the Young Men's Hebrew Association of Australia for Waten to be Guest of Honour and guest speaker, on "The Jewish Writers in the World Today"; from the Labour Zionist Organisation of Australia; and a third, from the Aleph Zadik Aleph Youth Group, on *Alien Son*. The reason given for the latter, in reply to a vigorous letter from Waten, is Waten's "publicly stated views on current Jewish world problems [and] due consideration of the views of the leaders of our Jewish community." Waten papers, NLA MS 4536 Box 30.

54.. Waten, "The Jewish Contribution to Australian Society."

55.. Hodge and Mishra, pp.188-89.

56.. Tom Inglis Moore (for the Canberra Fellowship of Australian Writers), letter to Waten, 26 August 1958; Waten to Inglis Moore, 7 September 1958, NLA MS 4536/2/258-59. *Span: An Adventure in Asian and Australian Writing*, ed. Lionel Wigmore for the Canberra Fellowship of Australian Writers (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1958).

57.. Gunew, "The Migrant Experience," in *The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*, eds Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson (Sydney: Macmillan, 1990), p.169.

58.. Waten, "Cliches and Cardboard," rev. of *Potatoes Are Cheaper*, by Max Shulman, and *Settle Down Simon Katz*, by Bernard Kops, *Sydney Morning Herald* 22 December 1973, p.15.

59.. Waten, rev. of *Ethnic Australia*, ed. Manfred Jurgensen, *New Literature Review* 12 (1983), p.46.

60.. See Oodgeroo, *Towards a Global Village in the Southern Hemisphere* (Nathan, Qld.: Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, Griffith University, 1989), p.1.

61.. Gunew, "The Migrant Experience," p.169.

62.. The distinction is made by Homi Bhabha, "The Commitment to Theory," *New Formations* 5 (Summer 1988), pp.18-19: "Cultural diversity is the recognition of pre-given cultural `contents' and customs,

held in a time-frame of relativism; it gives rise to anodyne liberal notions of multiculturalism, cultural exchange, or the culture of humanity." Cultural difference, by contrast, might be characterised by its recognition that the cultural contents are not "pre-given" and that beyond plurality lies hybridity. Of course Waten's commitent to historical progress complicates his relation to any fixed time-frame of relativism.

63.. The phrases quoted are from Waten, "Writers from Two Cultures,"*Aspect* 5, 1-2 (1980), p.55; and "Multilingual Neighbours On Our Literary Scene," rev. of *The First Multicultural Anthology*, ed. Andrew Dezsery and *Neighbours*, by Andrew Dezsery, *Age* 11 October 1980, p.30.

64.. Waten, "In Other Tongues," *Nation* 27 June 1970, pp.22-23; "Discovering Migrant Literature," *Island* 16 (1983), pp.26-29.

65.. Waten, "Writers From Two Cultures," p.50. He uses the same formulation for his own writing in "My Two Literary Careers," pp.87-88.

66.. Waten, "Multilingual Neighbours On Our Literary Scene"; and "Discovering Migrant Literature," p.26.

67.. Waten, rev. of *Ethnic Australia*, p.48.

68.. Waten, "Jews in a New Land," rev. of *On Firmer Shores*, by Serge Liberman, *Age* 3 October 1981, p.28.

69.. Waten, "In Other Tongues," p.23.

70.. Waten, "New Voices, New Attitudes," rev. of *Displacements: Migrant Storytellers*, ed. Sneja Gunew, *Age* 21 August 1982, p.14.

71.. Waten, rev. of *Ethnic Australia*, pp.47 & 48.

72.. Papastergiadis, "The Journeys Within," p.150.

73.. Waten, "Writers From Two Cultures," p.54.

74.. Gunew and Longley, Introduction to *Striking Chords*, p.xxi.

75.. For example, the scene of the memorial service for the war dead, when Joshua experiences something very much like the absurdity of existence, *Distant Land*, pp.120-22.

76.. Waten, "Writers From Two Cultures," p.50.

77.. Waten, "Writers From Two Cultures," p.51.

78.. The phrase is A.D. Hope's from his poem "William Butler Yeats," *Collected Poems* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1972), p.72.

79.. Damon, "Talking Yiddish," p.24.

80.. Waten, "Writers From Two Cultures," p.55.

81.. John McLaren, "New Novels," rev. of *So Far No Further*, *Overland* 52 (Winter 1972), p.53. In a foreword to the novel Waten adds an interesting explanation of his language: "some characters speak only Italian, others Yiddish or Polish. Therefore I have set down all speech in ordinary conversational English. No single form of foreigners' English exists; there are as many variations as there are different kinds of newcomers. I have regarded the use of foreigners' English as well as dialects as unnecessary to the story and indeed distracting."

82.. Damon, "Talking Yiddish," pp.24-25 (and passim).

83.. M.J. Haddock, "The Prose Fiction of Jewish Writers of Australia 1945-1969," *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal of Proceedings* 7, 7 (1974), p.508.

84.. "Three Generations," *Love and Rebellion*, p.115.

85.. Carl Harrison-Ford, "In a New Country," rev. of *So Far No Further*, by Judah Waten, *Nation* 5 February 1972, p.22.

86.. In a personal letter, Waten describes Joshua in terms of "the theme of the lost personality, the inability to acquire a new one in the new world.... [He] is quite prosperous but he has really been stripped of his beliefs and hopes." Letter to a Mr Baldwin, 25 January 1971, Waten papers, NLA MS 4536/2/1643. Interestingly the conclusion here seems more pessimistic than that of the novel itself.

87.. Cf. Damon, "Talking Yiddish," p.27, where she talks autobiographically about reading Jewish work "not for clues to a primary sort of Jewishness but for permission to invent new ways of being Jewish."

88.. Cf. the end of *The Unbending* (Melbourne: Australasian Book Society, 1954): "They were starting again, without illusions, not in a new land, but in a land which willy-nilly had become theirs" (p.301).

89.. Damon, "Talking Yiddish," p.26.

90.. See Peter Corris's review of *Love and Rebellion*, "An Alien Son Grows Up," *Australian*, 20-21 May 1978, p.9: the stories "present Italians and Greeks as stereotypes with only the externals of their culture and behaviour observed.... Their dominant emotion is sympathy." In a positive review of the stories, this becomes "compassion" — Rod Nicholls, "A Migrant-Eye View of Australian Life," *Age* 6 May 1978, p.26.

91.. Serge Liberman, "Australian Jewish Writing: An Assessment and a Programme," *Menorah* 1, 1 (1987), p.88.

92.. Damon reminds us that Yiddish itself is a hybrid language, and Yiddish literature a modernist literature, "Talking Yiddish," p.19: "Written Yiddish itself, long post-dating its spoken life, dizzyingly defamiliarises a primarily Germanic sound by representing it through Hebrew lettering.... [N]ot only have Jews been bilingual in relation to the dominant culture, but the internal usages of Yiddish and Hebrew within the marginalised group itself contributes to a consciousness of juxtaposition that happens specifically in language." Also: "the folksy minimalism of Aleichem's modernism has been misconstrued as pious and sentimental nostalgia."

93.. Hodge and Mishra, pp.192-93. Nino Culotta [John O'Grady], *They're a Weird Mob* (1957; Sydney: Ure Smith, 1974).

94.. Hodge and Mishra, p.193: the criticism proceeds by retelling the story of the characters' assimilation.

95.. According to Hodge and Mishra this did occur with *They're a Weird Mob*, p.190.

96.. On *Distant Land*, for example, Jeana Bradley, "Recent Australian Fiction," *Westerly* 2 (August 1965), p.53; R.M. Wilding, "Jewish Migrant," *Bulletin* 24 October 1964, pp.54-55. On *So Far No Further*, A.R. Chisholm, "Clash of Ideals," *Age* 4 December 1971, p.13; Brian Kiernan, "Change and Conflict in a Generation Gap," *Australian* 1 January 1972, p.15. The London *Jewish Quarterly* finds Waten "the authentic voice of Australian-Jewish life": "From Far and Near," *Jewish Quarterly* 13, 3 (Autumn 1965): collected in Waten's papers, NLA MS 4536, Box 20.

8

An Australian Jewish Writer

I do not regard myself as a Jewish writer but as very much an Australian writer who happens to be of Jewish extraction.
(Judah Waten, "My Two Literary Careers," 1971)

1. Beyond the Migrant Writer

During the last decade in Australia a significant body of critical and theoretical work on migrant writing has appeared. I have referred to some aspects of these developments above, particularly in relation to Judah Waten's *Alien Son* and the location of the migrant writer in the immediate post-war period. Here I want to turn first to recent critical work on migrant/non-Anglo-Celtic writing and then to read a number of Waten's "migrant" fictions against the categories and perspectives it supplies. In addition I want to discuss examples of Waten's own critical writing which examine questions of migration and migrant literature.

After *Alien Son* and *The Unbending* Waten departed from the migrant story, if we can use that phrase for the moment, in his two subsequent novels *Shares in Murder* and *Time of Conflict*. He returns to it in 1964 with the publication of *Distant Land* and in 1971 with *So Far No Further*. The former also marks Waten's return to mainstream publication and was his most critically acclaimed work after *Alien Son*, winning the Moomba Festival Best Australian Novel award. Over this period Waten also published short stories and memoirs, many concerning migrants and migration, collected in 1978 in *Love and Rebellion*.[1] The alternation in Waten's career between works which focus on non-Anglo-Celtic migrants and works which locate their heroes as Anglo or Celtic "ordinary Australians" itself has bearing on the question of how we theorise and historicise the field of migrant writing. What status do we give to experience and autobiography (as categories in different fields); what distinctions need to be made between writing *of* migrants and writing *as* a migrant? What status indeed do we give to *migration*?

We can begin with a problem: Judah Waten's writing does not *prima facie* fit well with many of the current notions of migrant/non-Anglo-Celtic writing. In a theory field that is post-structuralist and post-modernist in one sense or another,

Waten's realism presents a surface resistant to the play of critical desire. In a criticism that valorises excess, his self-denying prose is not likely to be fashionable or theoretically viable. Manfred Jurgensen, for example, has argued of Waten that "there is no multicultural imagination at work in any of his writings."[2] What the notion of a multicultural imagination might entail will be discussed below. But if it is the case that "multicultural aesthetics," in Jurgensen's term, has little to say about Waten, we need to ask not only how this absence reveals "absences" in Waten's writing but also how Waten's writings reveal absences in the theory.

The first point in theorising a cultural field in terms of migration or ethnicity is to argue the necessity of *reading for cultural difference*.[3] The analogy, though it is much more than that, is with those practices of reading in terms of class, gender and "colonial" difference which, unevenly but irreversibly, have affected the institutions of reading in the last decades. Reading for difference in this sense is to read against the grain of the universalist or monist assumptions which support the culture of "normative," though never singly dominant, groups: male, middle-class, white, Anglo/Anglo-Celtic. It should no longer be possible to read as if there were one literature unmarked by cultural specificity surrounded as it were by minority literatures which are so marked, as working-class, female, Aboriginal or, for our purposes, "migrant." Minimally, such an argument calls upon the reader to acknowledge that Anglo-Australian literature is indeed an ethnic literature. It thus also alters our sense of what constitutes the national literature, which must be something *other than* an ethnic literature.

This theoretical shift aims, further, to make "readable" in new ways texts which might otherwise be understood simply in terms of lack in relation to the dominant (lack of order, style, literariness, national characteristics or, indeed, universality). We can begin to read their stories as always in part the story of the text's own minority relationship to a majority tradition. This is the kind of reading of *Alien Son* which I hope to have provided above. Again feminist, Marxist and post-colonial criticism can provide analogies and more, a set of theoretical and political motivations and problematics: for example, a strategy of resistance against the homogenisation of the minority or marginalised groups as singly migrant, "ethnic," Other. In Sneja Gunew's terms, "the sameness about the oppressed and marginal voice is largely the

result of the undifferentiated way it has been situated by the dominant culture."[4] In a later essay she elaborates the point through a quotation from JanMohamed and Lloyd to the effect that "minority individuals are always treated and forced to experience themselves generically":

> At the moment, very different ethnic groups are cooperating to achieve certain goals because they have been assigned a particular (often negative) place within the culture. But this is to be distinguished from the homogenisation which is imposed upon them by those who position themselves outside multiculturalism, those for whom the ethnicity of England or Ireland is invisible.[5]

Sneja Gunew has been the most prominent and sophisticated theorist of migrant and non-Anglo-Celtic writing in Australia, and my focus will largely be on her work in a series of essays from 1981 to the present.

Gunew's arguments enter this writing into the critique of the subject which characterises the projects of both post-structuralism and post-modernism. Drawing on the language of Lacan and later Kristeva, she discusses the migrant as a specific form of the decentred or fragmented subject, fragmented to the power of two as the migrant is forced to renegotiate his or her entry into the symbolic. The definition of "migrant" becomes less a matter of birthplace or passport than of positioning within discourse, "not so much a question of *being* a migrant but of writing from a migrant position"[6]:

> By "migrant" I mean those who construct their subject-positions in terms of those who have had to renegotiate an entry into the symbolic. "Migrants" are those whose initial socialisation has taken place in a language and culture other than the hegemonic one, so that when they enter a new culture they are repositioned as children renegotiating language and the entry into the symbolic.[7]

The emphasis on the repositioning of the migrant as child recalls our earlier reading of *Alien Son*. It also suggests why Gunew feels compelled to complicate the notion of migrant writing until it can never appear except alongside the notion of the non-Anglo-Celtic: "the term `migrant writing' is commonly used without any awareness of the differences it contains within itself, not simply those that exist amongst the various non-Anglophone groups but also the differences which have nothing to do with migration itself but everything to do with the fact that the writer is non-Anglo-Celtic."[8] To emphasise migration can be to delimit the space from which "migrants" may speak to that of ethnicity or the trajectory towards assimilation; non-Anglo-Celtic, by contrast, foregrounds the question of positionality within language and culture.

This is an appropriate point at which to expand the differences between what we might call pre-structuralist and post-structuralist readings of migrant/non-Anglo-

Celtic writing. The former is grounded in the categories of individual experience, the authentic voice and, therefore, an expressive notion of language. It privileges the first-person mode as the site of authenticity and so reads migrant writing in a limited and reflectionist sense as autobiographical or sociological (in which case third-person omniscient conventions might be appropriate). Against these constraints Gunew returns the migrant story to the realm of textualisation: "The use of the first-person mode is no guarantee of anything but that a literary convention has been mobilised.... That `I' guarantees nothing, just as the fact of being born into a language other than English does not guarantee that one speaks from a position different from that taken by writers placed within the host language."[9] Migrant writing is often read as analogous to oral history, itself misunderstood as the authentic testimony of "speaking subjects" but not "writing subjects."[10] This in turn, Gunew argues, privileges two master plots for the migrant experience, the migrant success story or the migrant as problem (thus the host culture as refuge or promised land): "In the unified narrative of official history the first-person account has been returned to us as the collective migrant success story."[11] Waten, as I have argued earlier, presents an ironic version of these stories particularly in *The Unbending* with its recurrent promised land motif.

In the pre-structuralist scenario migrant writing can be percieved as an unproblematic addition to or assimilation into the majority culture. As such its primary function is to affirm the host culture's own depth and breadth, even if at sub-literary levels. In the post-structuralist scenario, by contrast, migrant writing is (potentially) a site of the transgressive, of resistance to or subversion of a dominant culture. As both inside and outside the majority language, inside and outside its hierarchy of discourses, it is likely to transgress the limits by which that culture defines itself. In particular, Gunew argues, "migrant writing registers a reading and interrogation of the nexus between culture and nationalism."[12] Writing from a marginalised position in relation to a dominant although not necessarily unified Anglo-Australian culture, the dis-location of the "migrant" represents a position (between two positions) which itself dislocates the majority culture's normative assumptions regarding the oneness of nationality, identity, common sense, place or home, language and experience.

This dislocation in relation to language and subjectivity might be represented as "an augmented awareness of the eruption of the semiotic into the symbolic."[13]

Gunew focuses on migrant women's writing:

> [which] signals more clearly than most the ideological loadings of interpellation, precisely because they register that interpellation as involving a split. Migrant writing carries within it, to put it another way, the dead or repressed or fading subjects created by other and sometimes former interpellations....
>
> Some (not all) of this writing breaks down any obvious reading of a unified subject (according to gender, class, culture) because these texts register clearly their dissonance with traditional meaning processes. Some, not all, because some migrant writing also plays the game of mimicry, of "passing" or of creating familiar facsimiles of the subjects we all know.... [W]hile one is never fully interpellated as a subject (there is *always* a misrecognition), when one is interpellated in ways which fall so totally short of other reflections, that is, where the gap between imaginary relations and real conditions becomes an abyss, then one reaches as a matter of survival for the first person in order to establish some kind of foothold. And it is precisely here, under those conditions, that "truth" (in the sense of a reality beyond our experience) is signalled as contingent, as historically and culturally specific, and that the subject is fragmented into contradictory positions which are also historically and culturally specific.[14]

The transgressive is that which exposes the exclusions and repressions, the contingencies and contradictions, of hegemonic discourses. It exposes as it is exposed to the limits of discursive limits. Thus the valorisation of excess and extravagance, hybridity and alienation, in recent criticism of migrant writing.[15]

The transgressive power of the marginalised is now a familiar trope in critical and theoretical writing. As a mode of criticism it will find itself drawn to *non-realist* forms, to writing — and speaking — which foregrounds its writerliness thereby rendering and thematising as problematic the first-person mode, subjectivity, the migrant experience, ethnic identity, and their representations (how they represent, how they are represented). Classic realist narratives, by contrast, will be seen to collude, by adding to their circulation, in the very systems of representation and subjectivity which marginalise minority voices. Thus they are easily recuperated or, to return to Jurgensen's discussion of Judah Waten, they offer "little resistance to their integration into mainstream Australian literature."[16]

In this moment, however, the critique approaches more dangerous ground where theories of discourse and subject-formation carry a disguised aesthetic imperative, moreover an aesthetic imperative which it is difficult to anchor specifically to "migrant writing." Charged with having to make historical sense of specific forms of subjectivity and authorship, this aesthetic imperative is misrecognised as an historical or political imperative.

Gunew's work lies within this theory field and so carries forth its aesthetic

imperative towards the non-realist work. At the same time her readings, her foregrounding of "transgressive" texts, situate themselves as strategic. In other words, the essays are situated overtly through questions of positionality and the deployment of texts:

> The question is always: for whom? If one asks how these texts differ from other kinds of non-realist or experimental writing in Australia, an answer is: only in so far as they foreground historical, cultural and socio-political questions concerning pronouns and positionality: who, from where, when and to whom? The reminder, to those who have eyes to see, is that the enunciating positions are partial and outside (or overlapping with manifestations of other cultural codes).[17]

Such a scheme allows for what we might call a thick description of certain forms of migrant writing, and indeed of the disposition of certain readers and critics towards them.

Elsewhere, however, "multiculturalism" becomes just another word for what post-romantic aesthetics has always claimed as the power of Art, its transformative and transcendent capacities. Wholeness and resolution might no longer be the goal for contemporary dispositions, but the dialectics of transcendence are never very distant. If we return to Jurgensen, we can see why he finds Judah Waten unreadable as the expression of a "multicultural imagination":

> A multicultural imagination is a transformational imagination, involving a transference of imaginative speech, in content and form, in semantics and grammar, in vocabulary and semiotics. It is recognisably "open," volatile, incomplete, in a state of becoming.... A multicultural work of literature is not carried by the safety of an established "mainstream" literary culture. Instead, it is perceived by that culture as a threat to the canon, and so defined as a failure or as marginal....
>
> The unique contribution of the multicultural artist is more than a combination or rearrangement of native and second-language literature. A new quality of imagination asserts itself, realising visions which could not have been expressed in any other form.... A truly multicultural aesthetics articulates new imaginative relations; it explores original concepts, ideas, images and experiences. Multicultural writing is the art of conveying a new consciousness; it is a different kind of imaginative thought.... The written work must possess a quality of originality capable of creating its own imaginative space in Australian literature; it does not aim for integration into a literary culture but strives to extend its range and concept.[18]

The category of the aesthetic stands at the beginning and end of Jurgensen's analysis as a realm of "new consciousness." Despite apparent similarities to Gunew's position, we might well ask what more we get here than the characteristically over-excited claims for originality, imagination and "becoming" that mark any number of aesthetic enthusiams. No doubt certain kinds of migrant writing are operable in this way for certain readers and writers, but Jurgensen's claims are more ambitious. The problem is that "multicultural" is in danger of appearing redundant in relation to literature or art or imagination. Almost inevitably that Jurgensen concludes that "*all* literary art ... is

multicultural whenever it extends beyond the boundaries of a national culture. In this sense, the classical works of world literature have conveyed to their diverse readership a multicultural imagination."[19] Cutural difference disappears in the undifferentiated world of Art (and its cultured citizens).

My scepticism towards this kind of argument in relation to migrant or multicultural writing is one that has also been voiced in relation to certain feminist aesthetics based either on Kristeva's notion of the semiotic or differently on notions of *l'écriture féminine*. As Rita Felski argues, "the theory of a subversive textual politics reveals an overemphasis on the transgressive function of the experimental text in modern society." The equation of the aesthetic conventions a text employs and its politics is "ultimately formalist in its failure to theorise the contingent functions of textual forms in relation to socially differentiated publics at particular historical moments." Such a critique has two consequences: it takes us beyond the formal properties of texts to their "frameworks of reception"; and it enables realism (for example) to return as a possible cultural politics depending, as Gunew might say, on the questions of who, from where, when and to whom. In Felski's words:

> the necessity and importance of a feminist avant-garde must be balanced against an equal need on the part of oppositional movements for texts which address the particularity of their social experience more explicitly and unambiguously, a need that has often resulted in a preference for realist forms which emphasise the denotative rather than aesthetic dimension of the text. One of the strengths of feminism has been precisely this partial reintegration of literature into the everyday communicative practices of large numbers of women by describing and commenting on women's experiences of gender relations.[20]

The same argument has its point in the context of migrant/non-Anglo-Celtic writing. Realist *representation* (of the migrant/non-Anglo experience) has its political occasions and effectivities, governed by specific reading formations. The politics of address will not be exhausted by the politics of style. Further, as readers, we cannot surrender these realist texts either to the "pre-textual" or to the "merely" literary. To be assimilated into a conservative aesthetic tradition through the intertextuality of conventional markers is not necessarily to be equated with the conservative cultural politics of assimilation which seek to efface cultural difference.

The notion of a multicultural imagination might not tell us about much more than the critic's taste and ability to align certain local works with a conventional late-romantic aesthetics. This can be distinguished from concepts of hybridity or cultural

difference which, rather than operating as figures of transcendence, define constraints, the "very limited space from which to speak" which migrants are assigned within the majority culture.[21] Nevertheless, as Gunew herself as remarked, in certain mobilisations of linguistic or psychoanalytically-based theories of discourse there remains the danger of a universalised grammar of transgression blind to specific historical and indeed discursive contexts.[22] More acutely, what announces itself as a theory of discourse operates in effect as a generalised aesthetics of literary taste, an aesthetics that can also affect political statements in the field: "[Fifth World (migrant) people] have in common a range of cultural experience that allows them to see all cultural and political systems as temporary structures that are infinitely changeable and open to question. [They] have a great advantage over those who are monocultural - they are suspicious of *all* systems."[23]

I have argued through this critique because it shows the tendency in certain theories of migrant writing towards anti-realism, towards linking realism and assimilationism, towards claiming migrant writing as a form of minority literature and hence a form of post-modernism.[24] In other words, it shows those tendencies which are unlikely to find Judah Waten's fiction an object of theoretical interest or value. My argument is not to defend realism, especially not on its own terms, nor to discount the power of the theory I have described. Nor is it to pose "history" against "aesthetics" as real to unreal (or as political to non-political): the point is rather to identify distinct discursive and hence operational realms. Although I will remain sceptical of the merely-conventional aesthetic claims of a critique such as Jurgensen's, the arguments towards post-modernism can indeed define the limits of Waten's discourse and its implication in the politics of assimilation (in a way that is not the case for other, mainly later writers). My resistance is against the over-generalisation of certain theoretical insights, of their "operability," and a consequent misrecognition of aesthetic categories.

More positively, the theories of migrant/non-Anglo-Celtic writing can provide a set of concepts and perspectives through which to read Waten's migrant fiction in quite specific ways *as* migrant fiction without reducing it to the quasi-autobiographical or sociological categories of "the migrant experience." The literariness of Waten's fiction, and hence its literary realism, however unfashionable, can become objects of

interest as strategies within migrant writing which we can address without assuming in advance that they are politically retrograde. We can ask, for example, how Waten writes "from a migrant position" and we can thus "examine the conditions under which it becomes possible to clear a space in which to speak migrant."[25]

Before turning to Waten's writing directly there is another, specific case argued "against" it which I want to address. In an investigation of literary evidence about the migrant experience, Bosworth and Wilton place Waten with David Martin as writers "with claims to the title of `high literature', [who] have dealt directly with migration." Their conclusion is that the novels of both "remain portraits painted by an outsider and delineated by a man who has turned himself into an English language writer." Thus they are "limited" despite their "considerable realism."[26]

I could take each of these remarks as a useful starting-point for my own analysis: there is indeed a sense in which Waten has turned himself into an English language writer (and we certainly want the notion of limits). But the merely negative force that these characteristics have for Bosworth and Wilton emerges in their nearly offensive, inaccurate discussion of Waten's assimilationism:

> Some of Waten's writing is mildly critical of Australia's unpreparedness for non-Anglo-Saxon migrants.... But Waten is also a confortable writer, a serene revolutionary who is not sad that Australia is such a "tranqil country," who even loves his mother ... and who devotes much of his writing to assimilation. In *Distant Land*, for example, Waten traces the conversion of the Kuperschmidts, a family of pious Polish Jews, into the materially successful Coopers. He makes much of generational differences, but the children of migrants always emerge as "Australians" and "do well" (indeed, there is much apparent endorsement of the cliche: "Every Jewish boy becomes a brain surgeon.") Assimilation is at least effective for the second generation although, invariably for the parents, the actual migrants, there is more agony or pathos and no assimilation.
>
> Waten, in part, is writing about his own experiences. He fits very much into the mould of his second generation migrant characters.[27]

To find one's voice within the bounds of Australian culture and the English language is seen as a virtual act of betrayal. Waten is indeed an "assimilationist" writer or at least a writer who in his contemporary context is compelled to engage with the rhetoric of assimilation. But his engagement with assimilationism is certainly more complex than Bosworth and Wilton allow. For a start, in the history of the Jewish diaspora assimilation has quite another range of connotations which in Waten's case must be articulated with the term's contemporary, Australian meanings.

This critique of Waten's assimilationism is argued naively. The same cannot be said of the analysis in Hodge and Mishra's *Dark Side of the Dream* which nevertheless reaches a similar conclusion.[28] I will delay my discussion of this more sophisticated case until the end of the chapter, and by way of conclusion.

2. Ethnicity and Assimilation

In order to address the issues raised above I want first to look at a series of non-fiction writings by Judah Waten spanning the period 1948 to 1983. The project here will be partly biographical, tracing the formulation of Waten's publicly-expressed attitudes to migrant communities, migrant writing and migrant politics over the course of his writing career. But the aim will not be to ground Waten's opinions in a set of propositions which might then govern our reading of his fiction. Each of his essays marks a writerly occasion, an act of positioning within a debate and clearing a space in which to speak — "migrant" or not remains to be seen. They intervene in the same cultural debates as his fictions but not necessarily with the same voice, from the same place, for the same readers.

Waten's critical writings here can be understood as falling into three groups: first, articles from the 1940s on Yiddish and Jewish literature in Australia; second, from the mid-1960s to the late-1970s, essays and reviews on Yiddish culture, Jewish migration to Australia and migrant writing *before* the appearance of a stream of publications consequent upon multiculturalism; third, writings from the 1980s which appear as it were in the midst of multiculturalism.[29]

In the late 1940s, while working for the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, Waten published several articles on Yiddish/Jewish literature in Australia.[30] There was a political dimension to the consideration of these issues, soon after the Second World War and the beginning of a new wave of Jewish migration from central and eastern Europe. The question of Yiddish historically was at the centre of Jewish debates about assimilation (versus separatism), for Yiddish was one of the clearest marks of Jewish difference, and then a mark of Jewish immigration, in whatever culture/majority language Jews lived. Yiddish also had class connotations (poor, immigrant, working-class) and it had helped divide the Australian Jewish community into Anglo and immigrant "factions."[31] It was also commonly argued that the war had proved that assimilation was no guarantee of safety for the Jewish people, an issue debated in Waten's novels.[32]

Waten's discussion of Yiddish literature is as much an intervention in these concerns as it is literary history. In focusing on Pinchas Goldhar and Herz Bergner, Waten mounts an argument *for* Yiddish literature but also for the notion of a literature inevitably in transition. It can thus, at the same time, be an argument for *Australian* literature. His language is organicist in its understanding of the relationship between literature and place or culture. Contemporary, immigrant Yiddish literature represents a continuation of the cultures of Russia and Poland; but "a living literature must not remain static: it must adapt itself to the new environment if it is to survive."[33] The argument is thus on the side of adaptation and transition but a clear line is drawn before assimilation at least in the "Jewish" sense of the term, the public disavowal of Yiddish/Jewish culture for the sake of social or political acceptance. Some form of linguistic and cultural assimilation (transformation or adjustment rather) is seen as inevitable, and as with other of Waten's post-war writings this sense of historical inevitability is *anti-nostalgic* or, in positive terms, modernising. Against this trajectory, mere social or class assimilation is truly reactionary, "capitulating to the so called superior culture of the ruling classes of [the] adopted country."[34]

If not altogether an original argument, this might nevertheless be the *first* such argument in Australia in which an ethnic minority literature stakes a claim on Australian literature (for this is its claim). The point is not its originality but its sense

of political occasion. Waten makes a number of nice distinctions that few other cultural commentators of the period would have been bothered to make. First he argues that in Australia Yiddish "has as yet been the only vehicle through which the Jew has expressed the deepest feelings and aspirations of his people"; second, however, he notes via Goldhar that "Polish and Russian Jewish literature could not be transplanted undisturbed"; finally he points out that it cannot be assumed that Jewish literature in Australia will always find expression in Yiddish: "As English becomes the language of Jewish people of the second and third generations, it is probable that there will arise an *Australian Jewish literature in English*."[35] The transitions between these three different perspectives cannot be reduced to a simple assimilationist trajectory, certainly not one that effaces cultural difference.

The immigrant Yiddish speakers with whom Waten identifies were marginal linguistically and culturally in relation not only to Anglo-Celtic (Protestant or Catholic) Australians but to the Anglo-Australian Jews as well. As Waten comments, again via Goldhar: "Not only the non-Jewish world, but the customs of their Australian brethren ... seem foreign and hostile to the newly arrived immigrant." Waten defines a "process of *vulgar assimilation*":

> The community dies not only because its people are scattered by changing economic conditions, but because they fall victim to the myth of the superiority of the culture and way of life of the non-Jewish upper classes. The life and vigor of the community disappears and there remains a tiny handful of Jews with only a lingering attachment to the religion of their forefathers.[36]

The argument is not particularly complex, perhaps, yet it is subtle enough that we cannot easily assign a value to the final sentence quoted above or to the probable loss of Yiddish as a literary language in Australia. Yiddish is necessary (and more), its passing is inevitable; separation and assimilation, the maintenance of the old culture and its "vulgar" abandonment are equally impossible alternatives.

Waten's constituency in these articles is overtly a Jewish one, but it is interesting that he can position himself within this Jewish readership/community as something like an English-language interpreter of Yiddish culture, an "outside insider."[37] His positioning leaps over the assimilated Jewish community, which operates here as (part of) the majority culture, to identify on one side with the minority Yiddishers and on the other with "Australian literature." It is a position of mediation that we will frequently meet (and have already met) in Waten's writings, mediating here between Australian and Jewish, English and Yiddish. He is arguing first towards a Jewish readership in the attempt to create a community of readers for these "Australian Yiddish" writers — to create Australian-Yiddish mentalities — which even amongst Yiddish speakers scarcely existed. He does so partly by reporting back to Jewish readers the progress of "their" literature in the field of Australian literature.

Waten's willingness to adopt such a position comes from a cultural politics that

does in some respects resemble assimilation. He wants "a Jewish literature, which *in a sense* is also part of Australian literature" (my emphasis: the hesitation is interesting). He celebrates the acceptance into Australian literature of translations of Goldhar and Bergner.[38] By contrast he draws a line, at least for the sake of argument, at "Yiddish writing which does not concern itself with life in this country, but is merely produced here by accident and is thematically and in spirit simply a repetition of Yiddish literature in older countries" (this is worthy of separate consideration but not as Australian literature). He writes enthusiastically of Goldhar's stories, that "they breathe the Australian environment, the Australian Jewish community and its relations with the non-Jewish world."[39]

The proper relation between Australian and Yiddish/Jewish cultures, for Waten and for his Yiddish and Australian literary friends, was, as we have seen earlier, one of alliance not antagonism or incongruity. Australian literature, in the fullest sense of the term we might say, was understood not as a neo-imperialism but as a potential anti-imperialism. As such, Australian literature in this period could scarcely be constituted as a *centre* or an oppressive dominant especially in relation to commercial, academic or for that matter popular cultural tastes (leaving aside for the moment how far a "radical nationalist" literature was itself already implicated in dominant and ethnist forms). An alliance with a popular, suppressed literature such as Yiddish could seem the most natural thing in the world.

There is, then, a species of assimilationism, or at least an anti-separatism, in Waten's argument. It is based on a broadly humanist and organicist notion of the relationship between a literature and a people: "for a Jewish literature to grow in this country it must have close links with the literature of the country."[40] But read with a slightly different emphasis, Waten's project is no less grounded on a sense of cultural difference and the hybridity of the migrant — Yiddish within Jewish within Australian. These are communities and speaking positions each of which Waten himself partially inhabits, each of which is itself divided. At its blandest perhaps the argument suggests simply a trajectory from one to the other (Yiddish *plus* or Australian *plus*). But it is not spoken just from the centre. In Gunew's terms, Waten's discourse is better thought of as "clearing a space" for the migrant or non-Anglo-Celtic voice within Australian literature, a voice that can talk to Australian literature, talk *as* Australian literature,

without losing the marks of its cultural difference. The markers of difference in his texts are never just those of "subject matter."

In his argument against *Jewish* assimilation, expressed in an approving summary of Goldhar, Waten foregrounds ethnic difference but does so in a rhetoric of universalising humanism that seems to render ethnicity a secondary rather than primary category. Anti-semitism is seen as part of the larger problem of racism confronting "all the democratic forces of the world." Its end "would not be found in the assimilation of the Jewish people, but in their independent existence in equality with all other peoples of the world."[41] As in an earlier phase of feminism, the emphasis falls on equality rather than difference (but it does not fall on essence). It is perhaps impossible to decide philosophically whether such a global multiculturalism inscribes or simply dissolves cultural difference. It might instead be a local, political question; it is certainly one that recurs throughout Waten's career as a commentator on ethnicity and assimilation.

The large-scale assimilation of non-Ango-Celtic migrants had yet to become a major item on the political agenda in the late 1940s when Waten addressed the issues of Jewish literature and Jewish assimilation. By the mid-sixties, however, migration and assimilation were critical issues culturally and politically. Waten reviews — he is *invited*, one supposes, to review — a number of academic studies of Jewish settlement and works of "migrant" biography or fiction. He also writes significant essays: two in overseas journals on international Yiddish culture and one in the Australian weekly *Nation* on non-English-speaking writers in Australia. These works coincide with the writing of *Distant Land*, *So Far No Further*, and many of the stories in *Love and Rebellion*.

In the book reviews relating to Jewish migration and settlement the persistent interest is the link between ethnicity and assimilation: the process whereby assimilated Jews "disappeared as Jewish ethnic entities" and the sociological and economic trajectory of assimilation, from the "traditional pattern of Jewish migrant occupations" to post-war middle-class professionalisation.[42] "In the English speaking countries," Waten suggests, Jews "have become more integrated into the general community than was ever thought possible." This migrant success story has both positive and ironic dimensions. First, a positive insistence on the contributions Jews have made in

academic and other professional fields (a familar trope of Jewish settlement history, but here less a communal pat on the back than an argument against the anti-semitism which accuses Jews of separatism). Second, an ironic account of contemporary Judaism among the successful second and third generations (they "are not immersed in Jewish culture, although they may be ardent supporters of Israel," Waten comments without comment).

Waten is also ironic towards a naive representation of Australia Felix: "Australia is truly the golden land; every Australian is `kindly' ... Australia is without a bureaucracy ... the apotheosis of Australian mateship. If only it was quite like this!"[43] It is no surprise to find him insisting that there has indeed been a "subdued anti-semitism" in Australian society. Waten also speaks of the "genuine loss" which is the decline and near-disappearance of Yiddish literature and theatre in the English-speaking immigrant communities.[44] He celebrates Yiddish culture but again without nostalgia, reminding readers of the conditions under which it developed in the Pale of Settlement. The *shtetls*, he remarks, had become "the object of exaggerated reverence in some American-Jewish literature."[45] This newly-popular American Jewish literature was one significant co-ordinate in the formation of Waten's position in this 1960s-1970s period; the Australian sociological studies provided another; an important third was the contemporary debate about anti-semiticism in the Soviet Union.[46]

Waten's essays on Yiddish culture, published in Australia and overseas, enter this latter debate by invoking a comparison between east and west:

> Often when anti-Soviet propagandists assert that today Yiddish culture is in a serious plight in the Soviet Union and that soon the Soviet Jews will be without a literature and language, they appear to try to leave the impression that conversely in the West, the Yiddish language and literature are flourishing. Actually the reverse is true. Yiddish is at a very low ebb in the USA and is virtually extinct in Britain, but in the Soviet Union there is still considerable creative activity in the Yiddish language.[47]

The argument is a detailed one which need not concern us except as it has bearing on questions of ethnicity, assimilation and separatism. Its point might be summed up, reductively of course, in the following way: assimilation is good in so far as it means Jews becoming part of the general democratic social(ist) movements in their country of habitation, in so far as it can be perceived as part of a progressive, modernising history (against this history, separatism is mere anachronism). Assimilation is bad when it means a sheer loss of culture, of a popular and high culture, for the sake of

wealth and social status in the non-Jewish community. One way or another, the movement of history is against Jewish separatism whether as ethnism, religion or Zionist politics:

> [T]he whole question of integration or assimilation which as a rule was accepted and encouraged by the European socialist movement, was increasingly discussed in the Yiddish press that arose in Odessa and Warsaw. Even then Russian culture was beginning to exercise a profound influence on Jewish intellectuals and workers, largely because of the *universal* character of the ideas that animated it, the ideas of writers like Tolstoy, Plekhanov and Lenin. At the turn of the 20th century significant numbers of Jews were turning to the Russian language and Jews began to enter Russian culture and literature. However, Yiddish remained the language of the Jewish masses....
>
> [In Britain] the Yiddish labour and general press declined as Jewish Labour gradually became part of the general labour movement.... Except as a private family language, generally imperfectly spoken, Yiddish has disappeared from the Anglo-Jewish world.... Jewish life in England has gradually found expression in an expanding Anglo-Jewish literature precisely because English has become the only language of the English Jews....
>
> Yiddish literature and culture have catastrophically declined in the USA in the face of the integration of the American-born Jews and powerful Americanisation campaigns.[48]

The rhetoric is historical rather than political: the (global) inevitability of integration with its "genuine losses" is to be grasped nevertheless as a modernising history. Waten is committed to the secularising of Jewish culture.

The rise and fall of Yiddish culture is tied — as it were *non-ethnically* — to the social conditions of its existence: "Yiddish literature was the specific product of Jewish life in Czarist Russia and tended to whither away under socialism with its *full facilities for integration*, or even when Jews were transplanted to the countries of capitalist democracy where they enjoy educational and civil equality."[49] Whenever, wherever, Yiddish ceases to be the vernacular language, Yiddish literature will decline.[50] In the Soviet Union, however, Yiddish is institutionally supported hence, Waten argues, its continued (modernising) viability:

> Soviet Yiddish literature has adapted itself to the new life and does not draw on a Ghetto sensibility which is still the case with Yiddish writers elsewhere.... [There] is a tremendous encouragement to Yiddish writers to continue writing in their native language, for they can express one area of the *Soviet-Jewish* spirit and at the same time address the vast Soviet world.[51]

If the dissolution of Jewish separatism occurs more slowly in the capitalist countries this is not only because anti-semitism persists but also because of Zionism which "virtually [denies] to Jews national citizenship in the countries of their birth and upbringing, relegating them almost to the position of aliens."[52]

Waten's arguments are thus pro-"integrationist" (as well as pro-Soviet and anti-Zionist). While this has nothing manifestly to do with assimilation into a local capitalist or ethnic status quo he nevertheless provides an argument on the model of assimilation into a *national* project (Soviet for example) in which *ethnic* difference becomes secondary. Zionism, ironically, might well be drawn to the selfsame model. It is only possible for Waten, of course, when the national project can be aligned with the trajectory of a larger progressive history. But it is not difficult to see the possible complicity of Waten's arguments with those of an exclusive nationalism or, at least, his defencelessness against such an ideology without recourse to the categories of class. Waten's own immigrant Jewish experience, refracted through the modernist, communist and nationalist discourses discussed in previous chapters, would likely render him both sensitive and sceptical towards the claims of ethnicity. Ethnic difference is asserted against the universalising, absolutist "myths of cultural superiority" in the majority culture; but a universalising rhetoric in turn is asserted against the absolutist claims of ethnic difference in the form of separatism or *imperialism*. This is where we must locate Waten's arguments, on the axis between ethnicity and universality which, in an important sense, he shares disputatiously with his cultural and political opponents.

In a review of Medding's *Jews in Australian Society* Waten disputes the very claim that Jews "constitute some kind of *monolithic ethnic group*, with a belief in a common destiny" (my emphasis). We can see why it might be important for a communist, anti-Zionist Jew to resist such a claim, in order to claim his right to speak Jewishness (a right that was in fact denied to him more than once[53]). Waten insists on the differences within the category "Jew":

> I do not believe Catholics or Protestants are ethnic groups nor are the Jews. Jews are many things, national, religious, secular and cultural.... The Jews in the Communist Party of Israel are Jews ... and not even the most pious rabbi in Israel would doubt it.[54]

The end of Waten's argument can be just glib in its universalisation of difference ("There are great differences among Jews as among all people here and everywhere"). But it might also be read as an early moment of resistance to the "monolithic" homogenisation and essentialising which can be conducted under the sign of ethnicity. National, religious, secular and cultural identifications cut across each other and across any single ethnic identity; singly or together they cannot provide ethnicity with an

essence. The argument thus also undermines assimilationism, a *form of* "ethnism" rather than its opposite, grounded in the notion of an homogenising, normative ethnicity.

Again we need to differentiate specific political (and writing) occasions rather than over-generalising an ideological structure. Waten's writing occurred at the height of official assimilationism which, as Hodge and Mishra show, affected the cultural as well as the political sphere.[55] In mid-1958 Waten was advised by the editors of *Span*, an Australian-Asian anthology, that his story "Mother" would not be included despite having been accepted. The reason: "it was really unsuitable for this anthology as a story about an alien *not* being assimilated and running into difficulties here — completely wrong as a picture of Australia to distribute to our Asian friends." Waten replied:

> Your point that `Mother' is actually unsuitable as it is about an alien not being assimilated doesn't seem very valid. Many aliens are not assimilated and nobody knows that better than people in Asia who have read about the White Australia policy ... and the discrimination against many foreign migrants and coloured people. Or do you really think the book will be a success in Asia if it merely provides a sugary Good Neighbour Council picture of the lives of foreigners in Australia?[56]

A little later Waten also describes the subtleties of assimilationism in fiction, the problem of "reinforcing stereotypes, thus sustaining the politics of assimilation."[57] Of an American Jewish novel he writes, it "suggests that the sense of Jewish difference still remains in the US but is now acceptable, easily accommodated to the non-Jewish middle-class point of view on foreigners. The Jews provide fun for all."[58] Later still, "after" multiculturalism, he remarks that certain commentators have endowed migrants with "an excessive exotic nobility"; and he interrogates the concept "ethnic," noting its curious Australian use, its awkward history, its dicey politics:

> *Ethnic* is misleading as it is used only to describe migrants from non-English speaking countries, from Europe or Asia, although it can as well be applied to Australians of Anglo-Saxon or Celtic origin and their customs and characteristics. Once it was a put-down word, as having to do with peoples not Christian or Jewish, heathen in fact. Something of that odium still hovers around *Ethnic*: it implies inferiority, at the best it is patronising.
>
> Yet in Australian history, *Ethnic* represents an advance in Australian thinking.... Only a few decades ago newcomers from European countries were variously described by such offensive terms as wogs, reffos, ikey mos and, of course, dagos. Few novels or short stories ... presented these migrants objectively, as other than stereotyped characters, often unpleasant stereotypes.
>
> So now there is some reason for the use of the term *Ethnic*, as it is generally used, but this hardly justifies the inclusion of Aboriginal stories ... in a volume of stories titled *Ethnic Australia*. Ethnics they may be, but they are the original

> inhabitants of this country with an entirely different culture and deserve a volume to themselves. They are not newcomers.[59]

Of course the politics of the final point remain double-edged.[60] For the moment, though, we can note Waten's conjuring of ethnicity against a continued suspicion of *ethnism* as both marginalising and homogenising. Here the politics of inclusion which still define the larger project are held in suspension between the two impossible alternatives.

Post-structuralist interest in migrant writing is self-evidently "interested": it has an investment in discovering writing which "contributes to the formation of resistances to the absolutist claims made on behalf of any culture ... [and] a healthy scepticism towards any bid for universal truths."[61] As far as absolutist ethnic (and in this sense national) definitions of culture are concerned we can say that Waten largely shares this sceptical project. Of course he deploys a pre-structuralist language or, to use a different comparison, in this field he writes from a modernist rather than a post-modernist position. Waten is perhaps the earliest commentator on Australian literature to make non-Anglo-Celtic writing in Australia visible as a topic *for* Australian literature. Much of his writing thus prefigures more recent arguments about ethnic difference, hybridity and marginality. While migrant writing is not seen as a radical disruption to Australian literature — here as elsewhere the project is reformist — it is located as a site from which an "Anglo-Saxon" (and class) cultural dominance might indeed be disrupted.

But sooner or later we find ourselves up against nothing less than a "bid for universal truths." Ultimately Waten's pre-structuralism and modernism make all the difference. It is difficult to push his arguments beyond the level of cultural *diversity* to that of cultural *difference*.[62] Beyond mere diversity, for Waten, lies the universalist notion of a progressive history, anti-nostalgic but also wholly optimistic, wholly positive (in both the philosophical and ethical sense of the term). History, in other words, has a goal. "Australian literature" is not perceived as a site of oppression just because (but also just in so far as) it is perceived as aligned with this positive history. The migrant subject too has a goal. Waten's migrant subjects, his own migrant subjectivities, may be double, divided, even stranded between two selves, but they are still subjects in transition, subjects on the way to somewhere. *Authenticity* is still an end (if not, interestingly, an origin).

A teleological history in this sense will almost certainly be "assimilationist," absorbing or dissolving all differences as it progresses towards its goal. Therefore, despite his insistence on the migrant voice, Waten's position is arguably available for recuperation by the dominant culture with a minimum of disruption, for it continues to identify (with) the nation as a site of positive meaning. Migrants, non-Anglos, are different but perhaps the differences are "inessential." But rather than reduce Waten's arguments to this final position, I want to leave my readings between the two possibilities: anti-ethnism and anti-assimilationism on one side, assimilation (or assimilability) on the other. It is the shifting space between the two that defines Waten's cultural politics in this field.

There is no fundamental change in Waten's discourse in its final phase, but we can note the shifting construction of his position from, as it were, Jewish to migrant to "non-English" or non "Anglo-Saxon-Protestant."[63] As early as 1970 Waten recognises in his interest in Yiddish/Jewish immigrant culture the larger question of "foreign migrant writers" and then non-English speaking writers: Greek, Turkish and Italian-language writers, Carboni, Wenz, Stefan von Kotze, Velia Ercole and more recent writers join Goldhar and Bergner as exemplars.[64] The task is no longer to bring forth the few migrant writers and place them alongside Australian literature but rather to take a position among the many migrant/non-Anglo-Celtic writers past and present. The links between "all writers of non-English backgrounds" are defined in the very same phrases Waten uses to define his own writing: "Loneliness, homesickness, language and cultural barriers, misunderstandings between the newcomers and the locals, divided families or the sharp conflicts between parents and their children brought up in Australia and representing different worlds and social and cultural mores."[65]

This self-situation goes together with a more developed concern to name the ethnicity of Australian literature as "Anglo-Saxon-Protestant."[66] Still, the insistence in these later essays is on the inevitable integrative dominance of English rather than foreign-language literatures: "the language in Australia for the expression of national identity is English."[67] The goal is to become an "Australian writer" however much one writes from inside one's community (and however much the category itself is tranformed).[68] Waten's 1970 essay is again perhaps the first such essay, on non-

English language writers, to appear in the mainstream cultural press. It strains at the very limits of a nationalist discourse within which, however, it is finally constrained:

> It is my belief that all these foreign language writers have contributed to Australian literature, although they are far from the Australian or wider English tradition. They should not be ignored if Australian literature is to further develop its individual quality. These writers describe, among other things, elements of character which are bound to become part of the Australian character when the foreign components in present day Australian society have been absorbed.
>
> Certainly there is no renewal of foreign language literatures in Australia. They stop with the first generation migrants....
>
> The foreign language literatures in Australia remain enclosed in their communities, but English writing is the main thread linking the lives of the widely different peoples living here. English has proved to be able to express the different national identities which now make up the Australian people. The increasing presence of the foreign migrant in Australian literature is evidence that it has grown up and that Australia is no longer a country of people of exclusively British origin.[69]

Multiculturalism *avant la lettre* or "foreignness" delivered to the dominant culture merely as evidence of its own maturity? The Australian tradition and Australian character still represent the outer boundaries; there is still an organicist conception of the relationship between literature, character and people which defines the nation. Yet within these boundaries, within the nation, we find multiple traditions, multiple characters, indeed multiple national identities. Then again, perhaps all these are launched on the one historical trajectory.

The later essays are caught between assimilation and appropriation. It is possible for the non-English speaking migrants to make English "their own";[70] Waten thus celebrates the "moment when a particular literature is enlarged by new groups in the population finding their voices, through writers that have emerged from these groups. The moment can be determined when the writers begin to use the language of the country rather than the language of their origins." Even more optimistic, and more assimilationist: "the `ethnic' writers will come of age and take their work a stage further when they begin from where they are, when they start to look with real perception and love at the landscape around them."[71]

We are a long way from the micro-politics of transgression and marginality, for here it is the fate or duty of the margins to enter the mainstream. Nikos Papastergiadis's description of the orthodox reception of migrant writing seems to apply to Waten no less than to the literary establishment:

> Literature written by "migrants" has often been described as literature *between* cultures, as if it unproblematically occupied the liminal spaces outside, the transitional space from one and towards another, or was the keystone that marked the

> boundary between two separate spaces.... It was either in the process of *becoming*, that is immature, or registered as that small and slightly odd item at the edge of sight. Hence the virtue of literature by migrants was limited to the "natural" or unmediated expressions of exotic or childish authenticity....
>
> Such conceptions sought to incorporate migrant literature selectively and domesticate it within a more stable and greater unity. In the last decade the monolith of Australian identity has prospered by pointing to new entrants in the formation of its *being*. Contradictory origins have not posed a contradiction to this evolution in identity - possibly because the contradictions have been wittingly or unwittingly erased in order to secure entry as a symbolic or real contribution to the national identity.[72]

This catches Waten's arguments in a number of its threads (the notion of a literature in a state of becoming, the project of securing entry into the national identity). Otherwise, and significantly, it just misses: migrant writing for Waten is always more than odd, exotic, marginal; it is always a political question; and the question of hybridity (and racism) is never erased by nationality.

Waten's arguments on migration, ethnicity and assimilation reproduce an orthodox liberal humanism that argues for equality and tolerance (for democracy and reason). This liberal humanism is scarely a unified field however. In one direction it could indeed produce the politics of assimilation: "we" give everyone an equal chance to become Australian. In another direction it undoes the cultural centrism at the heart of assimilation. Waten's sense of the mainstream tradition is, at least, an increasingly inclusive one. That its Anglo-Saxon-Protestant ethnicity has been decentred — historically passed by — is virtually taken for granted. Thus while minority writers are urged into the mainstream, there is little suggestion that they (nevertheless) remain its perpetual supplements. Migration and foreignness become, rather, *constitutive themes* of contemporary Australian literature.

As these points suggest, it is not possible to write of Waten's views on migrant writing as if his discourse were merely innocent. He has a gate-keeping role, a considerable authority (present in the modesty of his critical demeanour) as an Australian-migrant writer. He has his own stake in Australian literature and in defining its centre and its margins as here rather than there: the "here" is clearly not Anglo-Saxon-Protestant, yet it clearly is "Australian." His prescriptions for migrant writing are those which allow his own fiction to figure unambiguously as part of Australian literature. Waten's critical interventions were clearly enabling for his (and for others') fiction; and yet their commitment to positive notions of both "Australia" and "literature" render them part of an oppressive discourse for later migrant/multicultural

writers.

The question of positionality is crucial. Waten writes from a position at home in the majority culture, and this can produce the argument that ethnic writers must "begin from where they are," as if this were one benign place. At the same time he can show that this "home" is never ethnically pure or stable. Waten identifies himself — sometimes from *outside* — with the migrant, ethnic or non-Anglo writers. He clears a space to speak migrant or Jewish; but he refuses to speak only migrant or Jewish. The terms of Waten's criticism do make migrant writing available for recuperation by the majority culture, but it is a recuperation that can only operate against any notion of "monolithic" ethnicity.

3. "Facing the Different and Indifferent Australian World"[73]

In their introduction to *Striking Chords*, Gunew and Longley outline a "very generalised view of non-Anglo-Celtic Australian writing." Their three categories are not evolutionary and may occur in the one writer:

> The first ... deals with those texts which juxtapose the old and new cultures. Such writing, often nostalgic and elegiac, is usually perceived to be the only form that so-called migrant writing may take. And indeed, this is the only group which can properly be termed *migrant* writing.
>
> The second group often corresponds with the second generation after immigration and may be described as taking up the position of translation and mediation.... At home in both languages and cultures, these writers translate one reality into the other and mediate between the two....
>
> The third group is made up of those who forge new languages and new representations.... They foreground the transgressive possibilities of incorporating elements from other languages and other systems of representation into the more conventional forms, not least in their blurring of the traditional boundaries between speech and writing.[74]

Waten's fiction can be located across the first and second of these groups. *Distant Land* juxtaposes old and new cultures, but here as elsewhere the juxtaposition does not generate nostalgia for the old culture, at least not without irony. It does generate the elegiac, almost inevitably one might say for a story of a Jewish family across the course of the twentieth century, but here too elegy is almost always accompanied by *anxiety*.[75] It is, in other words, rendered symptomatic of a present lived contradiction whose resolution lies in the future rather than the past. The narrative of an "irrevocable" history is at once deeply elegiac — for whole ways of life are lost — and unavoidably optimistic — for new ways of life are created.

Although born outside Australia Waten can also be positioned with the second

generation immigrants, as he positioned himself: "For writers like myself a second childhood was unnecessary and we were able to write about our foreign communities as Australian writers ... knowing those communities from the inside."[76] Not only can we say that Waten is "at home" in both cultures, much of his work, both fictional and non-fictional, represents an *argument for* this possibility. His writing and his career, as emphasised above, can be understood exactly in terms of translation and mediation.

The third category is the least applicable, in ways indicated in the first section of this chapter. This is a good reason to begin my analysis of Waten's later "migrant" fiction with this very question of language, representation and realism. It is important in the context of migrant writing to focus on the *literariness* of Waten's realism, for the alternative is to understand it merely as lack, as the pre-literary speech of the migrant. But to narrow the question: how can we read Waten's utterly conventional realism *as* migrant writing, as strategic within the politics of cultural difference?

First, it is important not to underestimate the text's self-inscribed, self-inscribing function of "doing something for the first time." Naively or acutely, this is how Waten constructed his own "migrant" career and thus the occasion of his texts. Perhaps the very notion that there are *stories as yet untold* is exclusively realist. In any case it brings an additional weight to the burden of truth-telling, the burden of history, already inscribed in realism. The first-person semi-autobiographical stories of *Alien Son* become the third-person "chronicles" of the subsequent novels, "a chronicle of non-Anglo-Saxon migrant life in Australia."[77] There is a (realist) burden of representativeness which carries its own consequences for representation. If Waten shares this perspective on migrant writing with "majority" criticism, there is nevertheless a different politics at stake in the act of chronicling.

Second, Waten's realism participates in the universalising humanist discourse described earlier. Let me take as read the overwhelming deconstruction of both realist and humanist meta-narratives. Still I want to articulate their specific significations for the migrant occasion in Waten's writing. The point is to emphasise the political charge that these impossible positions could seem to bear, for in the context of migration and ethnicity, realism could be part of an anti-racist, anti-"ethnist" argument. Here realism functions as the sign of a "universal" language (beneath languages) in which "all things worth saying may be said."[78] In a particular sense it is therefore the language of

translation in which cultural difference can be uttered in terms of the essential human truths (beneath cultural difference). Truth, reason, ideals are translatable across cultures and languages to the extent that they participate in this universal humanity. As with every theory of language, this is also a theory of subjectivity. In realism the subject may be divided between languages but not *in* language: there remains an essential self for which it is always theoretically possible to find the right words.

Finally, the meaning of realism for Waten's migrant writing is its self-situation in a deep novelistic tradition and an Australian (realist) tradition. To make these claims is to argue that migrant histories are national history. Rather than approaching a "strange" or exotic sub-culture in order to report back to the centre, Waten's texts speak on the assumption that here, within the culture, there is a story to be told — which can be told like any other story. There *is* a primary sense in which the story is related for the majority culture to hear. The implied audience is "Australian." But rather than an "anxiety to please the more powerful on whom life depends,"[79] Waten's writings are calculated to resist ghettoisation as simply migrant or even Jewish writing; they resist that "very limited space" assigned to the migrant voice.

Linguistically, formally, Waten's fiction is not marked by difference. On the contrary, its realism is a powerful signifier of *belonging*, first to the realm of "serious writing," second to the realm of serious Australian writing:

> One can confidently assert that in the future there will be much more writing about the non-English communities in Australia.... Of course I only mean serious writers and serious writing. There is already plenty of caricature writing, mostly produced from the outside of the non-English communities.[80]

One aspect of this aesthetic is that Waten renders the "foreign" speech of his characters in what one critic calls "flat standard English."[81] It is easy to forget that they are not speaking English or to be uncertain what language is being spoken. But here as elsewhere Waten is less nostalgic about authenticity than his critics. He does introduce Yiddish words, Yiddish syntax and phrasing, for example, but rather than mimicry it is a matter of slightly inflecting English, strategically placing non-English words or proverbs, shifting the register slightly away from the idiomatic. This is a difficult point to establish economically through short quotations, but let me select a passage from each novel, one narration, the other dialogue:

> None of them could make conversation with Joshua after they had shaken hands with him and wished him long life after the custom. He sat in a corner

> with his head bowed, sighing loudly, seemingly oblivious of the others who spoke in hushed voices among themselves. If sighs could remain hanging in the air, thought Mr Mandel, Joshua Cooper's sighs would remain hanging in his son's house until the end of all generations. (*Distant Land*, 153)
>
> Falkstein repeated to himself something from his father and grandfather: "`Who is rich? The man who is content with his fate.'I am content with my fate, the fate of a rich man," he thought, a bleak smile breaking out from the ends of his mouth.
>
> When he came home he quoted from the Book of Zohar:
>
> "Men fall only in order to rise."
>
> Then he added:
>
> "I rose and so did you, Sofie. We have risen to riches. Now I am content. I shouldn't care if I died next week. I don't imagine I have very long to live."
>
> She coughed sceptically.
>
> "You behave like a man who expects to be here in twenty years time," she said. "You're reaching out for more all the time. To take it with you? You know, Joseph, I think it gives you pleasure to be alive."
>
> He shrugged his shoulders. The hearts of men and the bottom of the ocean are difficult to fathom, he said to himself, recalling an old Jewish proverb. (*So Far No Further*, 68)

In both quotations a relative sense of "non-Englishness" is suggested through minor shifts in syntax and diction, through an unidiomatic formality or proverbiality. The second passage is also deeply ironical in its traditional references (the language of the dialogue is Yiddish or Polish). There *is* a "standard English" omniscient narrator against which foreignness can be gauged, yet the narrating voice shifts easily inside that otherness ("...after the custom") and between indirect discourse and dialogue. The English might, then, be less standard than the critic implies. Its task is indeed to give the majority culture access to a foreign culture, but it avoids the "excessive exotic" by playing subtly across the borders of familiarity and unfamiliarity. There is a point to the (Australian) reader's recognition of the foreigners as both the same and different.

The "flatness" of the prose also warrants comment. In an analysis of Yiddish as a sub-cultural vernacular, as an "affront to the dominant tongue," Maria Damon lights on the "hyperverbalism" of certain Yiddish-influenced English-speaking performers whose rhetoric "consistently undermine[s] a teleological narrative that would privilege a `moral of the story'.... The point of the story is to keep telling the story."[82] Nothing could be further from Waten's writing, perhaps, than hyperverbalism and anti-teleology. But the very contrast, with what we might take as a latent possibility in Waten's own Yiddish-influenced English, re-figures the novels' rhetoric as a form of disciplining, a rigorous ordering and bringing into complementarity of volatile cultural differences so that the moral of the story can indeed be brought to a conclusion (even in the later novel which only goes "so far"). The construction of his

novels through very short sub-sections is one mark of this disciplining.

Part of the contrast is that Waten does not articulate his cultural politics in terms of defensive survival on the margins but rather of expanding his own inwardness to the majority culture, clearing a more generous space for the non-Anglo story *within* the Australian story. Perhaps this does demand controlled subtlety and a sort of commitment to the mundane (which is at times merely banal). Still, against the dislocating language that Damon analyses, Waten's own prose starts to look a little less stable, less self-evident, than it wants to. Cultural difference, we might say, leaks out from under the story's moral.

Let me turn to the level of theme and character, reading to this extent *with* the grain of Waten's realism. *Distant Land* is the story of a family from pre-first world war Poland/Czarist Russia, their migration to Australia (1925) and then their post-war "success." *So Far No Further* focuses on the children of post-war immigrants from two families, one Jewish, one Italian; it ends with a romantic attachment between the Italian son and the Jewish daughter. It will be evident that Waten is interested in the "migrant success story." But *pace* Bosworth and Wilton, while there is virtually always "successful" assimilation, worldly success is accompanied by contradiction, pathos and anxiety, often grotesquely. The novels work, as we might expect, by posing one form of assimilation against another.

In *Distant Land* Shoshanah Kuperschmidt successfully becomes Susan Cooper as she works to ensure the economic, social and professional success of her family. In the process she readily abandons religious practices and what her husband Joshua would call "ideals." Her voice becomes "strident and harsh and her eyes ... hard and rapacious" (66). At the markets she offends her fellow Jews by price-cutting and working on the Sabbath:

> Mr Leibel Schwartz lost his temper and said bitterly: "Your parents would die of shame if they knew you desecrated the Sabbath by working on it, let alone taking the bread out of the mouths of your fellow-Jews."
>
> "What did you all come here for?" she asked. "To make a success. To make money. You can't in this country unless you turn your back on the old ways. Haven't you all done that?... So it is here; so I must be. I don't feel I have to apologise to anyone about it."
>
> And that was that and her competitors knew it....
>
> "Better to stay poor than to become a lunatic chasing the pound," Israel Cohen said.
>
> "With a pound you can buy things, without it nothing," said Joseph Gold. "I'm afraid we'll all have to become lunatics." (65)

She sacrifices any of the "old ways" that impede her success, even as she clings to "traditional, even superstitious beliefs" (73). This contradiction is significant thematically in the novel in marking the course of (vulgar) assimilation. Judaism for Shoshanah becomes superstition and social climbing, with not much in between except cooking. The contradiction she lives, by suppressing, is suggested by her death from cancer.

Yet, as the quoted passage shows, the novel does not allow any single position of moral superiority towards her. This is magnified throughout by the way the text distributes reader sympathy. She has her own pragmatic integrity ("Shoshanah has no shame; she is frank: `God loves the poor and helps the rich'"[83]); the idea of "being realistic," moreover, is a self-reflexive figure in the text. She continues to be *Shoshanah* for the reader and for Joshua and to command his love, a desirability it is difficult for the reader to resist. Joshua, by contrast, is easily ashamed and for the most part ineffectual, but also for the most part the centre of judgement for the reader.

Australia as the promised land is also treated ironically. The novels are happy to show — as a matter of fact — that economic and social success is available to Jews in Australia in ways that it was not in the old (pre-revolutionary) countries. But this is scarcely due to anything "Australian" in Australia, only to a relative absence of institutionalised anti-semitism (there are limits here too: a "successfully assimilated" Jew is denied membership of an exclusive golf club in the story "Three Generations"[84]). As Carl Harrison-Ford comments of *So Far No Further*, although the second generation is moving out of the "closed, racial world of their parents" they do not move into an "open, Australian life ... an egalitarian, free alternative."[85]

In *Distant Land* assimilation turns Jewishness into something that Joshua, for one, scarcely recognises. For him the promise, not of wealth but of a place where Jews can be Jews without fear or discrimination, means turning himself into a "half-clown, half-trader" (37), half-thief, half-comedian (61). The novels return memorably to this scene of self-consciousness, absurdity, grotesqueness, to an *assigned* identity and double dislocation — as the phrases suggest, between one thing and another neither of which is originary.[86] Joshua's new "career" means changing his name, turning himself into a German goy rather than a Polish Jew, and shaving off his beard, the very mark of his Jewishness. Instead of the intellectual he had aspired to be, he becomes an

unqualified travelling optician ironically known as the Professor. The question the novel poses, in its own terms, is whether these excruciating violations of identity do, necessarily, violate anything "essential."

Both sides of the question are emphasised (indeed the dislocations of identity can be fatal). Split subjectivities are distributed over different "character sites": Saul Greenberg, the onetime unionist who despite himself becomes a factory owner, alongside Berel Singer, a secular Jew: "His concept of Jewishness was a kind of secular Judaism which he held with the same fervour as a religious Jew" (42). Berel claims that Australia has given him everything he wanted short of a fortune: "`A living, no Jew-hatred, and the kind of freedom I dreamt of in old Russia when I was a young man and belonged to a Socialist group'" (32). But in the same breath he declares that the "`Australian world plays havoc with Jewish life.... If you get too deeply into it you are lost and you become like the Australian Jews, suspended between two worlds'" (33).

Joshua remarks on Berel's "desperate battle to preserve Jewishness in surroundings completely goyishe, far more so than the country they had left behind" (33). It is Berel who takes Joshua into the travelling optician business ("`There's only hawking left for a Jewish intellectual.... There's hawking and hawking of course,'" 35). For all his apparent optimism, Berel himself is the figure suspended between two worlds. His own children refuse to speak Yiddish and they find Jewish food inappropriate to the climate, though still better than cold mutton! As Berel talks, Joshua observes his face slip from one expression to another, from candour and earnestness to "a sly, smirking smoothness" and yet sadness (36). The novel invites us to read these as character attributes, certainly, but there is always more than personality at stake.

Berel dies soon after the Second World War of "some wasting disease" (120) and his death signals the irrevocable passing of the old Jewish world:

> "This is the first time I have been in the synagogue for a long time.... And now I come to mourn the death of Europe's Jews. Joshua, the Jewish world we knew is dead. It can never be recalled...."
>
> Truly he was mourning for the end of his own life as well as for the dead of Europe....
>
> Joshua glanced curiously at the man who for so long had been an unbeliever.
>
> "Now for the rest of my days I shall treasure everything that belongs to us," Berel continued. "These houses of worship as well as our culture." (120)

At the service for the Jewish dead which follows, Joshua experiences a moment of

bitterness towards the Name of God: "What good was this Kaddish they were intoning with such fervour?" (122). The web of beliefs sustaining the culture, at once religious, communal and intellectual, has been irrevocably dispersed. But, for better and worse, the separate strands are available for the invention of new identities.[87]

As critics have remarked, the pattern of generational change and conflict structures all of Waten's migrant writings. The children become "Australian" no matter how traditional their migrant parents (*willy nilly* is a recurrent term, significant of Waten's particular historicism). There are positive and negative versions of this process of integration and, less remarked, a recurrent pattern of relationships: of a number of children (usually three) it is the youngest and least "ethnic" who becomes the authentic bearer into the future of the ideals of the old culture. The youngest child also reconciles mother and father, following the latter's ideals but with the former's looks! The point is to establish the continuities beneath the discontinuities of migration: "Jewishness" itself guarantees nothing especially as it is reshaped through the Australian social or political system. Again the pattern is a self-reflexive figure, here of the novel's capacity to carry forth the positive values of the old culture into a transformation of the new.

Berel has three sons: Joseph and Nathan, partners in a clothing factory, and Morris, a medical student. Berel feels certain of the two eldest, for "they were traditional Jewish business men even without Yiddish" (42), but not the youngest. Yet he is closest to Morris:

> who had fewer dealings with Jews and spoke less Yiddish than his brothers, [yet] was nevertheless more sympathetic to his father's strivings. He respected his father's intellect.
>
> .... The medical student was realising Berel's dream of studying and becoming a professional man, a doctor, of all things, and not a business man. In his heart of hearts Berel despised business men, only respecting men of learning. (41-42)

The pattern in Joshua's family is similar: Ezekial, the eldest, becomes a barrister, a business man, a very devout Jew and Zionist. His Jewishness, in the argument of the text, is both too much and not enough. In the book's historical argument he is one figure of modern Judaism: aggressively ethnist and political under the sign of religion. We observe him from Joshua's perspective:

> Ezekial had grown heavy and pompous with his success. Since he had become his father-in-law's partner his conversation was almost entirely about business, take-overs and expansion. On Saturdays he went to synagogue with Mr Mandel and returned home full of communal affairs and severely critical of those members of the

> board of the synagogue who failed to attend the service.... Ezekial had become very devout since his mother's death.... Let him be a religious Jew if he wants to be; it gives him solace and uplift as well, Joshua said to himself. He was not Joshua's idea of a religious Jew nevertheless. To his mind his father's uncle, Reb Moishe Eliazar, was the criterion of a religious Jew and not his son, who was like a convert, more holy than the holy, yet whose religion seemed very synthetic indeed. (155)

Ruth, Joshua's daughter, is a more sympathetic figure but also marked by ambition, in her case for the success of her doctor husband. Because of her absorption in Jewish society, Joshua finds her "more of a stranger to him than some of the people he saw every day in the country with whom he discussed the latest news" (156). The contrast is with the youngest child Benjamin, also a lawyer but of left-wing sympathies. Joshua describes him as "an Australian, a goy more than a Jew, only interested in Australian affairs, without any Jewish feeling" (156). Yet it is to Benjamin finally that Joshua feels closest.

These conflicts are played out in the novel's "climax" when Benjamin announces his intention to marry out, to marry a "shiksa." The event is used in the novel to draw its argument to a close and assign its characters to their final positions. Joshua's immediate reaction is shock, but as he sorts through his responses he can find nothing to say against the marriage that is not based on superstition or emotions "having their origins not in reason but in obscure feelings stemming from the dark past and the history of his people" (165). The passage towards this conclusion is difficult, for Joshua has a deeply-ingrained "suspicion of gentiles"; Benjamin's children "would be lost to the Jewish people" (165). In addition, the narrative underscores the mundane "Australianness" of Thelma, Benjamin's partner. Her speech, her attitude, her very glances are non-Jewish, the food she cooks is gentile food with "an alien smell" (164). What wins her to Joshua are her views on anti-semitism and racism: "Perhaps in our time racial inequality will be abolished all over the world and all people will mingle freely" (165). She has "ideals" (164). Even so, when he reflects on what Shoshanah would have thought of the marriage, he is disquieted by a feeling of disloyalty towards her.

Ruth is caught in between. She is scarcely religious, "nor did she have her mother's collection of traditional beliefs and superstitions" (162). Yet for her inter-marriage "`means the end of Jewishness'" (163). For Shoshanah marrying out had been "a genuine fear as though of death itself" (132). Ruth's fear can never quite be separated in Joshua's mind from her social and professional ambitions. Earlier in the

book Joshua remarks that inter-marriage is "the only tenet of Judaism, or what they believe is Judaism, which the community clings to. Everything else has gone by the board" (132).

There is no ambivalence for Ezekial. He cuts Benjamin completely and argues with his father ("`[H]e won't be dead for me,' Joshua said. `I'm not a religious fanatic.' `You're a Jewish father.'" 171). Further, Ezekial attempts to persuade Joshua to sell the family home in the country, and to live in Melbourne amongst Jews. Joshua decides to sell but also to stay in the country, indeed to board in the Wimmera Hotel ("After all he was not a stranger to living with gentiles," 174). For Ezekial this amounts to "choosing to live a Christian life in preference to a Jewish one" (177).

The question of living in Israel is also raised, but Joshua hesitates before the Jewish life Israel offers, perhaps the Jewish life of which he had always dreamed:

> He really did not know what he wanted; none of his old ideals satisfied him any longer. They had become shadowy, intangible like his own past which seemed lost in mists. Perhaps the truth was that unbeknown to himself he had formed deep ties with the new land, he had become part of it, and it was from it that new ideals would arise. (157)

This is the novel's unambiguous assimilationist argument (the "perhaps" is merely conventional). Joshua's "new" life, his ideals, are to be found here and now (for better or worse, willy nilly), not in the past, in secular Yiddish culture or traditional beliefs; not in their contemporary hyper-orthodox politico-religious forms; and not elsewhere, in the promised land of Israel. This amounts to an argument against Jewish separatism *and* "vulgar assimilation" (virtue scarcely resides in "Australia") in which the two are rendered virtually equivalent. By the end of the novel Ezekial strikes Benjamin as "`much closer to an extreme Christian conservative than to a Jew like myself or even [Joshua]'" (185). Joshua demurs, forseeing the possibility of anti-semitism once again compelling Jews to come together. But Benjamin's is closest to the final word: "`It's different now.... Now we are divided on the same lines as all other people'" (185).

The tendency of the argument is consistent with Waten's critical writing and much of his other fiction.[88] Jewishness (and, despite Waten's own warnings, ethnicity) is not an essence but an "evolution"; it is religious, cultural, social and political and so closely determined by time and place. We could emphasise Waten's insistence on "a multiplicity of ways of being Jewish, on the right to self-definition and the right to refuse definition" (in Damon's terms).[89] On the other hand we could emphasise the

texts' programmatically-opposed progressive and reactionary ways of being Jewish or being assimilated. There is a multiplicity of ways of being Jewish but they are not all equal. In *Distant Land* as elsewhere a singular, unambiguous argument is complicated only by the number of instances across which it is dispersed (thus the dispersal of the reader's desire).

The point is neither to abandon Jewishness/ethnicity in the pursuit of mere assimilation nor to cling to mere ethnicity in the face of historical change. Ethnicity, we might say, is necessary but never sufficient. To argue which, the novels must figure an authentic form of integration (which will figure their own integrative form). The optimistic resolution goes something like this: ideals which can be expressed as a form of Jewishness can be translated without loss into other cultural and political forms, and without compromising Jewishness:

> [H]e thought of his life, from the ealiest days when he had excelled in the Talmud and when he played the violin and later when he became a good linguist, serving a useful purpose during the war against the Nazis. Now he never played the violin and he had almost forgotten his languages, except the English he spoke. Even his Yiddish and German were now imperfect. He had not achieved what he had wanted; he had not ralised his ambitions. But he had not lost his ideals, he told himself. Once he thought only of Jewish causes. Now he believed that his people and the rest of mankind could not be separated into different worlds. It did not make him less a Jew. It made him more a Jew. For him a Jew was one who respected all mankind, loved justice and believed in intellect. He would give expression to his ideals in this town which he now believed he was destined to stay in. (187)

Joshua successfully "re-invents" his Jewish identity. What was loneliness for him becomes "perfect rest" (188), a significant phrase in a novel of Jewish migration.

In many ways, as we have seen, Waten is resisting Jewish essentialism rather than Anglo-Australian assimilationism. Hence his concern to argue against the primacy of ethnic difference (or of what he argues elsewhere is not really an ethnic difference at all). There is only an indirect concern with the politics of group survival, perhaps the principal trope of Jewish fiction and history. At the same time the texts do work to identify the kinship between ethnism and assimilationism, and to name the ethnicity of the Anglo-Saxon-Protestant or Celtic-Catholic host cultures. In *So Far No Further*, for example, Paul Avanzo's relation to his Italian/Catholic identity is juxtaposed to the Irish-Catholic Australian (itself dominant-dominated). Certainly the textual politics are not directed primarily at "resisting integration." But perhaps we can rewrite Jurgensen's terms to claim that the texts are designed to resist *exclusion* (the actual effect of assimilation), indeed to *demand* integration. The question then is: on

whose terms?

The narrating position in Waten's fiction, I have argued, can never be located (wholly) outside the minority cultures. One effect of this is to suggest that the "migrant" culture does not depend upon the gaze from outside for its self-definition (we might foreshadow a contrast with *They're a Weird Mob*). Waten's anti-essentialism, but also his realist universalism, is present in his assumption that he can "do" Italian or Greek just as well as Jewish migrants. "The Knife" suggests what is enabling and disabling in this assumption. Waten takes on the stereotype of Italian With Knife and rewrites it from the migrant's perspective; but (in the terms in which realism poses the issue) he might only land on a further "stereotype." In this sense the story may not get beyond "sympathy,"[90] although the series of transpositions whereby it signifies *migration*, rather than Italian-ness, is more complex. The knife is not the Italian migrant's weapon but his link with his homeland. It becomes a weapon through the generic typing of Plinio by his Australian antagonists. A story about identity, "The Knife" is also a story about masculinity, for the father and grandfather's knife has been passed on to Plinio by his mother. But the knife - as home, law, phallus - can never reassert the masculine identity disrupted by migration. Its rise as a weapon is its fall from meaning. Used by his father for wood-carving, "his mark of self-sufficiency," its use as a weapon by Plinio marks his ultimate loss of self-sufficiency. Waten dramatises the process whereby all "foreign migrants" are "forced to experience themselves generically" as foreign. In "A Child of War and Revolutions" the narrator remarks ironically on being taken for a German — a "Squarehead as well as Ikey Mo" — during the first war: "All foreigners were Germans" (*Love and Rebellion*, 13).

Serge Liberman has suggested that the history of Jewish migration is paradigmatic of "ethnic minority" migration. The argument, from a writer more securely within the post-war Jewish community than Waten, (nevertheless) nicely suggests the thematic ground of Waten's fiction:

> [The] issues involve matters of adaptation in a new environment.... For the Jew, the matter of adaptation is reflected in the question: What is home? Is home the place the Jew has had to abandon? Is home the place he has come to? Is it Israel, both the symbolic and the tangible geographic home of the Jew? Or is it the world of the memory on the one hand or of anticipation on the other, ... a place suspended in inner fantasy and in physical limbo?...
>
> Adaptation, too, is reflected in the striving after physical security along with attempts to rise socially, economically and professionally.... by the search for an identity in an alien environment, in an environment variously hostile, indifferent or

> accepting, with the corollary issues and tensions that this raises: the opposing attractions towards assimilation and towards increasing isolation and separatism from his sources; one's relation to ... one's tradition with its values and forms, sometimes at the expense of living in the wider social/cultural/political milieu ... the converse being no less a dilemma; the conflicts between the generations as a reflection of these tensions...; and, at the extremes of the identity conflicts — and of belongingness — questions such as intermarriage.[91]

For Liberman, the emphasis falls on the balance between survival and "success" (the conventional trope). For Waten, by contrast, the emphasis falls on what we might call the problem of modernity. This is a significant difference of interpretation, a different politics, which I want to consider before concluding.

From the beginning of *Distant Land*, the Jewish community is shown to be in transition and, in a sense, hybrid. This is the novel's very starting-point. Joshua is a prodigy in Hebrew and Talmudic studies but he is also attending a Russian school: "Without knowing it Mr Kuperschmidt, although devout and conservative, had been affected by the break-down of the old ghetto world, and had set his mind on giving his son a secular education, an education that would bring a university degree and a profession" (5). Joshua learns Russian, Ukrainian and Polish, as well as Yiddish and Hebrew. He reads the Russian writers, Chekhov, Gorki, Lermontov, Tolstoy, and contemporary Yiddish writers such as Aleichem: "Always he oscillated from one world to another — from the small Jewish world to the mysterious, fascinating greater outside world and then back to the Jewish again" (6).[92]

An enigma in Joshua's mind — the meaning of the Christian or gentile world in relation to the Jewish — is thematised in the novel as an opposition between the progressive and regressive forces of history. Of course the oppositions are not interchangeable, for the latter cuts across the former. To Joshua, the Christian world means anti-semitism and inhumanity. Yet it also provides learning: "there were teachers and pupils who were dedicated to the highest ideals, to the love of all peoples and the betterment of humanity" (8). Judaism provides him with his ideals but also with a mistrust of gentiles which, however justified locally, is ultimately irrational:

> During his last years at school he had read many Russian writers, from Chernyshevsky to Gorki and he had steeped himself in the modern Yiddish and Hebrew writers. They had shaken his belief in the traditional religious attitudes of the Jewish ghetto world which had been further undermined by the war and the Russian Revolution. Even Yiddish culture seemed to be the culture of the ghetto, yet he could not embrace the culture of the non-Jewish world, much as it drew him to it.
>
> In the Beth Hamedrash he had first talked about all these matters and he had cast doubts on the Holy Books. Then he had attended Zionist meetings where the future of the Holy Land was discussed and he found himself siding with those Zionist

> Socialists who believed their socialist aims could only be realised in the Holy Land. In general he was affected by Socialist ideas, yet because he felt a kind of hostility to the gentile world, a hostility that was at odds with his sympathy for the culture and the ideals that emerged from that world, he could not think of Socialism as something to be achieved in the land where he lived. For all his shedding of Jewish religious beliefs he still retained a traditional Jewish view of the non-Jew and could not come to terms with him. (12-13)

Elsewhere Waten describes the relationship between the two cultures, and between culture and commerce, tradition and modernity, in terms of the distribution of physical space. Joshua climbs a hill overlooking the town:

> From there he could see the two districts, the Christian and the Jewish, that met in the town square and market place with its town hall, two-story houses and shops with white, grey and green shutters, a kind of neutral territory for Christians and Jews for most parts of the year. He loved his own house in the square and he loved the town. In the centre of the Christian section, by far the largest with nearly two-thirds of the area and population, stood the Catholic church, the tallest building in the town with its steeple and pointed spire. And in the Jewish part the vaulted synagogue dome stood out. For the rest most of the houses in both parts were low-roofed, especially in the streets leading to the railway station where the mud never dried, where only the Christian workers lived. (15)

Here the question of class is entered into the problem of modernity, as is the question of Eretz Israel. Joshua rejects becoming a rabbi; he is unable to go to university in Poland or Germany; he decides then to go to Palestine (he is contemplating this decision as he looks over the town). The Holy Land offers itself as a reconciliation of his contradictory attitudes towards the non-Jewish world, for Palestine in this time and place is dangerously aligned with modernity. Joshua's father "believed it was a heresy or at least a piece of gross impertinence to want to anticipate the Messiah" (16); Reb Chaim Avremal is blunter: "`They start with the Holy Land and finish up Bolsheviks'" (18).

Joshua's idealistic dream of Eretz Israel, where as a linguist he could be a "human bridge between peoples ... Arab, European Christian and Jewish" (22), where he could "help to construct a new Jewish life" (26), is deflected by Shoshanah's sheer determination and "driving ambition" (27) for their economic and social success. Shoshanah too, in her own way, is a sign of modernity and change, unconcerned by the prospect of "migrating to a country where [she] would be surrounded by gentiles, where there was a tiny handful of Jews" (31). Her impatience with the old ways — in business especially — has been learnt in the war years "when the family had wandered from town to town, fleeing now from one army, now from another, now eluding pogromists" (19). This Jewish diaspora history is also the history that initiates

modernity:

> As Shoshanah did not ever go out on her own, did not belong to any society or organisation, but lived within the four walls of the house and the shop and in the women's gallery of the synagogue, she did not object to the fact that her suitors would be chosen or at least approved by her parents. In this respect she was the same as most conventional daughters of religious parents.... [But] she wanted to be in love with the man she married. That was very much a new-fangled idea, almost approaching a heresy, but Mr Weissenberg could not argue her out of it. (19)

The place of Palestine/Israel changes in the course of the novel (or perhaps its historical meaning emerges more clearly). From the perspective of post-war Australia it can no longer be a place of reconciliation, an ideal — in Israel too, it is implied, the Jews are divided "along the same lines as all other people."

Ezekial disapproves of the secular politicians in Israel: "He really believed in a theocracy for Israel, a religious state led by rigidly orthodox rabbis. He admired the Catholic Church which combined religion and politics" (183). Benjamin, by contrast, resists Joshua's suggestion that he develop an interest in Jewish affairs, in Israel:

> "You surely wouldn't want me to cut myself off from Australian life. I am an Australian."
> "Yes, yes," said Joshua, "but you're a Jew."
> "Australia's my country," Benjamin said. (125)

To return to our earlier terms, the course of a modernising, emancipatory, progressive history is in one sense *beyond* ethnicity, certainly beyond religion, and towards "mankind." It can thus afford to be truly mundane, anchored in the here and now, the everyday, the empirical. Waten will always seek to clinch his most ambitious arguments in the most ordinary terms.

Modernity is approached in a rather different manner in *So Far No Further*. In bringing together the daughter and son of Jewish and Italian families respectively, Waten is making the same sort of argument beyond ethnicity even as he registers the force of ethnicity for all his characters. Further, this post-1968 novel is involved in a heavy-handed (that is, excessively disciplinary) argument with the politics of the student New Left and new avant-garde — portrayed as play-acting for middle-class kids or a not-so new version of Trotskyism, now anarchism and Maoism. The task of the novel is not only to consign the old superstitions to the past and to reconcile Deborah's Polish Jewishness and Paul's Italian Catholicism, her radicalism and his conservatism (which is idealistic, genuine). It is also to win back the history of human progress and modernity for what I have called in earlier chapters the "long historical perspective." Despite this, or rather because of it, the novel's resolution (its

"assimilation") remains incomplete. Deborah has the last word, as she resists Paul's proposal of marriage: "`Then we will have to live in our separate houses'" (224). Waten's strong teleology produces a narrative emphasis on ongoingness rather than closure.

To conclude I want to consider the "post-structuralist" critique of *Distant Land* mounted by Hodge and Mishra.[93] They read the novel alongside John O'Grady/Nino Culotta's *They're a Weird Mob* as assimilationist. They are correct, of course, to argue that writing by "real" migrants (their quote-marks) can be no less assimilationist than that by Anglo-Celtic Australians and that certain positions within multiculturalism were not always historically available. What I find theoretically interesting is that they fail to distinguish Waten's text in any way from O'Grady's. Behind this failure is the aesthetic excess, the ultimately formalist critique of realism, defined in the first section of this chapter. It produces some remarkable "over-readings." Waten's memoir "A Writer's Youth," they say, "is silent about his migrant experience." Unfortunately the passage they quote comes from the end of the memoir where Waten comments, with an irony they seem to miss, that his failed novel *Hunger* included "everything" — except his migrant background. The memoir begins: "The first writer in my life was Sholem Aleichem, the great Yiddish comic writer."

The novel's realism is the first thing Hodge and Mishra note. They align it with other, canonical emigrant family sagas including *The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney*. Waten would not have minded this location at all, for his work is indeed designed to address the literary tradition, to be considered in its space. For Hodge and Mishra, though, this can only be a shortcoming or worse a "suppression" of the migrant voice. Thus they read *Distant Land* as an "unacknowledged narrative of assimilation." But on one level at least, nothing could be more acknowledged in this novel which begins with debates *within* a Jewish community between Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian cultural options, and ends with Zionism, anti-Zionism and "Australian-Jewishness" juxtaposed. What Hodge and Mishra mean, of course, on a different level, is that Waten's voice is indistinguishable from majority voices. This has its point, as I have shown, but their criticism finally depends upon a sheer aestheticisation of "voice" which even has them forgetting to distinguish between the levels of story and discourse.[94] If they imply an answer to the question of who Waten is writing for, they

fail to ask who he is writing against.

Waten's fiction, I have argued, gives nothing to the overt politics of assimilation (it would not have been handed out to arriving immigrants[95]). Not least at the level of discourse, and in contrast to *They're a Weird Mob*, there is no position from which a distinctive Australian way of life is offered as a singular good thing (affectionately "weird," that is, unique, authentic, native). O'Grady's plot, as Hodge and Mishra show, can only be a kind of "first contact" narrative in which the boundaries of inside and outside remain as firmly delineated as ever. Waten's migrant story, by contrast, begins before migration, and the borderlines to be renegotiated are largely those within the Jewish community (whose own boundaries are always in transition). "Australia" has only a weak presence in the text, not as a goal so much as a kind of historical accident. There *is* a positive goal, as I have suggested, in the reconciliation of Jewish and Australian identities figured at the end of *Distant Land*, but again Australia is only a contingent, and so transformable, site for this process.

I have also argued that Waten's migrant writings can be read as strategies of resistance to the "othering" of the majority culture: again, the fiction offers no position from which the "foreigner," the migrant, can be taken generically as exotic or as pure Other. The strategy is to show that the foreigner/migrant both is and is not the same, and the fictions locate the power to make these differences on the migrants' own ground rather than on the grounds of the majority culture. If in their bid for cultural respectability Waten's texts are more assimilationist than he knows, it might also be the case that they are more wrought by cultural difference than their strong teleology admits. Again the critics can be more anxious about the authentic than Waten himself. Hodge and Mishra in effect render Waten's migrant writing illegitimate, "inauthentic" against "genuine multicultural writing" or "authentic voices" (their words). They exercise their own suppression of anything less than the "traumatised response of multicultural writing proper." But by reading cultural difference as firstly a formal difference, they fail to read for cultural difference after all. They are left in the awkward position of defending post-modernism in the name of authenticity.

In Waten's fiction diverse ethnic histories are argued into the course of Australian history and as constitutive rather than as supplementary, despite his strong commitment (elsewhere) to a national tradition and even as ethnicity emerges as a

secondary category relative to the universal categories of mankind and history. This is an argument against ethnic essentialism, but also against assimilation. It is, we might say, an assertion of universal values against the assumptions of universality made by a single culture, by any single culture, Jewish or Anglo-Saxon-Protestant as the case may be. There are no chosen people in Waten's novels except perhaps the *people* (but that's another story).

This is the most optimistic case *for* Waten as a migrant/non-Anglo-Celtic writer. He writes from a "migrant" position, he clears a space within the majority culture for the migrant/non-Anglo voice. His disarming assumption is that there is an "other" story to tell which can be told like any other story. Here we might want to resist the merely impossible concept of a multicultural aesthetics by insisting on the novels' "success" in specific frameworks of reception and a specific local politics. Very few of their contemporary reviewers, to stay within a limited sphere, were able to find the migrant theme merely documentary-autobiographical; the novels posed questions to the critics about Australian literature, modestly reworking their sense of the culture's boundaries.[96]

At the same time the positions articulated in the post-structuralist, post-modernist — and post-assimilationist — criticism do enable us to define the limits of Waten's texts, their recuperability. The points can best be made negatively in terms of what the texts *cannot resist*. Waten's realism, in implying the translatability of all cultural difference, cannot finally constrain or proscribe readings which will merely efface those differences. Similarly it cannot altogether constrain readings of the texts as mere chronicles or migrant spectacle in so far as the third-person omniscient narrator participates in an authoritative empiricism.

In short, there is indeed a limit to how far the texts can constrain their co-option to a position within the host culture. They can be read so as to deliver migrants to that culture, now with the guarantee of being "good neighbours" (or good migrants and bad migrants). Further, despite their socialist inflection, the humanist universals through which the fiction mounts it critique of ethnism are the values claimed for literature itself in the majority culture. The texts cannot resist their being read as *merely universal*. But the point of my argument is that these will be assimilationist or "aesthetic" readings, not readings for cultural difference.

1.. Judah Waten, *Distant Land* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1964); *So Far No Further* (Mount Eliza, Vic.: Wren, 1971); *Love and Rebellion* (1978; Richmond, Vic.: Hodja Educational, 1983). *Distant Land* was also an Australasian Book Society selection, and a *Herald-Sun* Readers Book Club choice! Further references to these books will appear in the text.

2.. Manfred Jurgensen, "Multicultural Aesthetics: A Preliminary Definition," in *Striking Chords: Multicultural Literary Interpretations*, eds Sneja Gunew and Kateryna O. Longley (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992), p.33.

3.. Gunew and Longley, Introduction to *Striking Chords*, pp.xvi-xvii.

4.. Gunew, "Migrant Women Writers: Who's on Whose Margins?" in *Gender, Politics and Fiction: Twentieth Century Australian Women's Novels*, ed. Carole Ferrier (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1985), p.165.

5.. Gunew, "PMT (Post Modernist Tensions: Reading for (Multi)Cultural Difference," in *Striking Chords*, pp.42-43. The quotation from JanMohamed and Lloyd is in "Introduction: Minority Discourse — What is to be Done?" *Cultural Critique* 7 (Spring 1987), p.10 (an issue prompted by Deleuze and Guattari's *Kafka*, discussed in Chapter 3 above).

6.. Gunew, "Migrant Women Writers," p.168.

7.. Gunew, "Framing Marginality: Distinguishing the Textual Politics of the Marginal Voice," *Southern Review* 18, 2 (July 1985), p.144.

8.. Gunew, "PMT," p.43. For further discussion of the meanings and politics of the different terms see Gunew, "Home and Away: Nostalgia in Australian (Migrant) Writing," in *Island in the Stream: Myths of Place in Australian Culture*, ed. Paul Foss (Leichhardt, NSW: Pluto Press, 1988), p.35. Gunew also discusses the dangers and the usefulness of "Anglo-Celtic" which, she argues, does not commit us to the notion that "Anglo" and "Celtic" are homogenous.

9.. Gunew, "Migrant Women Writers," pp.165 & 167.

10.. Gunew, "Authenticity and the Writing Cure," in *Grafts: Feminist Cultural Criticism*, ed. Susan Sheridan (London: Verso, 1989), p.117.

11.. Gunew, "Constructing Australian Subjects: Critics, Writers, Multicultural Writers," in *Diversity Itself*, ed. Peter Quartermaine (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1986), p.55; also "Framing Marginality," p.148.

12.. Gunew, "Framing Marginality," p.144.

13.. Gunew, "Framing Marginality," p.146.

14.. Gunew, "Authenticity and the Writing Cure," pp.118-19.

15.. For example, the following essays in *Striking Chords*: Efi Hatzimanolis, "Speak as You Eat: Reading Migrant Writing, Naturally," pp.168-77 and Ivor Indyk, "The Migrant and the Comedy of Excess in Recent Australian Writing," pp.178-86.

16.. Jurgensen, "Multicultural Aesthetics," p.33.

17.. Gunew, "Authenticity and the Writing Cure," p.120.

18.. Jurgensen, "Multicultural Aesthetics," pp.30 & 32.

19.. Jurgensen, "Multicultural Aesthetics," p.30.

20.. Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp.4-7 & 160-162.

21.. Gunew, "Framing Marginality," p.146; and see Nikos Papastergiadis, "The Journeys Within: Migration

and Identity in Greek-Australian Literature," in *Striking Chords*, pp.149-61, for an account of Antigone Kefala's work as transgressive but less than transcendent.

22.. Gunew, "Authenticity and the Writing Cure," p.119. See also Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), pp.170-72.

23.. Longley, "Fifth World," in *Striking Chords*, p.23.

24.. Gunew, "PMT," p.37.

25.. Gunew, "Migrant Women Writers," p.168; "Framing Marginality," p.144.

26.. Richard Bosworth and Janis Wilton, "Novels, Poems and the Study of Europeans in Australia," *Teaching History* 15, 2 (July 1981), pp.45 & 50.

27.. Bosworth and Wilton, "Novels, Poems," p.48.

28.. Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), pp.188-93.

29.. The policies of multiculturalism were established in the early-mid 1970s but it was some time before literary publications expressing this new sense of ethnic/migrant groups began to appear. For example: Manfred Jurgensen's *Ethnic Australia* (Brisbane: Phoenix Publications) appeared in 1981; Sneja Gunew's *Displacements: Migrant Stroytellers* (Deakin University Press) in 1982; R.F. Holt's *The Strength of Tradition: Stories of the Immigrant Presence in Australia* (University of Queensland Press) in 1983.

30.. Waten, "Yiddish Literature in Australia," *Unity* (July-August 1948), pp.4-5; "Contemporary Jewish Literature in Australia," *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal and Proceedings* 3, 2 (1949), pp.92-102. See also "Pinchas Goldhar," *Voice* (February 1947), p.13.

31.. See for example, Hilary L. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Victoria 1835-1985* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986), chs 10 & 11, esp. pp.152-63.

32.. *Distant Land*, pp.79-87; "Three Generations," *Love and Rebellion*, pp.113-14.

33.. Waten, "Yiddish Literature," p.4.

34.. Waten, "Yiddish Literature," p.4.

35.. Waten, "Yiddish Literature," p.5 (my emphasis).

36.. Quotations in this paragraph from "Yiddish Literature." p.4 (my emphases).

37.. Maria Damon, "Talking Yiddish at the Boundaries," *Cultural Studies* 5, 1 (January 1991), p.17, where she defines her own relation to her American Jewishness as a "reinvention and recognition of ethnicity."

38.. Waten, "Contemporary Jewish Literature," p.92.

39.. Waten, "Contemporary Jewish Literature," p.94.

40.. Waten, "Contemporary Jewish Literature," p.95.

41.. Waten, "Yiddish Literature," p.4.

42.. Quotations in this paragraph are from Waten's book reviews: "The Kosher Caper," rev. of *Jewish Settlers in Australia*, by Charles Price, *Australian Book Review* 4, 2 & 3 (December 1964-January 1965), p.27; "Melbourne Jewry," rev. of *The Fortunes of Samuel Wynn*, by Allan Wynn, *Australian Book Review* 7 (September 1968), p.202; "The Jewish Contribution to Australian Society," rev. of *Jews in Australian Society*, ed. Peter Medding, *Age* 18 August 1973, p.12.

43.. Waten, "Melbourne Jewry," p.202.

44.. "Portrait of the Jewish Home," rev. of *The Walled Garden*, by Chiam Berman, *Sydney Morning Herald* 21 February 1976, p.16. See also "Yiddish Heroes and Themes," rev. of *Portraits of Yiddish Writers*,

by Yitzhak Kahn, *Age* 28 July 1979, p.26, where Waten describes Yiddish as "a tough travelling language, refusing to die despite wanderings and genocide and the adoption of English as the first language of American, English and Australian Jews."

45.. Waten, "Portrait of the Jewish Home."

46.. Waten's extensive newspaper and periodical cuttings collection reveals his interest in the Jewish writers in the USA: Bellow, Roth, Potok, Singer etc. There is also a large collection of cuttings on Jews/Yiddish in the Soviet Union. As well as communist papers, there is a good deal from *Time*, *Newsweek*, the *Bulletin*, the *Times Literary Supplement*. Judah Waten Papers, NLA MS 4536, Boxes 30-36.

47.. Waten, "Yiddish Culture in West and East," *Labour Monthly* (August 1966), p.374; repr. in the journal of the Communist Party of the USA, *Political Affairs* (October 1966), pp.51-61. See also "Will Yiddish Culture Survive?" *Labour Monthly* (September 1966), pp.440-46; "Yiddish Culture in the West," *Australian Left Review* 3 (October-November 1966), pp.52-57; and "Setting the Record Straight," *Political Affairs* (March 1967), pp.58-61.

48.. Waten, "Yiddish Culture in West and East," pp.376-78. In "Will Yiddish Culture Survive?" Waten adds that the "State of Israel offers no hope to Yiddish" (p.445).

49.. Waten, "Setting the Record Straight," *Political Affairs*, p.59 (my emphasis).

50.. Waten, "Will Yiddish Culture Survive?" p.445. Elsewhere he adds: "I myself would grieve at the passing of Yiddish literature in the Soviet Union, just as I do at its passing on other countries. I have always been a protagonist of Yiddish writing from which my own work as a novelist draws inspiration," ("Setting the Record Straight," p.61).

51.. Waten, "Will Yiddish Culture Survive?" p.446 (my emphasis).

52.. Waten, "Setting the Record Straight," p.60.

53.. For example, in 1967-68 invitations to address Jewish organisations were withdrawn: from the Young Men's Hebrew Association of Australia for Waten to be Guest of Honour and guest speaker, on "The Jewish Writers in the World Today"; from the Labour Zionist Organisation of Australia; and a third, from the Aleph Zadik Aleph Youth Group, on *Alien Son*. The reason given for the latter, in reply to a vigorous letter from Waten, is Waten's "publicly stated views on current Jewish world problems [and] due consideration of the views of the leaders of our Jewish community." Waten papers, NLA MS 4536 Box 30.

54.. Waten, "The Jewish Contribution to Australian Society."

55.. Hodge and Mishra, pp.188-89.

56.. Tom Inglis Moore (for the Canberra Fellowship of Australian Writers), letter to Waten, 26 August 1958; Waten to Inglis Moore, 7 September 1958, NLA MS 4536/2/258-59. *Span: An Adventure in Asian and Australian Writing*, ed. Lionel Wigmore for the Canberra Fellowship of Australian Writers (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1958).

57.. Gunew, "The Migrant Experience," in *The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*, eds Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson (Sydney: Macmillan, 1990), p.169.

58.. Waten, "Cliches and Cardboard," rev. of *Potatoes Are Cheaper*, by Max Shulman, and *Settle Down Simon Katz*, by Bernard Kops, *Sydney Morning Herald* 22 December 1973, p.15.

59.. Waten, rev. of *Ethnic Australia*, ed. Manfred Jurgensen, *New Literature Review* 12 (1983), p.46.

60.. See Oodgeroo, *Towards a Global Village in the Southern Hemisphere* (Nathan, Qld.: Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, Griffith University, 1989), p.1.

61.. Gunew, "The Migrant Experience," p.169.

62.. The distinction is made by Homi Bhabha, "The Commitment to Theory," *New Formations* 5 (Summer 1988), pp.18-19: "Cultural diversity is the recognition of pre-given cultural `contents' and customs,

held in a time-frame of relativism; it gives rise to anodyne liberal notions of multiculturalism, cultural exchange, or the culture of humanity." Cultural difference, by contrast, might be characterised by its recognition that the cultural contents are not "pre-given" and that beyond plurality lies hybridity. Of course Waten's commitent to historical progress complicates his relation to any fixed time-frame of relativism.

63.. The phrases quoted are from Waten, "Writers from Two Cultures,"*Aspect* 5, 1-2 (1980), p.55; and "Multilingual Neighbours On Our Literary Scene," rev. of *The First Multicultural Anthology*, ed. Andrew Dezsery and *Neighbours*, by Andrew Dezsery, *Age* 11 October 1980, p.30.

64.. Waten, "In Other Tongues," *Nation* 27 June 1970, pp.22-23; "Discovering Migrant Literature," *Island* 16 (1983), pp.26-29.

65.. Waten, "Writers From Two Cultures," p.50. He uses the same formulation for his own writing in "My Two Literary Careers," pp.87-88.

66.. Waten, "Multilingual Neighbours On Our Literary Scene"; and "Discovering Migrant Literature," p.26.

67.. Waten, rev. of *Ethnic Australia*, p.48.

68.. Waten, "Jews in a New Land," rev. of *On Firmer Shores*, by Serge Liberman, *Age* 3 October 1981, p.28.

69.. Waten, "In Other Tongues," p.23.

70.. Waten, "New Voices, New Attitudes," rev. of *Displacements: Migrant Storytellers*, ed. Sneja Gunew, *Age* 21 August 1982, p.14.

71.. Waten, rev. of *Ethnic Australia*, pp.47 & 48.

72.. Papastergiadis, "The Journeys Within," p.150.

73.. Waten, "Writers From Two Cultures," p.54.

74.. Gunew and Longley, Introduction to *Striking Chords*, p.xxi.

75.. For example, the scene of the memorial service for the war dead, when Joshua experiences something very much like the absurdity of existence, *Distant Land*, pp.120-22.

76.. Waten, "Writers From Two Cultures," p.50.

77.. Waten, "Writers From Two Cultures," p.51.

78.. The phrase is A.D. Hope's from his poem "William Butler Yeats," *Collected Poems* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1972), p.72.

79.. Damon, "Talking Yiddish," p.24.

80.. Waten, "Writers From Two Cultures," p.55.

81.. John McLaren, "New Novels," rev. of *So Far No Further*, *Overland* 52 (Winter 1972), p.53. In a foreword to the novel Waten adds an interesting explanation of his language: "some characters speak only Italian, others Yiddish or Polish. Therefore I have set down all speech in ordinary conversational English. No single form of foreigners' English exists; there are as many variations as there are different kinds of newcomers. I have regarded the use of foreigners' English as well as dialects as unnecessary to the story and indeed distracting."

82.. Damon, "Talking Yiddish," pp.24-25 (and passim).

83.. M.J. Haddock, "The Prose Fiction of Jewish Writers of Australia 1945-1969," *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal of Proceedings* 7, 7 (1974), p.508.

84.. "Three Generations," *Love and Rebellion*, p.115.

85.. Carl Harrison-Ford, "In a New Country," rev. of *So Far No Further*, by Judah Waten, *Nation* 5 February 1972, p.22.

86.. In a personal letter, Waten describes Joshua in terms of "the theme of the lost personality, the inability to acquire a new one in the new world.... [He] is quite prosperous but he has really been stripped of his beliefs and hopes." Letter to a Mr Baldwin, 25 January 1971, Waten papers, NLA MS 4536/2/1643. Interestingly the conclusion here seems more pessimistic than that of the novel itself.

87.. Cf. Damon, "Talking Yiddish," p.27, where she talks autobiographically about reading Jewish work "not for clues to a primary sort of Jewishness but for permission to invent new ways of being Jewish."

88.. Cf. the end of *The Unbending* (Melbourne: Australasian Book Society, 1954): "They were starting again, without illusions, not in a new land, but in a land which willy-nilly had become theirs" (p.301).

89.. Damon, "Talking Yiddish," p.26.

90.. See Peter Corris's review of *Love and Rebellion*, "An Alien Son Grows Up," *Australian*, 20-21 May 1978, p.9: the stories "present Italians and Greeks as stereotypes with only the externals of their culture and behaviour observed.... Their dominant emotion is sympathy." In a positive review of the stories, this becomes "compassion" — Rod Nicholls, "A Migrant-Eye View of Australian Life," *Age* 6 May 1978, p.26.

91.. Serge Liberman, "Australian Jewish Writing: An Assessment and a Programme," *Menorah* 1, 1 (1987), p.88.

92.. Damon reminds us that Yiddish itself is a hybrid language, and Yiddish literature a modernist literature, "Talking Yiddish," p.19: "Written Yiddish itself, long post-dating its spoken life, dizzyingly defamiliarises a primarily Germanic sound by representing it through Hebrew lettering.... [N]ot only have Jews been bilingual in relation to the dominant culture, but the internal usages of Yiddish and Hebrew within the marginalised group itself contributes to a consciousness of juxtaposition that happens specifically in language." Also: "the folksy minimalism of Aleichem's modernism has been misconstrued as pious and sentimental nostalgia."

93.. Hodge and Mishra, pp.192-93. Nino Culotta [John O'Grady], *They're a Weird Mob* (1957; Sydney: Ure Smith, 1974).

94.. Hodge and Mishra, p.193: the criticism proceeds by retelling the story of the characters' assimilation.

95.. According to Hodge and Mishra this did occur with *They're a Weird Mob*, p.190.

96.. On *Distant Land*, for example, Jeana Bradley, "Recent Australian Fiction," *Westerly* 2 (August 1965), p.53; R.M. Wilding, "Jewish Migrant," *Bulletin* 24 October 1964, pp.54-55. On *So Far No Further*, A.R. Chisholm, "Clash of Ideals," *Age* 4 December 1971, p.13; Brian Kiernan, "Change and Conflict in a Generation Gap," *Australian* 1 January 1972, p.15. The London *Jewish Quarterly* finds Waten "the authentic voice of Australian-Jewish life": "From Far and Near," *Jewish Quarterly* 13, 3 (Autumn 1965): collected in Waten's papers, NLA MS 4536, Box 20.

8

An Australian Jewish Writer

I do not regard myself as a Jewish writer but as very much an Australian writer who happens to be of Jewish extraction.
(Judah Waten, "My Two Literary Careers," 1971)

1. Beyond the Migrant Writer

During the last decade in Australia a significant body of critical and theoretical work on migrant writing has appeared. I have referred to some aspects of these developments above, particularly in relation to Judah Waten's *Alien Son* and the location of the migrant writer in the immediate post-war period. Here I want to turn first to recent critical work on migrant/non-Anglo-Celtic writing and then to read a number of Waten's "migrant" fictions against the categories and perspectives it supplies. In addition I want to discuss examples of Waten's own critical writing which examine questions of migration and migrant literature.

After *Alien Son* and *The Unbending* Waten departed from the migrant story, if we can use that phrase for the moment, in his two subsequent novels *Shares in Murder* and *Time of Conflict*. He returns to it in 1964 with the publication of *Distant Land* and in 1971 with *So Far No Further*. The former also marks Waten's return to mainstream publication and was his most critically acclaimed work after *Alien Son*, winning the Moomba Festival Best Australian Novel award. Over this period Waten also published short stories and memoirs, many concerning migrants and migration, collected in 1978 in *Love and Rebellion*.[1] The alternation in Waten's career between works which focus on non-Anglo-Celtic migrants and works which locate their heroes as Anglo or Celtic "ordinary Australians" itself has bearing on the question of how we theorise and historicise the field of migrant writing. What status do we give to experience and autobiography (as categories in different fields); what distinctions need to be made between writing *of* migrants and writing *as* a migrant? What status indeed do we give to *migration*?

We can begin with a problem: Judah Waten's writing does not *prima facie* fit well with many of the current notions of migrant/non-Anglo-Celtic writing. In a theory field that is post-structuralist and post-modernist in one sense or another,

Waten's realism presents a surface resistant to the play of critical desire. In a criticism that valorises excess, his self-denying prose is not likely to be fashionable or theoretically viable. Manfred Jurgensen, for example, has argued of Waten that "there is no multicultural imagination at work in any of his writings."[2] What the notion of a multicultural imagination might entail will be discussed below. But if it is the case that "multicultural aesthetics," in Jurgensen's term, has little to say about Waten, we need to ask not only how this absence reveals "absences" in Waten's writing but also how Waten's writings reveal absences in the theory.

The first point in theorising a cultural field in terms of migration or ethnicity is to argue the necessity of *reading for cultural difference*.[3] The analogy, though it is much more than that, is with those practices of reading in terms of class, gender and "colonial" difference which, unevenly but irreversibly, have affected the institutions of reading in the last decades. Reading for difference in this sense is to read against the grain of the universalist or monist assumptions which support the culture of "normative," though never singly dominant, groups: male, middle-class, white, Anglo/Anglo-Celtic. It should no longer be possible to read as if there were one literature unmarked by cultural specificity surrounded as it were by minority literatures which are so marked, as working-class, female, Aboriginal or, for our purposes, "migrant." Minimally, such an argument calls upon the reader to acknowledge that Anglo-Australian literature is indeed an ethnic literature. It thus also alters our sense of what constitutes the national literature, which must be something *other than* an ethnic literature.

This theoretical shift aims, further, to make "readable" in new ways texts which might otherwise be understood simply in terms of lack in relation to the dominant (lack of order, style, literariness, national characteristics or, indeed, universality). We can begin to read their stories as always in part the story of the text's own minority relationship to a majority tradition. This is the kind of reading of *Alien Son* which I hope to have provided above. Again feminist, Marxist and post-colonial criticism can provide analogies and more, a set of theoretical and political motivations and problematics: for example, a strategy of resistance against the homogenisation of the minority or marginalised groups as singly migrant, "ethnic," Other. In Sneja Gunew's terms, "the sameness about the oppressed and marginal voice is largely the

result of the undifferentiated way it has been situated by the dominant culture."[4] In a later essay she elaborates the point through a quotation from JanMohamed and Lloyd to the effect that "minority individuals are always treated and forced to experience themselves generically":

> At the moment, very different ethnic groups are cooperating to achieve certain goals because they have been assigned a particular (often negative) place within the culture. But this is to be distinguished from the homogenisation which is imposed upon them by those who position themselves outside multiculturalism, those for whom the ethnicity of England or Ireland is invisible.[5]

Sneja Gunew has been the most prominent and sophisticated theorist of migrant and non-Anglo-Celtic writing in Australia, and my focus will largely be on her work in a series of essays from 1981 to the present.

Gunew's arguments enter this writing into the critique of the subject which characterises the projects of both post-structuralism and post-modernism. Drawing on the language of Lacan and later Kristeva, she discusses the migrant as a specific form of the decentred or fragmented subject, fragmented to the power of two as the migrant is forced to renegotiate his or her entry into the symbolic. The definition of "migrant" becomes less a matter of birthplace or passport than of positioning within discourse, "not so much a question of *being* a migrant but of writing from a migrant position"[6]:

> By "migrant" I mean those who construct their subject-positions in terms of those who have had to renegotiate an entry into the symbolic. "Migrants" are those whose initial socialisation has taken place in a language and culture other than the hegemonic one, so that when they enter a new culture they are repositioned as children renegotiating language and the entry into the symbolic.[7]

The emphasis on the repositioning of the migrant as child recalls our earlier reading of *Alien Son*. It also suggests why Gunew feels compelled to complicate the notion of migrant writing until it can never appear except alongside the notion of the non-Anglo-Celtic: "the term `migrant writing' is commonly used without any awareness of the differences it contains within itself, not simply those that exist amongst the various non-Anglophone groups but also the differences which have nothing to do with migration itself but everything to do with the fact that the writer is non-Anglo-Celtic."[8] To emphasise migration can be to delimit the space from which "migrants" may speak to that of ethnicity or the trajectory towards assimilation; non-Anglo-Celtic, by contrast, foregrounds the question of positionality within language and culture.

This is an appropriate point at which to expand the differences between what we might call pre-structuralist and post-structuralist readings of migrant/non-Anglo-

Celtic writing. The former is grounded in the categories of individual experience, the authentic voice and, therefore, an expressive notion of language. It privileges the first-person mode as the site of authenticity and so reads migrant writing in a limited and reflectionist sense as autobiographical or sociological (in which case third-person omniscient conventions might be appropriate). Against these constraints Gunew returns the migrant story to the realm of textualisation: "The use of the first-person mode is no guarantee of anything but that a literary convention has been mobilised.... That `I' guarantees nothing, just as the fact of being born into a language other than English does not guarantee that one speaks from a position different from that taken by writers placed within the host language."[9] Migrant writing is often read as analogous to oral history, itself misunderstood as the authentic testimony of "speaking subjects" but not "writing subjects."[10] This in turn, Gunew argues, privileges two master plots for the migrant experience, the migrant success story or the migrant as problem (thus the host culture as refuge or promised land): "In the unified narrative of official history the first-person account has been returned to us as the collective migrant success story."[11] Waten, as I have argued earlier, presents an ironic version of these stories particularly in *The Unbending* with its recurrent promised land motif.

In the pre-structuralist scenario migrant writing can be percieved as an unproblematic addition to or assimilation into the majority culture. As such its primary function is to affirm the host culture's own depth and breadth, even if at sub-literary levels. In the post-structuralist scenario, by contrast, migrant writing is (potentially) a site of the transgressive, of resistance to or subversion of a dominant culture. As both inside and outside the majority language, inside and outside its hierarchy of discourses, it is likely to transgress the limits by which that culture defines itself. In particular, Gunew argues, "migrant writing registers a reading and interrogation of the nexus between culture and nationalism."[12] Writing from a marginalised position in relation to a dominant although not necessarily unified Anglo-Australian culture, the dis-location of the "migrant" represents a position (between two positions) which itself dislocates the majority culture's normative assumptions regarding the oneness of nationality, identity, common sense, place or home, language and experience.

This dislocation in relation to language and subjectivity might be represented as "an augmented awareness of the eruption of the semiotic into the symbolic."[13]

Gunew focuses on migrant women's writing:

> [which] signals more clearly than most the ideological loadings of interpellation, precisely because they register that interpellation as involving a split. Migrant writing carries within it, to put it another way, the dead or repressed or fading subjects created by other and sometimes former interpellations....
>
> Some (not all) of this writing breaks down any obvious reading of a unified subject (according to gender, class, culture) because these texts register clearly their dissonance with traditional meaning processes. Some, not all, because some migrant writing also plays the game of mimicry, of "passing" or of creating familiar facsimiles of the subjects we all know.... [W]hile one is never fully interpellated as a subject (there is *always* a misrecognition), when one is interpellated in ways which fall so totally short of other reflections, that is, where the gap between imaginary relations and real conditions becomes an abyss, then one reaches as a matter of survival for the first person in order to establish some kind of foothold. And it is precisely here, under those conditions, that "truth" (in the sense of a reality beyond our experience) is signalled as contingent, as historically and culturally specific, and that the subject is fragmented into contradictory positions which are also historically and culturally specific.[14]

The transgressive is that which exposes the exclusions and repressions, the contingencies and contradictions, of hegemonic discourses. It exposes as it is exposed to the limits of discursive limits. Thus the valorisation of excess and extravagance, hybridity and alienation, in recent criticism of migrant writing.[15]

The transgressive power of the marginalised is now a familiar trope in critical and theoretical writing. As a mode of criticism it will find itself drawn to *non-realist* forms, to writing — and speaking — which foregrounds its writerliness thereby rendering and thematising as problematic the first-person mode, subjectivity, the migrant experience, ethnic identity, and their representations (how they represent, how they are represented). Classic realist narratives, by contrast, will be seen to collude, by adding to their circulation, in the very systems of representation and subjectivity which marginalise minority voices. Thus they are easily recuperated or, to return to Jurgensen's discussion of Judah Waten, they offer "little resistance to their integration into mainstream Australian literature."[16]

In this moment, however, the critique approaches more dangerous ground where theories of discourse and subject-formation carry a disguised aesthetic imperative, moreover an aesthetic imperative which it is difficult to anchor specifically to "migrant writing." Charged with having to make historical sense of specific forms of subjectivity and authorship, this aesthetic imperative is misrecognised as an historical or political imperative.

Gunew's work lies within this theory field and so carries forth its aesthetic

imperative towards the non-realist work. At the same time her readings, her foregrounding of "transgressive" texts, situate themselves as strategic. In other words, the essays are situated overtly through questions of positionality and the deployment of texts:

> The question is always: for whom? If one asks how these texts differ from other kinds of non-realist or experimental writing in Australia, an answer is: only in so far as they foreground historical, cultural and socio-political questions concerning pronouns and positionality: who, from where, when and to whom? The reminder, to those who have eyes to see, is that the enunciating positions are partial and outside (or overlapping with manifestations of other cultural codes).[17]

Such a scheme allows for what we might call a thick description of certain forms of migrant writing, and indeed of the disposition of certain readers and critics towards them.

Elsewhere, however, "multiculturalism" becomes just another word for what post-romantic aesthetics has always claimed as the power of Art, its transformative and transcendent capacities. Wholeness and resolution might no longer be the goal for contemporary dispositions, but the dialectics of transcendence are never very distant. If we return to Jurgensen, we can see why he finds Judah Waten unreadable as the expression of a "multicultural imagination":

> A multicultural imagination is a transformational imagination, involving a transference of imaginative speech, in content and form, in semantics and grammar, in vocabulary and semiotics. It is recognisably "open," volatile, incomplete, in a state of becoming.... A multicultural work of literature is not carried by the safety of an established "mainstream" literary culture. Instead, it is perceived by that culture as a threat to the canon, and so defined as a failure or as marginal....
>
> The unique contribution of the multicultural artist is more than a combination or rearrangement of native and second-language literature. A new quality of imagination asserts itself, realising visions which could not have been expressed in any other form.... A truly multicultural aesthetics articulates new imaginative relations; it explores original concepts, ideas, images and experiences. Multicultural writing is the art of conveying a new consciousness; it is a different kind of imaginative thought.... The written work must possess a quality of originality capable of creating its own imaginative space in Australian literature; it does not aim for integration into a literary culture but strives to extend its range and concept.[18]

The category of the aesthetic stands at the beginning and end of Jurgensen's analysis as a realm of "new consciousness." Despite apparent similarities to Gunew's position, we might well ask what more we get here than the characteristically over-excited claims for originality, imagination and "becoming" that mark any number of aesthetic enthusiams. No doubt certain kinds of migrant writing are operable in this way for certain readers and writers, but Jurgensen's claims are more ambitious. The problem is that "multicultural" is in danger of appearing redundant in relation to literature or art or imagination. Almost inevitably that Jurgensen concludes that "*all* literary art ... is

multicultural whenever it extends beyond the boundaries of a national culture. In this sense, the classical works of world literature have conveyed to their diverse readership a multicultural imagination."[19] Cutural difference disappears in the undifferentiated world of Art (and its cultured citizens).

My scepticism towards this kind of argument in relation to migrant or multicultural writing is one that has also been voiced in relation to certain feminist aesthetics based either on Kristeva's notion of the semiotic or differently on notions of *l'écriture féminine*. As Rita Felski argues, "the theory of a subversive textual politics reveals an overemphasis on the transgressive function of the experimental text in modern society." The equation of the aesthetic conventions a text employs and its politics is "ultimately formalist in its failure to theorise the contingent functions of textual forms in relation to socially differentiated publics at particular historical moments." Such a critique has two consequences: it takes us beyond the formal properties of texts to their "frameworks of reception"; and it enables realism (for example) to return as a possible cultural politics depending, as Gunew might say, on the questions of who, from where, when and to whom. In Felski's words:

> the necessity and importance of a feminist avant-garde must be balanced against an equal need on the part of oppositional movements for texts which address the particularity of their social experience more explicitly and unambiguously, a need that has often resulted in a preference for realist forms which emphasise the denotative rather than aesthetic dimension of the text. One of the strengths of feminism has been precisely this partial reintegration of literature into the everyday communicative practices of large numbers of women by describing and commenting on women's experiences of gender relations.[20]

The same argument has its point in the context of migrant/non-Anglo-Celtic writing. Realist *representation* (of the migrant/non-Anglo experience) has its political occasions and effectivities, governed by specific reading formations. The politics of address will not be exhausted by the politics of style. Further, as readers, we cannot surrender these realist texts either to the "pre-textual" or to the "merely" literary. To be assimilated into a conservative aesthetic tradition through the intertextuality of conventional markers is not necessarily to be equated with the conservative cultural politics of assimilation which seek to efface cultural difference.

The notion of a multicultural imagination might not tell us about much more than the critic's taste and ability to align certain local works with a conventional late-romantic aesthetics. This can be distinguished from concepts of hybridity or cultural

difference which, rather than operating as figures of transcendence, define constraints, the "very limited space from which to speak" which migrants are assigned within the majority culture.[21] Nevertheless, as Gunew herself as remarked, in certain mobilisations of linguistic or psychoanalytically-based theories of discourse there remains the danger of a universalised grammar of transgression blind to specific historical and indeed discursive contexts.[22] More acutely, what announces itself as a theory of discourse operates in effect as a generalised aesthetics of literary taste, an aesthetics that can also affect political statements in the field: "[Fifth World (migrant) people] have in common a range of cultural experience that allows them to see all cultural and political systems as temporary structures that are infinitely changeable and open to question. [They] have a great advantage over those who are monocultural - they are suspicious of *all* systems."[23]

I have argued through this critique because it shows the tendency in certain theories of migrant writing towards anti-realism, towards linking realism and assimilationism, towards claiming migrant writing as a form of minority literature and hence a form of post-modernism.[24] In other words, it shows those tendencies which are unlikely to find Judah Waten's fiction an object of theoretical interest or value. My argument is not to defend realism, especially not on its own terms, nor to discount the power of the theory I have described. Nor is it to pose "history" against "aesthetics" as real to unreal (or as political to non-political): the point is rather to identify distinct discursive and hence operational realms. Although I will remain sceptical of the merely-conventional aesthetic claims of a critique such as Jurgensen's, the arguments towards post-modernism can indeed define the limits of Waten's discourse and its implication in the politics of assimilation (in a way that is not the case for other, mainly later writers). My resistance is against the over-generalisation of certain theoretical insights, of their "operability," and a consequent misrecognition of aesthetic categories.

More positively, the theories of migrant/non-Anglo-Celtic writing can provide a set of concepts and perspectives through which to read Waten's migrant fiction in quite specific ways *as* migrant fiction without reducing it to the quasi-autobiographical or sociological categories of "the migrant experience." The literariness of Waten's fiction, and hence its literary realism, however unfashionable, can become objects of

interest as strategies within migrant writing which we can address without assuming in advance that they are politically retrograde. We can ask, for example, how Waten writes "from a migrant position" and we can thus "examine the conditions under which it becomes possible to clear a space in which to speak migrant."[25]

Before turning to Waten's writing directly there is another, specific case argued "against" it which I want to address. In an investigation of literary evidence about the migrant experience, Bosworth and Wilton place Waten with David Martin as writers "with claims to the title of `high literature', [who] have dealt directly with migration." Their conclusion is that the novels of both "remain portraits painted by an outsider and delineated by a man who has turned himself into an English language writer." Thus they are "limited" despite their "considerable realism."[26]

I could take each of these remarks as a useful starting-point for my own analysis: there is indeed a sense in which Waten has turned himself into an English language writer (and we certainly want the notion of limits). But the merely negative force that these characteristics have for Bosworth and Wilton emerges in their nearly offensive, inaccurate discussion of Waten's assimilationism:

> Some of Waten's writing is mildly critical of Australia's unpreparedness for non-Anglo-Saxon migrants.... But Waten is also a confortable writer, a serene revolutionary who is not sad that Australia is such a "tranqil country," who even loves his mother ... and who devotes much of his writing to assimilation. In *Distant Land*, for example, Waten traces the conversion of the Kuperschmidts, a family of pious Polish Jews, into the materially successful Coopers. He makes much of generational differences, but the children of migrants always emerge as "Australians" and "do well" (indeed, there is much apparent endorsement of the cliche: "Every Jewish boy becomes a brain surgeon.") Assimilation is at least effective for the second generation although, invariably for the parents, the actual migrants, there is more agony or pathos and no assimilation.
>
> Waten, in part, is writing about his own experiences. He fits very much into the mould of his second generation migrant characters.[27]

To find one's voice within the bounds of Australian culture and the English language is seen as a virtual act of betrayal. Waten is indeed an "assimilationist" writer or at least a writer who in his contemporary context is compelled to engage with the rhetoric of assimilation. But his engagement with assimilationism is certainly more complex than Bosworth and Wilton allow. For a start, in the history of the Jewish diaspora assimilation has quite another range of connotations which in Waten's case must be articulated with the term's contemporary, Australian meanings.

This critique of Waten's assimilationism is argued naively. The same cannot be said of the analysis in Hodge and Mishra's *Dark Side of the Dream* which nevertheless reaches a similar conclusion.[28] I will delay my discussion of this more sophisticated case until the end of the chapter, and by way of conclusion.

2. Ethnicity and Assimilation

In order to address the issues raised above I want first to look at a series of non-fiction writings by Judah Waten spanning the period 1948 to 1983. The project here will be partly biographical, tracing the formulation of Waten's publicly-expressed attitudes to migrant communities, migrant writing and migrant politics over the course of his writing career. But the aim will not be to ground Waten's opinions in a set of propositions which might then govern our reading of his fiction. Each of his essays marks a writerly occasion, an act of positioning within a debate and clearing a space in which to speak — "migrant" or not remains to be seen. They intervene in the same cultural debates as his fictions but not necessarily with the same voice, from the same place, for the same readers.

Waten's critical writings here can be understood as falling into three groups: first, articles from the 1940s on Yiddish and Jewish literature in Australia; second, from the mid-1960s to the late-1970s, essays and reviews on Yiddish culture, Jewish migration to Australia and migrant writing *before* the appearance of a stream of publications consequent upon multiculturalism; third, writings from the 1980s which appear as it were in the midst of multiculturalism.[29]

In the late 1940s, while working for the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, Waten published several articles on Yiddish/Jewish literature in Australia.[30] There was a political dimension to the consideration of these issues, soon after the Second World War and the beginning of a new wave of Jewish migration from central and eastern Europe. The question of Yiddish historically was at the centre of Jewish debates about assimilation (versus separatism), for Yiddish was one of the clearest marks of Jewish difference, and then a mark of Jewish immigration, in whatever culture/majority language Jews lived. Yiddish also had class connotations (poor, immigrant, working-class) and it had helped divide the Australian Jewish community into Anglo and immigrant "factions."[31] It was also commonly argued that the war had proved that assimilation was no guarantee of safety for the Jewish people, an issue debated in Waten's novels.[32]

Waten's discussion of Yiddish literature is as much an intervention in these concerns as it is literary history. In focusing on Pinchas Goldhar and Herz Bergner, Waten mounts an argument *for* Yiddish literature but also for the notion of a literature inevitably in transition. It can thus, at the same time, be an argument for *Australian* literature. His language is organicist in its understanding of the relationship between literature and place or culture. Contemporary, immigrant Yiddish literature represents a continuation of the cultures of Russia and Poland; but "a living literature must not remain static: it must adapt itself to the new environment if it is to survive."[33] The argument is thus on the side of adaptation and transition but a clear line is drawn before assimilation at least in the "Jewish" sense of the term, the public disavowal of Yiddish/Jewish culture for the sake of social or political acceptance. Some form of linguistic and cultural assimilation (transformation or adjustment rather) is seen as inevitable, and as with other of Waten's post-war writings this sense of historical inevitability is *anti-nostalgic* or, in positive terms, modernising. Against this trajectory, mere social or class assimilation is truly reactionary, "capitulating to the so called superior culture of the ruling classes of [the] adopted country."[34]

If not altogether an original argument, this might nevertheless be the *first* such argument in Australia in which an ethnic minority literature stakes a claim on Australian literature (for this is its claim). The point is not its originality but its sense

of political occasion. Waten makes a number of nice distinctions that few other cultural commentators of the period would have been bothered to make. First he argues that in Australia Yiddish "has as yet been the only vehicle through which the Jew has expressed the deepest feelings and aspirations of his people"; second, however, he notes via Goldhar that "Polish and Russian Jewish literature could not be transplanted undisturbed"; finally he points out that it cannot be assumed that Jewish literature in Australia will always find expression in Yiddish: "As English becomes the language of Jewish people of the second and third generations, it is probable that there will arise an *Australian Jewish literature in English*."[35] The transitions between these three different perspectives cannot be reduced to a simple assimilationist trajectory, certainly not one that effaces cultural difference.

The immigrant Yiddish speakers with whom Waten identifies were marginal linguistically and culturally in relation not only to Anglo-Celtic (Protestant or Catholic) Australians but to the Anglo-Australian Jews as well. As Waten comments, again via Goldhar: "Not only the non-Jewish world, but the customs of their Australian brethren ... seem foreign and hostile to the newly arrived immigrant." Waten defines a "process of *vulgar assimilation*":

> The community dies not only because its people are scattered by changing economic conditions, but because they fall victim to the myth of the superiority of the culture and way of life of the non-Jewish upper classes. The life and vigor of the community disappears and there remains a tiny handful of Jews with only a lingering attachment to the religion of their forefathers.[36]

The argument is not particularly complex, perhaps, yet it is subtle enough that we cannot easily assign a value to the final sentence quoted above or to the probable loss of Yiddish as a literary language in Australia. Yiddish is necessary (and more), its passing is inevitable; separation and assimilation, the maintenance of the old culture and its "vulgar" abandonment are equally impossible alternatives.

Waten's constituency in these articles is overtly a Jewish one, but it is interesting that he can position himself within this Jewish readership/community as something like an English-language interpreter of Yiddish culture, an "outside insider."[37] His positioning leaps over the assimilated Jewish community, which operates here as (part of) the majority culture, to identify on one side with the minority Yiddishers and on the other with "Australian literature." It is a position of mediation that we will frequently meet (and have already met) in Waten's writings, mediating here between Australian and Jewish, English and Yiddish. He is arguing first towards a Jewish readership in the attempt to create a community of readers for these "Australian Yiddish" writers — to create Australian-Yiddish mentalities — which even amongst Yiddish speakers scarcely existed. He does so partly by reporting back to Jewish readers the progress of "their" literature in the field of Australian literature.

Waten's willingness to adopt such a position comes from a cultural politics that

does in some respects resemble assimilation. He wants "a Jewish literature, which *in a sense* is also part of Australian literature" (my emphasis: the hesitation is interesting). He celebrates the acceptance into Australian literature of translations of Goldhar and Bergner.[38] By contrast he draws a line, at least for the sake of argument, at "Yiddish writing which does not concern itself with life in this country, but is merely produced here by accident and is thematically and in spirit simply a repetition of Yiddish literature in older countries" (this is worthy of separate consideration but not as Australian literature). He writes enthusiastically of Goldhar's stories, that "they breathe the Australian environment, the Australian Jewish community and its relations with the non-Jewish world."[39]

The proper relation between Australian and Yiddish/Jewish cultures, for Waten and for his Yiddish and Australian literary friends, was, as we have seen earlier, one of alliance not antagonism or incongruity. Australian literature, in the fullest sense of the term we might say, was understood not as a neo-imperialism but as a potential anti-imperialism. As such, Australian literature in this period could scarcely be constituted as a *centre* or an oppressive dominant especially in relation to commercial, academic or for that matter popular cultural tastes (leaving aside for the moment how far a "radical nationalist" literature was itself already implicated in dominant and ethnist forms). An alliance with a popular, suppressed literature such as Yiddish could seem the most natural thing in the world.

There is, then, a species of assimilationism, or at least an anti-separatism, in Waten's argument. It is based on a broadly humanist and organicist notion of the relationship between a literature and a people: "for a Jewish literature to grow in this country it must have close links with the literature of the country."[40] But read with a slightly different emphasis, Waten's project is no less grounded on a sense of cultural difference and the hybridity of the migrant — Yiddish within Jewish within Australian. These are communities and speaking positions each of which Waten himself partially inhabits, each of which is itself divided. At its blandest perhaps the argument suggests simply a trajectory from one to the other (Yiddish *plus* or Australian *plus*). But it is not spoken just from the centre. In Gunew's terms, Waten's discourse is better thought of as "clearing a space" for the migrant or non-Anglo-Celtic voice within Australian literature, a voice that can talk to Australian literature, talk *as* Australian literature,

without losing the marks of its cultural difference. The markers of difference in his texts are never just those of "subject matter."

In his argument against *Jewish* assimilation, expressed in an approving summary of Goldhar, Waten foregrounds ethnic difference but does so in a rhetoric of universalising humanism that seems to render ethnicity a secondary rather than primary category. Anti-semitism is seen as part of the larger problem of racism confronting "all the democratic forces of the world." Its end "would not be found in the assimilation of the Jewish people, but in their independent existence in equality with all other peoples of the world."[41] As in an earlier phase of feminism, the emphasis falls on equality rather than difference (but it does not fall on essence). It is perhaps impossible to decide philosophically whether such a global multiculturalism inscribes or simply dissolves cultural difference. It might instead be a local, political question; it is certainly one that recurs throughout Waten's career as a commentator on ethnicity and assimilation.

The large-scale assimilation of non-Ango-Celtic migrants had yet to become a major item on the political agenda in the late 1940s when Waten addressed the issues of Jewish literature and Jewish assimilation. By the mid-sixties, however, migration and assimilation were critical issues culturally and politically. Waten reviews — he is *invited*, one supposes, to review — a number of academic studies of Jewish settlement and works of "migrant" biography or fiction. He also writes significant essays: two in overseas journals on international Yiddish culture and one in the Australian weekly *Nation* on non-English-speaking writers in Australia. These works coincide with the writing of *Distant Land*, *So Far No Further*, and many of the stories in *Love and Rebellion*.

In the book reviews relating to Jewish migration and settlement the persistent interest is the link between ethnicity and assimilation: the process whereby assimilated Jews "disappeared as Jewish ethnic entities" and the sociological and economic trajectory of assimilation, from the "traditional pattern of Jewish migrant occupations" to post-war middle-class professionalisation.[42] "In the English speaking countries," Waten suggests, Jews "have become more integrated into the general community than was ever thought possible." This migrant success story has both positive and ironic dimensions. First, a positive insistence on the contributions Jews have made in

academic and other professional fields (a familar trope of Jewish settlement history, but here less a communal pat on the back than an argument against the anti-semitism which accuses Jews of separatism). Second, an ironic account of contemporary Judaism among the successful second and third generations (they "are not immersed in Jewish culture, although they may be ardent supporters of Israel," Waten comments without comment).

Waten is also ironic towards a naive representation of Australia Felix: "Australia is truly the golden land; every Australian is `kindly' ... Australia is without a bureaucracy ... the apotheosis of Australian mateship. If only it was quite like this!"[43] It is no surprise to find him insisting that there has indeed been a "subdued anti-semitism" in Australian society. Waten also speaks of the "genuine loss" which is the decline and near-disappearance of Yiddish literature and theatre in the English-speaking immigrant communities.[44] He celebrates Yiddish culture but again without nostalgia, reminding readers of the conditions under which it developed in the Pale of Settlement. The *shtetls*, he remarks, had become "the object of exaggerated reverence in some American-Jewish literature."[45] This newly-popular American Jewish literature was one significant co-ordinate in the formation of Waten's position in this 1960s-1970s period; the Australian sociological studies provided another; an important third was the contemporary debate about anti-semiticism in the Soviet Union.[46]

Waten's essays on Yiddish culture, published in Australia and overseas, enter this latter debate by invoking a comparison between east and west:

> Often when anti-Soviet propagandists assert that today Yiddish culture is in a serious plight in the Soviet Union and that soon the Soviet Jews will be without a literature and language, they appear to try to leave the impression that conversely in the West, the Yiddish language and literature are flourishing. Actually the reverse is true. Yiddish is at a very low ebb in the USA and is virtually extinct in Britain, but in the Soviet Union there is still considerable creative activity in the Yiddish language.[47]

The argument is a detailed one which need not concern us except as it has bearing on questions of ethnicity, assimilation and separatism. Its point might be summed up, reductively of course, in the following way: assimilation is good in so far as it means Jews becoming part of the general democratic social(ist) movements in their country of habitation, in so far as it can be perceived as part of a progressive, modernising history (against this history, separatism is mere anachronism). Assimilation is bad when it means a sheer loss of culture, of a popular and high culture, for the sake of

wealth and social status in the non-Jewish community. One way or another, the movement of history is against Jewish separatism whether as ethnism, religion or Zionist politics:

> [T]he whole question of integration or assimilation which as a rule was accepted and encouraged by the European socialist movement, was increasingly discussed in the Yiddish press that arose in Odessa and Warsaw. Even then Russian culture was beginning to exercise a profound influence on Jewish intellectuals and workers, largely because of the *universal* character of the ideas that animated it, the ideas of writers like Tolstoy, Plekhanov and Lenin. At the turn of the 20th century significant numbers of Jews were turning to the Russian language and Jews began to enter Russian culture and literature. However, Yiddish remained the language of the Jewish masses....
>
> [In Britain] the Yiddish labour and general press declined as Jewish Labour gradually became part of the general labour movement.... Except as a private family language, generally imperfectly spoken, Yiddish has disappeared from the Anglo-Jewish world.... Jewish life in England has gradually found expression in an expanding Anglo-Jewish literature precisely because English has become the only language of the English Jews....
>
> Yiddish literature and culture have catastrophically declined in the USA in the face of the integration of the American-born Jews and powerful Americanisation campaigns.[48]

The rhetoric is historical rather than political: the (global) inevitability of integration with its "genuine losses" is to be grasped nevertheless as a modernising history. Waten is committed to the secularising of Jewish culture.

The rise and fall of Yiddish culture is tied — as it were *non-ethnically* — to the social conditions of its existence: "Yiddish literature was the specific product of Jewish life in Czarist Russia and tended to whither away under socialism with its *full facilities for integration*, or even when Jews were transplanted to the countries of capitalist democracy where they enjoy educational and civil equality."[49] Whenever, wherever, Yiddish ceases to be the vernacular language, Yiddish literature will decline.[50] In the Soviet Union, however, Yiddish is institutionally supported hence, Waten argues, its continued (modernising) viability:

> Soviet Yiddish literature has adapted itself to the new life and does not draw on a Ghetto sensibility which is still the case with Yiddish writers elsewhere.... [There] is a tremendous encouragement to Yiddish writers to continue writing in their native language, for they can express one area of the *Soviet-Jewish* spirit and at the same time address the vast Soviet world.[51]

If the dissolution of Jewish separatism occurs more slowly in the capitalist countries this is not only because anti-semitism persists but also because of Zionism which "virtually [denies] to Jews national citizenship in the countries of their birth and upbringing, relegating them almost to the position of aliens."[52]

Waten's arguments are thus pro-"integrationist" (as well as pro-Soviet and anti-Zionist). While this has nothing manifestly to do with assimilation into a local capitalist or ethnic status quo he nevertheless provides an argument on the model of assimilation into a *national* project (Soviet for example) in which *ethnic* difference becomes secondary. Zionism, ironically, might well be drawn to the selfsame model. It is only possible for Waten, of course, when the national project can be aligned with the trajectory of a larger progressive history. But it is not difficult to see the possible complicity of Waten's arguments with those of an exclusive nationalism or, at least, his defencelessness against such an ideology without recourse to the categories of class. Waten's own immigrant Jewish experience, refracted through the modernist, communist and nationalist discourses discussed in previous chapters, would likely render him both sensitive and sceptical towards the claims of ethnicity. Ethnic difference is asserted against the universalising, absolutist "myths of cultural superiority" in the majority culture; but a universalising rhetoric in turn is asserted against the absolutist claims of ethnic difference in the form of separatism or *imperialism*. This is where we must locate Waten's arguments, on the axis between ethnicity and universality which, in an important sense, he shares disputatiously with his cultural and political opponents.

In a review of Medding's *Jews in Australian Society* Waten disputes the very claim that Jews "constitute some kind of *monolithic ethnic group*, with a belief in a common destiny" (my emphasis). We can see why it might be important for a communist, anti-Zionist Jew to resist such a claim, in order to claim his right to speak Jewishness (a right that was in fact denied to him more than once[53]). Waten insists on the differences within the category "Jew":

> I do not believe Catholics or Protestants are ethnic groups nor are the Jews. Jews are many things, national, religious, secular and cultural.... The Jews in the Communist Party of Israel are Jews ... and not even the most pious rabbi in Israel would doubt it.[54]

The end of Waten's argument can be just glib in its universalisation of difference ("There are great differences among Jews as among all people here and everywhere"). But it might also be read as an early moment of resistance to the "monolithic" homogenisation and essentialising which can be conducted under the sign of ethnicity. National, religious, secular and cultural identifications cut across each other and across any single ethnic identity; singly or together they cannot provide ethnicity with an

essence. The argument thus also undermines assimilationism, a *form of* "ethnism" rather than its opposite, grounded in the notion of an homogenising, normative ethnicity.

Again we need to differentiate specific political (and writing) occasions rather than over-generalising an ideological structure. Waten's writing occurred at the height of official assimilationism which, as Hodge and Mishra show, affected the cultural as well as the political sphere.[55] In mid-1958 Waten was advised by the editors of *Span*, an Australian-Asian anthology, that his story "Mother" would not be included despite having been accepted. The reason: "it was really unsuitable for this anthology as a story about an alien *not* being assimilated and running into difficulties here — completely wrong as a picture of Australia to distribute to our Asian friends." Waten replied:

> Your point that `Mother' is actually unsuitable as it is about an alien not being assimilated doesn't seem very valid. Many aliens are not assimilated and nobody knows that better than people in Asia who have read about the White Australia policy ... and the discrimination against many foreign migrants and coloured people. Or do you really think the book will be a success in Asia if it merely provides a sugary Good Neighbour Council picture of the lives of foreigners in Australia?[56]

A little later Waten also describes the subtleties of assimilationism in fiction, the problem of "reinforcing stereotypes, thus sustaining the politics of assimilation."[57] Of an American Jewish novel he writes, it "suggests that the sense of Jewish difference still remains in the US but is now acceptable, easily accommodated to the non-Jewish middle-class point of view on foreigners. The Jews provide fun for all."[58] Later still, "after" multiculturalism, he remarks that certain commentators have endowed migrants with "an excessive exotic nobility"; and he interrogates the concept "ethnic," noting its curious Australian use, its awkward history, its dicey politics:

> *Ethnic* is misleading as it is used only to describe migrants from non-English speaking countries, from Europe or Asia, although it can as well be applied to Australians of Anglo-Saxon or Celtic origin and their customs and characteristics. Once it was a put-down word, as having to do with peoples not Christian or Jewish, heathen in fact. Something of that odium still hovers around *Ethnic*: it implies inferiority, at the best it is patronising.
>
> Yet in Australian history, *Ethnic* represents an advance in Australian thinking.... Only a few decades ago newcomers from European countries were variously described by such offensive terms as wogs, reffos, ikey mos and, of course, dagos. Few novels or short stories ... presented these migrants objectively, as other than stereotyped characters, often unpleasant stereotypes.
>
> So now there is some reason for the use of the term *Ethnic*, as it is generally used, but this hardly justifies the inclusion of Aboriginal stories ... in a volume of stories titled *Ethnic Australia*. Ethnics they may be, but they are the original

> inhabitants of this country with an entirely different culture and deserve a volume to themselves. They are not newcomers.[59]

Of course the politics of the final point remain double-edged.[60] For the moment, though, we can note Waten's conjuring of ethnicity against a continued suspicion of *ethnism* as both marginalising and homogenising. Here the politics of inclusion which still define the larger project are held in suspension between the two impossible alternatives.

Post-structuralist interest in migrant writing is self-evidently "interested": it has an investment in discovering writing which "contributes to the formation of resistances to the absolutist claims made on behalf of any culture ... [and] a healthy scepticism towards any bid for universal truths."[61] As far as absolutist ethnic (and in this sense national) definitions of culture are concerned we can say that Waten largely shares this sceptical project. Of course he deploys a pre-structuralist language or, to use a different comparison, in this field he writes from a modernist rather than a post-modernist position. Waten is perhaps the earliest commentator on Australian literature to make non-Anglo-Celtic writing in Australia visible as a topic *for* Australian literature. Much of his writing thus prefigures more recent arguments about ethnic difference, hybridity and marginality. While migrant writing is not seen as a radical disruption to Australian literature — here as elsewhere the project is reformist — it is located as a site from which an "Anglo-Saxon" (and class) cultural dominance might indeed be disrupted.

But sooner or later we find ourselves up against nothing less than a "bid for universal truths." Ultimately Waten's pre-structuralism and modernism make all the difference. It is difficult to push his arguments beyond the level of cultural *diversity* to that of cultural *difference*.[62] Beyond mere diversity, for Waten, lies the universalist notion of a progressive history, anti-nostalgic but also wholly optimistic, wholly positive (in both the philosophical and ethical sense of the term). History, in other words, has a goal. "Australian literature" is not perceived as a site of oppression just because (but also just in so far as) it is perceived as aligned with this positive history. The migrant subject too has a goal. Waten's migrant subjects, his own migrant subjectivities, may be double, divided, even stranded between two selves, but they are still subjects in transition, subjects on the way to somewhere. *Authenticity* is still an end (if not, interestingly, an origin).

A teleological history in this sense will almost certainly be "assimilationist," absorbing or dissolving all differences as it progresses towards its goal. Therefore, despite his insistence on the migrant voice, Waten's position is arguably available for recuperation by the dominant culture with a minimum of disruption, for it continues to identify (with) the nation as a site of positive meaning. Migrants, non-Anglos, are different but perhaps the differences are "inessential." But rather than reduce Waten's arguments to this final position, I want to leave my readings between the two possibilities: anti-ethnism and anti-assimilationism on one side, assimilation (or assimilability) on the other. It is the shifting space between the two that defines Waten's cultural politics in this field.

There is no fundamental change in Waten's discourse in its final phase, but we can note the shifting construction of his position from, as it were, Jewish to migrant to "non-English" or non "Anglo-Saxon-Protestant."[63] As early as 1970 Waten recognises in his interest in Yiddish/Jewish immigrant culture the larger question of "foreign migrant writers" and then non-English speaking writers: Greek, Turkish and Italian-language writers, Carboni, Wenz, Stefan von Kotze, Velia Ercole and more recent writers join Goldhar and Bergner as exemplars.[64] The task is no longer to bring forth the few migrant writers and place them alongside Australian literature but rather to take a position among the many migrant/non-Anglo-Celtic writers past and present. The links between "all writers of non-English backgrounds" are defined in the very same phrases Waten uses to define his own writing: "Loneliness, homesickness, language and cultural barriers, misunderstandings between the newcomers and the locals, divided families or the sharp conflicts between parents and their children brought up in Australia and representing different worlds and social and cultural mores."[65]

This self-situation goes together with a more developed concern to name the ethnicity of Australian literature as "Anglo-Saxon-Protestant."[66] Still, the insistence in these later essays is on the inevitable integrative dominance of English rather than foreign-language literatures: "the language in Australia for the expression of national identity is English."[67] The goal is to become an "Australian writer" however much one writes from inside one's community (and however much the category itself is tranformed).[68] Waten's 1970 essay is again perhaps the first such essay, on non-

English language writers, to appear in the mainstream cultural press. It strains at the very limits of a nationalist discourse within which, however, it is finally constrained:

> It is my belief that all these foreign language writers have contributed to Australian literature, although they are far from the Australian or wider English tradition. They should not be ignored if Australian literature is to further develop its individual quality. These writers describe, among other things, elements of character which are bound to become part of the Australian character when the foreign components in present day Australian society have been absorbed.
>
> Certainly there is no renewal of foreign language literatures in Australia. They stop with the first generation migrants....
>
> The foreign language literatures in Australia remain enclosed in their communities, but English writing is the main thread linking the lives of the widely different peoples living here. English has proved to be able to express the different national identities which now make up the Australian people. The increasing presence of the foreign migrant in Australian literature is evidence that it has grown up and that Australia is no longer a country of people of exclusively British origin.[69]

Multiculturalism *avant la lettre* or "foreignness" delivered to the dominant culture merely as evidence of its own maturity? The Australian tradition and Australian character still represent the outer boundaries; there is still an organicist conception of the relationship between literature, character and people which defines the nation. Yet within these boundaries, within the nation, we find multiple traditions, multiple characters, indeed multiple national identities. Then again, perhaps all these are launched on the one historical trajectory.

The later essays are caught between assimilation and appropriation. It is possible for the non-English speaking migrants to make English "their own";[70] Waten thus celebrates the "moment when a particular literature is enlarged by new groups in the population finding their voices, through writers that have emerged from these groups. The moment can be determined when the writers begin to use the language of the country rather than the language of their origins." Even more optimistic, and more assimilationist: "the `ethnic' writers will come of age and take their work a stage further when they begin from where they are, when they start to look with real perception and love at the landscape around them."[71]

We are a long way from the micro-politics of transgression and marginality, for here it is the fate or duty of the margins to enter the mainstream. Nikos Papastergiadis's description of the orthodox reception of migrant writing seems to apply to Waten no less than to the literary establishment:

> Literature written by "migrants" has often been described as literature *between* cultures, as if it unproblematically occupied the liminal spaces outside, the transitional space from one and towards another, or was the keystone that marked the

> boundary between two separate spaces.... It was either in the process of *becoming*, that is immature, or registered as that small and slightly odd item at the edge of sight. Hence the virtue of literature by migrants was limited to the "natural" or unmediated expressions of exotic or childish authenticity....
>
> Such conceptions sought to incorporate migrant literature selectively and domesticate it within a more stable and greater unity. In the last decade the monolith of Australian identity has prospered by pointing to new entrants in the formation of its *being*. Contradictory origins have not posed a contradiction to this evolution in identity - possibly because the contradictions have been wittingly or unwittingly erased in order to secure entry as a symbolic or real contribution to the national identity.[72]

This catches Waten's arguments in a number of its threads (the notion of a literature in a state of becoming, the project of securing entry into the national identity). Otherwise, and significantly, it just misses: migrant writing for Waten is always more than odd, exotic, marginal; it is always a political question; and the question of hybridity (and racism) is never erased by nationality.

Waten's arguments on migration, ethnicity and assimilation reproduce an orthodox liberal humanism that argues for equality and tolerance (for democracy and reason). This liberal humanism is scarely a unified field however. In one direction it could indeed produce the politics of assimilation: "we" give everyone an equal chance to become Australian. In another direction it undoes the cultural centrism at the heart of assimilation. Waten's sense of the mainstream tradition is, at least, an increasingly inclusive one. That its Anglo-Saxon-Protestant ethnicity has been decentred — historically passed by — is virtually taken for granted. Thus while minority writers are urged into the mainstream, there is little suggestion that they (nevertheless) remain its perpetual supplements. Migration and foreignness become, rather, *constitutive themes* of contemporary Australian literature.

As these points suggest, it is not possible to write of Waten's views on migrant writing as if his discourse were merely innocent. He has a gate-keeping role, a considerable authority (present in the modesty of his critical demeanour) as an Australian-migrant writer. He has his own stake in Australian literature and in defining its centre and its margins as here rather than there: the "here" is clearly not Anglo-Saxon-Protestant, yet it clearly is "Australian." His prescriptions for migrant writing are those which allow his own fiction to figure unambiguously as part of Australian literature. Waten's critical interventions were clearly enabling for his (and for others') fiction; and yet their commitment to positive notions of both "Australia" and "literature" render them part of an oppressive discourse for later migrant/multicultural

writers.

The question of positionality is crucial. Waten writes from a position at home in the majority culture, and this can produce the argument that ethnic writers must "begin from where they are," as if this were one benign place. At the same time he can show that this "home" is never ethnically pure or stable. Waten identifies himself — sometimes from *outside* — with the migrant, ethnic or non-Anglo writers. He clears a space to speak migrant or Jewish; but he refuses to speak only migrant or Jewish. The terms of Waten's criticism do make migrant writing available for recuperation by the majority culture, but it is a recuperation that can only operate against any notion of "monolithic" ethnicity.

3. "Facing the Different and Indifferent Australian World"[73]

In their introduction to *Striking Chords*, Gunew and Longley outline a "very generalised view of non-Anglo-Celtic Australian writing." Their three categories are not evolutionary and may occur in the one writer:

> The first ... deals with those texts which juxtapose the old and new cultures. Such writing, often nostalgic and elegiac, is usually perceived to be the only form that so-called migrant writing may take. And indeed, this is the only group which can properly be termed *migrant* writing.
>
> The second group often corresponds with the second generation after immigration and may be described as taking up the position of translation and mediation.... At home in both languages and cultures, these writers translate one reality into the other and mediate between the two....
>
> The third group is made up of those who forge new languages and new representations.... They foreground the transgressive possibilities of incorporating elements from other languages and other systems of representation into the more conventional forms, not least in their blurring of the traditional boundaries between speech and writing.[74]

Waten's fiction can be located across the first and second of these groups. *Distant Land* juxtaposes old and new cultures, but here as elsewhere the juxtaposition does not generate nostalgia for the old culture, at least not without irony. It does generate the elegiac, almost inevitably one might say for a story of a Jewish family across the course of the twentieth century, but here too elegy is almost always accompanied by *anxiety*.[75] It is, in other words, rendered symptomatic of a present lived contradiction whose resolution lies in the future rather than the past. The narrative of an "irrevocable" history is at once deeply elegiac — for whole ways of life are lost — and unavoidably optimistic — for new ways of life are created.

Although born outside Australia Waten can also be positioned with the second

generation immigrants, as he positioned himself: "For writers like myself a second childhood was unnecessary and we were able to write about our foreign communities as Australian writers ... knowing those communities from the inside."[76] Not only can we say that Waten is "at home" in both cultures, much of his work, both fictional and non-fictional, represents an *argument for* this possibility. His writing and his career, as emphasised above, can be understood exactly in terms of translation and mediation.

The third category is the least applicable, in ways indicated in the first section of this chapter. This is a good reason to begin my analysis of Waten's later "migrant" fiction with this very question of language, representation and realism. It is important in the context of migrant writing to focus on the *literariness* of Waten's realism, for the alternative is to understand it merely as lack, as the pre-literary speech of the migrant. But to narrow the question: how can we read Waten's utterly conventional realism *as* migrant writing, as strategic within the politics of cultural difference?

First, it is important not to underestimate the text's self-inscribed, self-inscribing function of "doing something for the first time." Naively or acutely, this is how Waten constructed his own "migrant" career and thus the occasion of his texts. Perhaps the very notion that there are *stories as yet untold* is exclusively realist. In any case it brings an additional weight to the burden of truth-telling, the burden of history, already inscribed in realism. The first-person semi-autobiographical stories of *Alien Son* become the third-person "chronicles" of the subsequent novels, "a chronicle of non-Anglo-Saxon migrant life in Australia."[77] There is a (realist) burden of representativeness which carries its own consequences for representation. If Waten shares this perspective on migrant writing with "majority" criticism, there is nevertheless a different politics at stake in the act of chronicling.

Second, Waten's realism participates in the universalising humanist discourse described earlier. Let me take as read the overwhelming deconstruction of both realist and humanist meta-narratives. Still I want to articulate their specific significations for the migrant occasion in Waten's writing. The point is to emphasise the political charge that these impossible positions could seem to bear, for in the context of migration and ethnicity, realism could be part of an anti-racist, anti-"ethnist" argument. Here realism functions as the sign of a "universal" language (beneath languages) in which "all things worth saying may be said."[78] In a particular sense it is therefore the language of

translation in which cultural difference can be uttered in terms of the essential human truths (beneath cultural difference). Truth, reason, ideals are translatable across cultures and languages to the extent that they participate in this universal humanity. As with every theory of language, this is also a theory of subjectivity. In realism the subject may be divided between languages but not *in* language: there remains an essential self for which it is always theoretically possible to find the right words.

Finally, the meaning of realism for Waten's migrant writing is its self-situation in a deep novelistic tradition and an Australian (realist) tradition. To make these claims is to argue that migrant histories are national history. Rather than approaching a "strange" or exotic sub-culture in order to report back to the centre, Waten's texts speak on the assumption that here, within the culture, there is a story to be told — which can be told like any other story. There *is* a primary sense in which the story is related for the majority culture to hear. The implied audience is "Australian." But rather than an "anxiety to please the more powerful on whom life depends,"[79] Waten's writings are calculated to resist ghettoisation as simply migrant or even Jewish writing; they resist that "very limited space" assigned to the migrant voice.

Linguistically, formally, Waten's fiction is not marked by difference. On the contrary, its realism is a powerful signifier of *belonging*, first to the realm of "serious writing," second to the realm of serious Australian writing:

> One can confidently assert that in the future there will be much more writing about the non-English communities in Australia.... Of course I only mean serious writers and serious writing. There is already plenty of caricature writing, mostly produced from the outside of the non-English communities.[80]

One aspect of this aesthetic is that Waten renders the "foreign" speech of his characters in what one critic calls "flat standard English."[81] It is easy to forget that they are not speaking English or to be uncertain what language is being spoken. But here as elsewhere Waten is less nostalgic about authenticity than his critics. He does introduce Yiddish words, Yiddish syntax and phrasing, for example, but rather than mimicry it is a matter of slightly inflecting English, strategically placing non-English words or proverbs, shifting the register slightly away from the idiomatic. This is a difficult point to establish economically through short quotations, but let me select a passage from each novel, one narration, the other dialogue:

> None of them could make conversation with Joshua after they had shaken hands with him and wished him long life after the custom. He sat in a corner

> with his head bowed, sighing loudly, seemingly oblivious of the others who spoke in hushed voices among themselves. If sighs could remain hanging in the air, thought Mr Mandel, Joshua Cooper's sighs would remain hanging in his son's house until the end of all generations. (*Distant Land*, 153)
>
> Falkstein repeated to himself something from his father and grandfather: "`Who is rich? The man who is content with his fate.'I am content with my fate, the fate of a rich man," he thought, a bleak smile breaking out from the ends of his mouth.
>
> When he came home he quoted from the Book of Zohar:
>
> "Men fall only in order to rise."
>
> Then he added:
>
> "I rose and so did you, Sofie. We have risen to riches. Now I am content. I shouldn't care if I died next week. I don't imagine I have very long to live."
>
> She coughed sceptically.
>
> "You behave like a man who expects to be here in twenty years time," she said. "You're reaching out for more all the time. To take it with you? You know, Joseph, I think it gives you pleasure to be alive."
>
> He shrugged his shoulders. The hearts of men and the bottom of the ocean are difficult to fathom, he said to himself, recalling an old Jewish proverb. (*So Far No Further*, 68)

In both quotations a relative sense of "non-Englishness" is suggested through minor shifts in syntax and diction, through an unidiomatic formality or proverbiality. The second passage is also deeply ironical in its traditional references (the language of the dialogue is Yiddish or Polish). There *is* a "standard English" omniscient narrator against which foreignness can be gauged, yet the narrating voice shifts easily inside that otherness ("...after the custom") and between indirect discourse and dialogue. The English might, then, be less standard than the critic implies. Its task is indeed to give the majority culture access to a foreign culture, but it avoids the "excessive exotic" by playing subtly across the borders of familiarity and unfamiliarity. There is a point to the (Australian) reader's recognition of the foreigners as both the same and different.

The "flatness" of the prose also warrants comment. In an analysis of Yiddish as a sub-cultural vernacular, as an "affront to the dominant tongue," Maria Damon lights on the "hyperverbalism" of certain Yiddish-influenced English-speaking performers whose rhetoric "consistently undermine[s] a teleological narrative that would privilege a `moral of the story'.... The point of the story is to keep telling the story."[82] Nothing could be further from Waten's writing, perhaps, than hyperverbalism and anti-teleology. But the very contrast, with what we might take as a latent possibility in Waten's own Yiddish-influenced English, re-figures the novels' rhetoric as a form of disciplining, a rigorous ordering and bringing into complementarity of volatile cultural differences so that the moral of the story can indeed be brought to a conclusion (even in the later novel which only goes "so far"). The construction of his

novels through very short sub-sections is one mark of this disciplining.

Part of the contrast is that Waten does not articulate his cultural politics in terms of defensive survival on the margins but rather of expanding his own inwardness to the majority culture, clearing a more generous space for the non-Anglo story *within* the Australian story. Perhaps this does demand controlled subtlety and a sort of commitment to the mundane (which is at times merely banal). Still, against the dislocating language that Damon analyses, Waten's own prose starts to look a little less stable, less self-evident, than it wants to. Cultural difference, we might say, leaks out from under the story's moral.

Let me turn to the level of theme and character, reading to this extent *with* the grain of Waten's realism. *Distant Land* is the story of a family from pre-first world war Poland/Czarist Russia, their migration to Australia (1925) and then their post-war "success." *So Far No Further* focuses on the children of post-war immigrants from two families, one Jewish, one Italian; it ends with a romantic attachment between the Italian son and the Jewish daughter. It will be evident that Waten is interested in the "migrant success story." But *pace* Bosworth and Wilton, while there is virtually always "successful" assimilation, worldly success is accompanied by contradiction, pathos and anxiety, often grotesquely. The novels work, as we might expect, by posing one form of assimilation against another.

In *Distant Land* Shoshanah Kuperschmidt successfully becomes Susan Cooper as she works to ensure the economic, social and professional success of her family. In the process she readily abandons religious practices and what her husband Joshua would call "ideals." Her voice becomes "strident and harsh and her eyes ... hard and rapacious" (66). At the markets she offends her fellow Jews by price-cutting and working on the Sabbath:

> Mr Leibel Schwartz lost his temper and said bitterly: "Your parents would die of shame if they knew you desecrated the Sabbath by working on it, let alone taking the bread out of the mouths of your fellow-Jews."
>
> "What did you all come here for?" she asked. "To make a success. To make money. You can't in this country unless you turn your back on the old ways. Haven't you all done that?... So it is here; so I must be. I don't feel I have to apologise to anyone about it."
>
> And that was that and her competitors knew it....
>
> "Better to stay poor than to become a lunatic chasing the pound," Israel Cohen said.
>
> "With a pound you can buy things, without it nothing," said Joseph Gold. "I'm afraid we'll all have to become lunatics." (65)

She sacrifices any of the "old ways" that impede her success, even as she clings to "traditional, even superstitious beliefs" (73). This contradiction is significant thematically in the novel in marking the course of (vulgar) assimilation. Judaism for Shoshanah becomes superstition and social climbing, with not much in between except cooking. The contradiction she lives, by suppressing, is suggested by her death from cancer.

Yet, as the quoted passage shows, the novel does not allow any single position of moral superiority towards her. This is magnified throughout by the way the text distributes reader sympathy. She has her own pragmatic integrity ("Shoshanah has no shame; she is frank: `God loves the poor and helps the rich'"[83]); the idea of "being realistic," moreover, is a self-reflexive figure in the text. She continues to be *Shoshanah* for the reader and for Joshua and to command his love, a desirability it is difficult for the reader to resist. Joshua, by contrast, is easily ashamed and for the most part ineffectual, but also for the most part the centre of judgement for the reader.

Australia as the promised land is also treated ironically. The novels are happy to show — as a matter of fact — that economic and social success is available to Jews in Australia in ways that it was not in the old (pre-revolutionary) countries. But this is scarcely due to anything "Australian" in Australia, only to a relative absence of institutionalised anti-semitism (there are limits here too: a "successfully assimilated" Jew is denied membership of an exclusive golf club in the story "Three Generations"[84]). As Carl Harrison-Ford comments of *So Far No Further*, although the second generation is moving out of the "closed, racial world of their parents" they do not move into an "open, Australian life ... an egalitarian, free alternative."[85]

In *Distant Land* assimilation turns Jewishness into something that Joshua, for one, scarcely recognises. For him the promise, not of wealth but of a place where Jews can be Jews without fear or discrimination, means turning himself into a "half-clown, half-trader" (37), half-thief, half-comedian (61). The novels return memorably to this scene of self-consciousness, absurdity, grotesqueness, to an *assigned* identity and double dislocation — as the phrases suggest, between one thing and another neither of which is originary.[86] Joshua's new "career" means changing his name, turning himself into a German goy rather than a Polish Jew, and shaving off his beard, the very mark of his Jewishness. Instead of the intellectual he had aspired to be, he becomes an

unqualified travelling optician ironically known as the Professor. The question the novel poses, in its own terms, is whether these excruciating violations of identity do, necessarily, violate anything "essential."

Both sides of the question are emphasised (indeed the dislocations of identity can be fatal). Split subjectivities are distributed over different "character sites": Saul Greenberg, the onetime unionist who despite himself becomes a factory owner, alongside Berel Singer, a secular Jew: "His concept of Jewishness was a kind of secular Judaism which he held with the same fervour as a religious Jew" (42). Berel claims that Australia has given him everything he wanted short of a fortune: "`A living, no Jew-hatred, and the kind of freedom I dreamt of in old Russia when I was a young man and belonged to a Socialist group'" (32). But in the same breath he declares that the "`Australian world plays havoc with Jewish life.... If you get too deeply into it you are lost and you become like the Australian Jews, suspended between two worlds'" (33).

Joshua remarks on Berel's "desperate battle to preserve Jewishness in surroundings completely goyishe, far more so than the country they had left behind" (33). It is Berel who takes Joshua into the travelling optician business ("`There's only hawking left for a Jewish intellectual.... There's hawking and hawking of course,'" 35). For all his apparent optimism, Berel himself is the figure suspended between two worlds. His own children refuse to speak Yiddish and they find Jewish food inappropriate to the climate, though still better than cold mutton! As Berel talks, Joshua observes his face slip from one expression to another, from candour and earnestness to "a sly, smirking smoothness" and yet sadness (36). The novel invites us to read these as character attributes, certainly, but there is always more than personality at stake.

Berel dies soon after the Second World War of "some wasting disease" (120) and his death signals the irrevocable passing of the old Jewish world:

> "This is the first time I have been in the synagogue for a long time.... And now I come to mourn the death of Europe's Jews. Joshua, the Jewish world we knew is dead. It can never be recalled...."
>
> Truly he was mourning for the end of his own life as well as for the dead of Europe....
>
> Joshua glanced curiously at the man who for so long had been an unbeliever.
>
> "Now for the rest of my days I shall treasure everything that belongs to us," Berel continued. "These houses of worship as well as our culture." (120)

At the service for the Jewish dead which follows, Joshua experiences a moment of

bitterness towards the Name of God: "What good was this Kaddish they were intoning with such fervour?" (122). The web of beliefs sustaining the culture, at once religious, communal and intellectual, has been irrevocably dispersed. But, for better and worse, the separate strands are available for the invention of new identities.[87]

As critics have remarked, the pattern of generational change and conflict structures all of Waten's migrant writings. The children become "Australian" no matter how traditional their migrant parents (*willy nilly* is a recurrent term, significant of Waten's particular historicism). There are positive and negative versions of this process of integration and, less remarked, a recurrent pattern of relationships: of a number of children (usually three) it is the youngest and least "ethnic" who becomes the authentic bearer into the future of the ideals of the old culture. The youngest child also reconciles mother and father, following the latter's ideals but with the former's looks! The point is to establish the continuities beneath the discontinuities of migration: "Jewishness" itself guarantees nothing especially as it is reshaped through the Australian social or political system. Again the pattern is a self-reflexive figure, here of the novel's capacity to carry forth the positive values of the old culture into a transformation of the new.

Berel has three sons: Joseph and Nathan, partners in a clothing factory, and Morris, a medical student. Berel feels certain of the two eldest, for "they were traditional Jewish business men even without Yiddish" (42), but not the youngest. Yet he is closest to Morris:

> who had fewer dealings with Jews and spoke less Yiddish than his brothers, [yet] was nevertheless more sympathetic to his father's strivings. He respected his father's intellect.
>
> .... The medical student was realising Berel's dream of studying and becoming a professional man, a doctor, of all things, and not a business man. In his heart of hearts Berel despised business men, only respecting men of learning. (41-42)

The pattern in Joshua's family is similar: Ezekial, the eldest, becomes a barrister, a business man, a very devout Jew and Zionist. His Jewishness, in the argument of the text, is both too much and not enough. In the book's historical argument he is one figure of modern Judaism: aggressively ethnist and political under the sign of religion. We observe him from Joshua's perspective:

> Ezekial had grown heavy and pompous with his success. Since he had become his father-in-law's partner his conversation was almost entirely about business, take-overs and expansion. On Saturdays he went to synagogue with Mr Mandel and returned home full of communal affairs and severely critical of those members of the

> board of the synagogue who failed to attend the service.... Ezekial had become very devout since his mother's death.... Let him be a religious Jew if he wants to be; it gives him solace and uplift as well, Joshua said to himself. He was not Joshua's idea of a religious Jew nevertheless. To his mind his father's uncle, Reb Moishe Eliazar, was the criterion of a religious Jew and not his son, who was like a convert, more holy than the holy, yet whose religion seemed very synthetic indeed. (155)

Ruth, Joshua's daughter, is a more sympathetic figure but also marked by ambition, in her case for the success of her doctor husband. Because of her absorption in Jewish society, Joshua finds her "more of a stranger to him than some of the people he saw every day in the country with whom he discussed the latest news" (156). The contrast is with the youngest child Benjamin, also a lawyer but of left-wing sympathies. Joshua describes him as "an Australian, a goy more than a Jew, only interested in Australian affairs, without any Jewish feeling" (156). Yet it is to Benjamin finally that Joshua feels closest.

These conflicts are played out in the novel's "climax" when Benjamin announces his intention to marry out, to marry a "shiksa." The event is used in the novel to draw its argument to a close and assign its characters to their final positions. Joshua's immediate reaction is shock, but as he sorts through his responses he can find nothing to say against the marriage that is not based on superstition or emotions "having their origins not in reason but in obscure feelings stemming from the dark past and the history of his people" (165). The passage towards this conclusion is difficult, for Joshua has a deeply-ingrained "suspicion of gentiles"; Benjamin's children "would be lost to the Jewish people" (165). In addition, the narrative underscores the mundane "Australianness" of Thelma, Benjamin's partner. Her speech, her attitude, her very glances are non-Jewish, the food she cooks is gentile food with "an alien smell" (164). What wins her to Joshua are her views on anti-semitism and racism: "Perhaps in our time racial inequality will be abolished all over the world and all people will mingle freely" (165). She has "ideals" (164). Even so, when he reflects on what Shoshanah would have thought of the marriage, he is disquieted by a feeling of disloyalty towards her.

Ruth is caught in between. She is scarcely religious, "nor did she have her mother's collection of traditional beliefs and superstitions" (162). Yet for her inter-marriage "`means the end of Jewishness'" (163). For Shoshanah marrying out had been "a genuine fear as though of death itself" (132). Ruth's fear can never quite be separated in Joshua's mind from her social and professional ambitions. Earlier in the

book Joshua remarks that inter-marriage is "the only tenet of Judaism, or what they believe is Judaism, which the community clings to. Everything else has gone by the board" (132).

There is no ambivalence for Ezekial. He cuts Benjamin completely and argues with his father ("`[H]e won't be dead for me,' Joshua said. `I'm not a religious fanatic.' `You're a Jewish father.'" 171). Further, Ezekial attempts to persuade Joshua to sell the family home in the country, and to live in Melbourne amongst Jews. Joshua decides to sell but also to stay in the country, indeed to board in the Wimmera Hotel ("After all he was not a stranger to living with gentiles," 174). For Ezekial this amounts to "choosing to live a Christian life in preference to a Jewish one" (177).

The question of living in Israel is also raised, but Joshua hesitates before the Jewish life Israel offers, perhaps the Jewish life of which he had always dreamed:

> He really did not know what he wanted; none of his old ideals satisfied him any longer. They had become shadowy, intangible like his own past which seemed lost in mists. Perhaps the truth was that unbeknown to himself he had formed deep ties with the new land, he had become part of it, and it was from it that new ideals would arise. (157)

This is the novel's unambiguous assimilationist argument (the "perhaps" is merely conventional). Joshua's "new" life, his ideals, are to be found here and now (for better or worse, willy nilly), not in the past, in secular Yiddish culture or traditional beliefs; not in their contemporary hyper-orthodox politico-religious forms; and not elsewhere, in the promised land of Israel. This amounts to an argument against Jewish separatism *and* "vulgar assimilation" (virtue scarcely resides in "Australia") in which the two are rendered virtually equivalent. By the end of the novel Ezekial strikes Benjamin as "`much closer to an extreme Christian conservative than to a Jew like myself or even [Joshua]'" (185). Joshua demurs, forseeing the possibility of anti-semitism once again compelling Jews to come together. But Benjamin's is closest to the final word: "`It's different now.... Now we are divided on the same lines as all other people'" (185).

The tendency of the argument is consistent with Waten's critical writing and much of his other fiction.[88] Jewishness (and, despite Waten's own warnings, ethnicity) is not an essence but an "evolution"; it is religious, cultural, social and political and so closely determined by time and place. We could emphasise Waten's insistence on "a multiplicity of ways of being Jewish, on the right to self-definition and the right to refuse definition" (in Damon's terms).[89] On the other hand we could emphasise the

texts' programmatically-opposed progressive and reactionary ways of being Jewish or being assimilated. There is a multiplicity of ways of being Jewish but they are not all equal. In *Distant Land* as elsewhere a singular, unambiguous argument is complicated only by the number of instances across which it is dispersed (thus the dispersal of the reader's desire).

The point is neither to abandon Jewishness/ethnicity in the pursuit of mere assimilation nor to cling to mere ethnicity in the face of historical change. Ethnicity, we might say, is necessary but never sufficient. To argue which, the novels must figure an authentic form of integration (which will figure their own integrative form). The optimistic resolution goes something like this: ideals which can be expressed as a form of Jewishness can be translated without loss into other cultural and political forms, and without compromising Jewishness:

> [H]e thought of his life, from the ealiest days when he had excelled in the Talmud and when he played the violin and later when he became a good linguist, serving a useful purpose during the war against the Nazis. Now he never played the violin and he had almost forgotten his languages, except the English he spoke. Even his Yiddish and German were now imperfect. He had not achieved what he had wanted; he had not ralised his ambitions. But he had not lost his ideals, he told himself. Once he thought only of Jewish causes. Now he believed that his people and the rest of mankind could not be separated into different worlds. It did not make him less a Jew. It made him more a Jew. For him a Jew was one who respected all mankind, loved justice and believed in intellect. He would give expression to his ideals in this town which he now believed he was destined to stay in. (187)

Joshua successfully "re-invents" his Jewish identity. What was loneliness for him becomes "perfect rest" (188), a significant phrase in a novel of Jewish migration.

In many ways, as we have seen, Waten is resisting Jewish essentialism rather than Anglo-Australian assimilationism. Hence his concern to argue against the primacy of ethnic difference (or of what he argues elsewhere is not really an ethnic difference at all). There is only an indirect concern with the politics of group survival, perhaps the principal trope of Jewish fiction and history. At the same time the texts do work to identify the kinship between ethnism and assimilationism, and to name the ethnicity of the Anglo-Saxon-Protestant or Celtic-Catholic host cultures. In *So Far No Further*, for example, Paul Avanzo's relation to his Italian/Catholic identity is juxtaposed to the Irish-Catholic Australian (itself dominant-dominated). Certainly the textual politics are not directed primarily at "resisting integration." But perhaps we can rewrite Jurgensen's terms to claim that the texts are designed to resist *exclusion* (the actual effect of assimilation), indeed to *demand* integration. The question then is: on

whose terms?

The narrating position in Waten's fiction, I have argued, can never be located (wholly) outside the minority cultures. One effect of this is to suggest that the "migrant" culture does not depend upon the gaze from outside for its self-definition (we might foreshadow a contrast with *They're a Weird Mob*). Waten's anti-essentialism, but also his realist universalism, is present in his assumption that he can "do" Italian or Greek just as well as Jewish migrants. "The Knife" suggests what is enabling and disabling in this assumption. Waten takes on the stereotype of Italian With Knife and rewrites it from the migrant's perspective; but (in the terms in which realism poses the issue) he might only land on a further "stereotype." In this sense the story may not get beyond "sympathy,"[90] although the series of transpositions whereby it signifies *migration*, rather than Italian-ness, is more complex. The knife is not the Italian migrant's weapon but his link with his homeland. It becomes a weapon through the generic typing of Plinio by his Australian antagonists. A story about identity, "The Knife" is also a story about masculinity, for the father and grandfather's knife has been passed on to Plinio by his mother. But the knife - as home, law, phallus - can never reassert the masculine identity disrupted by migration. Its rise as a weapon is its fall from meaning. Used by his father for wood-carving, "his mark of self-sufficiency," its use as a weapon by Plinio marks his ultimate loss of self-sufficiency. Waten dramatises the process whereby all "foreign migrants" are "forced to experience themselves generically" as foreign. In "A Child of War and Revolutions" the narrator remarks ironically on being taken for a German — a "Squarehead as well as Ikey Mo" — during the first war: "All foreigners were Germans" (*Love and Rebellion*, 13).

Serge Liberman has suggested that the history of Jewish migration is paradigmatic of "ethnic minority" migration. The argument, from a writer more securely within the post-war Jewish community than Waten, (nevertheless) nicely suggests the thematic ground of Waten's fiction:

> [The] issues involve matters of adaptation in a new environment.... For the Jew, the matter of adaptation is reflected in the question: What is home? Is home the place the Jew has had to abandon? Is home the place he has come to? Is it Israel, both the symbolic and the tangible geographic home of the Jew? Or is it the world of the memory on the one hand or of anticipation on the other, ... a place suspended in inner fantasy and in physical limbo?...
>
> Adaptation, too, is reflected in the striving after physical security along with attempts to rise socially, economically and professionally.... by the search for an identity in an alien environment, in an environment variously hostile, indifferent or

> accepting, with the corollary issues and tensions that this raises: the opposing attractions towards assimilation and towards increasing isolation and separatism from his sources; one's relation to ... one's tradition with its values and forms, sometimes at the expense of living in the wider social/cultural/political milieu ... the converse being no less a dilemma; the conflicts between the generations as a reflection of these tensions...; and, at the extremes of the identity conflicts — and of belongingness — questions such as intermarriage.[91]

For Liberman, the emphasis falls on the balance between survival and "success" (the conventional trope). For Waten, by contrast, the emphasis falls on what we might call the problem of modernity. This is a significant difference of interpretation, a different politics, which I want to consider before concluding.

From the beginning of *Distant Land*, the Jewish community is shown to be in transition and, in a sense, hybrid. This is the novel's very starting-point. Joshua is a prodigy in Hebrew and Talmudic studies but he is also attending a Russian school: "Without knowing it Mr Kuperschmidt, although devout and conservative, had been affected by the break-down of the old ghetto world, and had set his mind on giving his son a secular education, an education that would bring a university degree and a profession" (5). Joshua learns Russian, Ukrainian and Polish, as well as Yiddish and Hebrew. He reads the Russian writers, Chekhov, Gorki, Lermontov, Tolstoy, and contemporary Yiddish writers such as Aleichem: "Always he oscillated from one world to another — from the small Jewish world to the mysterious, fascinating greater outside world and then back to the Jewish again" (6).[92]

An enigma in Joshua's mind — the meaning of the Christian or gentile world in relation to the Jewish — is thematised in the novel as an opposition between the progressive and regressive forces of history. Of course the oppositions are not interchangeable, for the latter cuts across the former. To Joshua, the Christian world means anti-semitism and inhumanity. Yet it also provides learning: "there were teachers and pupils who were dedicated to the highest ideals, to the love of all peoples and the betterment of humanity" (8). Judaism provides him with his ideals but also with a mistrust of gentiles which, however justified locally, is ultimately irrational:

> During his last years at school he had read many Russian writers, from Chernyshevsky to Gorki and he had steeped himself in the modern Yiddish and Hebrew writers. They had shaken his belief in the traditional religious attitudes of the Jewish ghetto world which had been further undermined by the war and the Russian Revolution. Even Yiddish culture seemed to be the culture of the ghetto, yet he could not embrace the culture of the non-Jewish world, much as it drew him to it.
>
> In the Beth Hamedrash he had first talked about all these matters and he had cast doubts on the Holy Books. Then he had attended Zionist meetings where the future of the Holy Land was discussed and he found himself siding with those Zionist

> Socialists who believed their socialist aims could only be realised in the Holy Land. In general he was affected by Socialist ideas, yet because he felt a kind of hostility to the gentile world, a hostility that was at odds with his sympathy for the culture and the ideals that emerged from that world, he could not think of Socialism as something to be achieved in the land where he lived. For all his shedding of Jewish religious beliefs he still retained a traditional Jewish view of the non-Jew and could not come to terms with him. (12-13)

Elsewhere Waten describes the relationship between the two cultures, and between culture and commerce, tradition and modernity, in terms of the distribution of physical space. Joshua climbs a hill overlooking the town:

> From there he could see the two districts, the Christian and the Jewish, that met in the town square and market place with its town hall, two-story houses and shops with white, grey and green shutters, a kind of neutral territory for Christians and Jews for most parts of the year. He loved his own house in the square and he loved the town. In the centre of the Christian section, by far the largest with nearly two-thirds of the area and population, stood the Catholic church, the tallest building in the town with its steeple and pointed spire. And in the Jewish part the vaulted synagogue dome stood out. For the rest most of the houses in both parts were low-roofed, especially in the streets leading to the railway station where the mud never dried, where only the Christian workers lived. (15)

Here the question of class is entered into the problem of modernity, as is the question of Eretz Israel. Joshua rejects becoming a rabbi; he is unable to go to university in Poland or Germany; he decides then to go to Palestine (he is contemplating this decision as he looks over the town). The Holy Land offers itself as a reconciliation of his contradictory attitudes towards the non-Jewish world, for Palestine in this time and place is dangerously aligned with modernity. Joshua's father "believed it was a heresy or at least a piece of gross impertinence to want to anticipate the Messiah" (16); Reb Chaim Avremal is blunter: "`They start with the Holy Land and finish up Bolsheviks'" (18).

Joshua's idealistic dream of Eretz Israel, where as a linguist he could be a "human bridge between peoples ... Arab, European Christian and Jewish" (22), where he could "help to construct a new Jewish life" (26), is deflected by Shoshanah's sheer determination and "driving ambition" (27) for their economic and social success. Shoshanah too, in her own way, is a sign of modernity and change, unconcerned by the prospect of "migrating to a country where [she] would be surrounded by gentiles, where there was a tiny handful of Jews" (31). Her impatience with the old ways — in business especially — has been learnt in the war years "when the family had wandered from town to town, fleeing now from one army, now from another, now eluding pogromists" (19). This Jewish diaspora history is also the history that initiates

modernity:

> As Shoshanah did not ever go out on her own, did not belong to any society or organisation, but lived within the four walls of the house and the shop and in the women's gallery of the synagogue, she did not object to the fact that her suitors would be chosen or at least approved by her parents. In this respect she was the same as most conventional daughters of religious parents.... [But] she wanted to be in love with the man she married. That was very much a new-fangled idea, almost approaching a heresy, but Mr Weissenberg could not argue her out of it. (19)

The place of Palestine/Israel changes in the course of the novel (or perhaps its historical meaning emerges more clearly). From the perspective of post-war Australia it can no longer be a place of reconciliation, an ideal — in Israel too, it is implied, the Jews are divided "along the same lines as all other people."

Ezekial disapproves of the secular politicians in Israel: "He really believed in a theocracy for Israel, a religious state led by rigidly orthodox rabbis. He admired the Catholic Church which combined religion and politics" (183). Benjamin, by contrast, resists Joshua's suggestion that he develop an interest in Jewish affairs, in Israel:

> "You surely wouldn't want me to cut myself off from Australian life. I am an Australian."
> "Yes, yes," said Joshua, "but you're a Jew."
> "Australia's my country," Benjamin said. (125)

To return to our earlier terms, the course of a modernising, emancipatory, progressive history is in one sense *beyond* ethnicity, certainly beyond religion, and towards "mankind." It can thus afford to be truly mundane, anchored in the here and now, the everyday, the empirical. Waten will always seek to clinch his most ambitious arguments in the most ordinary terms.

Modernity is approached in a rather different manner in *So Far No Further*. In bringing together the daughter and son of Jewish and Italian families respectively, Waten is making the same sort of argument beyond ethnicity even as he registers the force of ethnicity for all his characters. Further, this post-1968 novel is involved in a heavy-handed (that is, excessively disciplinary) argument with the politics of the student New Left and new avant-garde — portrayed as play-acting for middle-class kids or a not-so new version of Trotskyism, now anarchism and Maoism. The task of the novel is not only to consign the old superstitions to the past and to reconcile Deborah's Polish Jewishness and Paul's Italian Catholicism, her radicalism and his conservatism (which is idealistic, genuine). It is also to win back the history of human progress and modernity for what I have called in earlier chapters the "long historical perspective." Despite this, or rather because of it, the novel's resolution (its

"assimilation") remains incomplete. Deborah has the last word, as she resists Paul's proposal of marriage: "`Then we will have to live in our separate houses'" (224). Waten's strong teleology produces a narrative emphasis on ongoingness rather than closure.

To conclude I want to consider the "post-structuralist" critique of *Distant Land* mounted by Hodge and Mishra.[93] They read the novel alongside John O'Grady/Nino Culotta's *They're a Weird Mob* as assimilationist. They are correct, of course, to argue that writing by "real" migrants (their quote-marks) can be no less assimilationist than that by Anglo-Celtic Australians and that certain positions within multiculturalism were not always historically available. What I find theoretically interesting is that they fail to distinguish Waten's text in any way from O'Grady's. Behind this failure is the aesthetic excess, the ultimately formalist critique of realism, defined in the first section of this chapter. It produces some remarkable "over-readings." Waten's memoir "A Writer's Youth," they say, "is silent about his migrant experience." Unfortunately the passage they quote comes from the end of the memoir where Waten comments, with an irony they seem to miss, that his failed novel *Hunger* included "everything" — except his migrant background. The memoir begins: "The first writer in my life was Sholem Aleichem, the great Yiddish comic writer."

The novel's realism is the first thing Hodge and Mishra note. They align it with other, canonical emigrant family sagas including *The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney*. Waten would not have minded this location at all, for his work is indeed designed to address the literary tradition, to be considered in its space. For Hodge and Mishra, though, this can only be a shortcoming or worse a "suppression" of the migrant voice. Thus they read *Distant Land* as an "unacknowledged narrative of assimilation." But on one level at least, nothing could be more acknowledged in this novel which begins with debates *within* a Jewish community between Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian cultural options, and ends with Zionism, anti-Zionism and "Australian-Jewishness" juxtaposed. What Hodge and Mishra mean, of course, on a different level, is that Waten's voice is indistinguishable from majority voices. This has its point, as I have shown, but their criticism finally depends upon a sheer aestheticisation of "voice" which even has them forgetting to distinguish between the levels of story and discourse.[94] If they imply an answer to the question of who Waten is writing for, they

fail to ask who he is writing against.

Waten's fiction, I have argued, gives nothing to the overt politics of assimilation (it would not have been handed out to arriving immigrants[95]). Not least at the level of discourse, and in contrast to *They're a Weird Mob*, there is no position from which a distinctive Australian way of life is offered as a singular good thing (affectionately "weird," that is, unique, authentic, native). O'Grady's plot, as Hodge and Mishra show, can only be a kind of "first contact" narrative in which the boundaries of inside and outside remain as firmly delineated as ever. Waten's migrant story, by contrast, begins before migration, and the borderlines to be renegotiated are largely those within the Jewish community (whose own boundaries are always in transition). "Australia" has only a weak presence in the text, not as a goal so much as a kind of historical accident. There *is* a positive goal, as I have suggested, in the reconciliation of Jewish and Australian identities figured at the end of *Distant Land*, but again Australia is only a contingent, and so transformable, site for this process.

I have also argued that Waten's migrant writings can be read as strategies of resistance to the "othering" of the majority culture: again, the fiction offers no position from which the "foreigner," the migrant, can be taken generically as exotic or as pure Other. The strategy is to show that the foreigner/migrant both is and is not the same, and the fictions locate the power to make these differences on the migrants' own ground rather than on the grounds of the majority culture. If in their bid for cultural respectability Waten's texts are more assimilationist than he knows, it might also be the case that they are more wrought by cultural difference than their strong teleology admits. Again the critics can be more anxious about the authentic than Waten himself. Hodge and Mishra in effect render Waten's migrant writing illegitimate, "inauthentic" against "genuine multicultural writing" or "authentic voices" (their words). They exercise their own suppression of anything less than the "traumatised response of multicultural writing proper." But by reading cultural difference as firstly a formal difference, they fail to read for cultural difference after all. They are left in the awkward position of defending post-modernism in the name of authenticity.

In Waten's fiction diverse ethnic histories are argued into the course of Australian history and as constitutive rather than as supplementary, despite his strong commitment (elsewhere) to a national tradition and even as ethnicity emerges as a

secondary category relative to the universal categories of mankind and history. This is an argument against ethnic essentialism, but also against assimilation. It is, we might say, an assertion of universal values against the assumptions of universality made by a single culture, by any single culture, Jewish or Anglo-Saxon-Protestant as the case may be. There are no chosen people in Waten's novels except perhaps the *people* (but that's another story).

This is the most optimistic case *for* Waten as a migrant/non-Anglo-Celtic writer. He writes from a "migrant" position, he clears a space within the majority culture for the migrant/non-Anglo voice. His disarming assumption is that there is an "other" story to tell which can be told like any other story. Here we might want to resist the merely impossible concept of a multicultural aesthetics by insisting on the novels' "success" in specific frameworks of reception and a specific local politics. Very few of their contemporary reviewers, to stay within a limited sphere, were able to find the migrant theme merely documentary-autobiographical; the novels posed questions to the critics about Australian literature, modestly reworking their sense of the culture's boundaries.[96]

At the same time the positions articulated in the post-structuralist, post-modernist — and post-assimilationist — criticism do enable us to define the limits of Waten's texts, their recuperability. The points can best be made negatively in terms of what the texts *cannot resist*. Waten's realism, in implying the translatability of all cultural difference, cannot finally constrain or proscribe readings which will merely efface those differences. Similarly it cannot altogether constrain readings of the texts as mere chronicles or migrant spectacle in so far as the third-person omniscient narrator participates in an authoritative empiricism.

In short, there is indeed a limit to how far the texts can constrain their co-option to a position within the host culture. They can be read so as to deliver migrants to that culture, now with the guarantee of being "good neighbours" (or good migrants and bad migrants). Further, despite their socialist inflection, the humanist universals through which the fiction mounts it critique of ethnism are the values claimed for literature itself in the majority culture. The texts cannot resist their being read as *merely universal*. But the point of my argument is that these will be assimilationist or "aesthetic" readings, not readings for cultural difference.

1.. Judah Waten, *Distant Land* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1964); *So Far No Further* (Mount Eliza, Vic.: Wren, 1971); *Love and Rebellion* (1978; Richmond, Vic.: Hodja Educational, 1983). *Distant Land* was also an Australasian Book Society selection, and a *Herald-Sun* Readers Book Club choice! Further references to these books will appear in the text.

2.. Manfred Jurgensen, "Multicultural Aesthetics: A Preliminary Definition," in *Striking Chords: Multicultural Literary Interpretations*, eds Sneja Gunew and Kateryna O. Longley (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992), p.33.

3.. Gunew and Longley, Introduction to *Striking Chords*, pp.xvi-xvii.

4.. Gunew, "Migrant Women Writers: Who's on Whose Margins?" in *Gender, Politics and Fiction: Twentieth Century Australian Women's Novels*, ed. Carole Ferrier (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1985), p.165.

5.. Gunew, "PMT (Post Modernist Tensions: Reading for (Multi)Cultural Difference," in *Striking Chords*, pp.42-43. The quotation from JanMohamed and Lloyd is in "Introduction: Minority Discourse — What is to be Done?" *Cultural Critique* 7 (Spring 1987), p.10 (an issue prompted by Deleuze and Guattari's *Kafka*, discussed in Chapter 3 above).

6.. Gunew, "Migrant Women Writers," p.168.

7.. Gunew, "Framing Marginality: Distinguishing the Textual Politics of the Marginal Voice," *Southern Review* 18, 2 (July 1985), p.144.

8.. Gunew, "PMT," p.43. For further discussion of the meanings and politics of the different terms see Gunew, "Home and Away: Nostalgia in Australian (Migrant) Writing," in *Island in the Stream: Myths of Place in Australian Culture*, ed. Paul Foss (Leichhardt, NSW: Pluto Press, 1988), p.35. Gunew also discusses the dangers and the usefulness of "Anglo-Celtic" which, she argues, does not commit us to the notion that "Anglo" and "Celtic" are homogenous.

9.. Gunew, "Migrant Women Writers," pp.165 & 167.

10.. Gunew, "Authenticity and the Writing Cure," in *Grafts: Feminist Cultural Criticism*, ed. Susan Sheridan (London: Verso, 1989), p.117.

11.. Gunew, "Constructing Australian Subjects: Critics, Writers, Multicultural Writers," in *Diversity Itself*, ed. Peter Quartermaine (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1986), p.55; also "Framing Marginality," p.148.

12.. Gunew, "Framing Marginality," p.144.

13.. Gunew, "Framing Marginality," p.146.

14.. Gunew, "Authenticity and the Writing Cure," pp.118-19.

15.. For example, the following essays in *Striking Chords*: Efi Hatzimanolis, "Speak as You Eat: Reading Migrant Writing, Naturally," pp.168-77 and Ivor Indyk, "The Migrant and the Comedy of Excess in Recent Australian Writing," pp.178-86.

16.. Jurgensen, "Multicultural Aesthetics," p.33.

17.. Gunew, "Authenticity and the Writing Cure," p.120.

18.. Jurgensen, "Multicultural Aesthetics," pp.30 & 32.

19.. Jurgensen, "Multicultural Aesthetics," p.30.

20.. Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp.4-7 & 160-162.

21.. Gunew, "Framing Marginality," p.146; and see Nikos Papastergiadis, "The Journeys Within: Migration

and Identity in Greek-Australian Literature," in *Striking Chords*, pp.149-61, for an account of Antigone Kefala's work as transgressive but less than transcendent.

22.. Gunew, "Authenticity and the Writing Cure," p.119. See also Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), pp.170-72.

23.. Longley, "Fifth World," in *Striking Chords*, p.23.

24.. Gunew, "PMT," p.37.

25.. Gunew, "Migrant Women Writers," p.168; "Framing Marginality," p.144.

26.. Richard Bosworth and Janis Wilton, "Novels, Poems and the Study of Europeans in Australia," *Teaching History* 15, 2 (July 1981), pp.45 & 50.

27.. Bosworth and Wilton, "Novels, Poems," p.48.

28.. Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), pp.188-93.

29.. The policies of multiculturalism were established in the early-mid 1970s but it was some time before literary publications expressing this new sense of ethnic/migrant groups began to appear. For example: Manfred Jurgensen's *Ethnic Australia* (Brisbane: Phoenix Publications) appeared in 1981; Sneja Gunew's *Displacements: Migrant Stroytellers* (Deakin University Press) in 1982; R.F. Holt's *The Strength of Tradition: Stories of the Immigrant Presence in Australia* (University of Queensland Press) in 1983.

30.. Waten, "Yiddish Literature in Australia," *Unity* (July-August 1948), pp.4-5; "Contemporary Jewish Literature in Australia," *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal and Proceedings* 3, 2 (1949), pp.92-102. See also "Pinchas Goldhar," *Voice* (February 1947), p.13.

31.. See for example, Hilary L. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Victoria 1835-1985* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986), chs 10 & 11, esp. pp.152-63.

32.. *Distant Land*, pp.79-87; "Three Generations," *Love and Rebellion*, pp.113-14.

33.. Waten, "Yiddish Literature," p.4.

34.. Waten, "Yiddish Literature," p.4.

35.. Waten, "Yiddish Literature," p.5 (my emphasis).

36.. Quotations in this paragraph from "Yiddish Literature." p.4 (my emphases).

37.. Maria Damon, "Talking Yiddish at the Boundaries," *Cultural Studies* 5, 1 (January 1991), p.17, where she defines her own relation to her American Jewishness as a "reinvention and recognition of ethnicity."

38.. Waten, "Contemporary Jewish Literature," p.92.

39.. Waten, "Contemporary Jewish Literature," p.94.

40.. Waten, "Contemporary Jewish Literature," p.95.

41.. Waten, "Yiddish Literature," p.4.

42.. Quotations in this paragraph are from Waten's book reviews: "The Kosher Caper," rev. of *Jewish Settlers in Australia*, by Charles Price, *Australian Book Review* 4, 2 & 3 (December 1964-January 1965), p.27; "Melbourne Jewry," rev. of *The Fortunes of Samuel Wynn*, by Allan Wynn, *Australian Book Review* 7 (September 1968), p.202; "The Jewish Contribution to Australian Society," rev. of *Jews in Australian Society*, ed. Peter Medding, *Age* 18 August 1973, p.12.

43.. Waten, "Melbourne Jewry," p.202.

44.. "Portrait of the Jewish Home," rev. of *The Walled Garden*, by Chiam Berman, *Sydney Morning Herald* 21 February 1976, p.16. See also "Yiddish Heroes and Themes," rev. of *Portraits of Yiddish Writers*,

by Yitzhak Kahn, *Age* 28 July 1979, p.26, where Waten describes Yiddish as "a tough travelling language, refusing to die despite wanderings and genocide and the adoption of English as the first language of American, English and Australian Jews."

45.. Waten, "Portrait of the Jewish Home."

46.. Waten's extensive newspaper and periodical cuttings collection reveals his interest in the Jewish writers in the USA: Bellow, Roth, Potok, Singer etc. There is also a large collection of cuttings on Jews/Yiddish in the Soviet Union. As well as communist papers, there is a good deal from *Time*, *Newsweek*, the *Bulletin*, the *Times Literary Supplement*. Judah Waten Papers, NLA MS 4536, Boxes 30-36.

47.. Waten, "Yiddish Culture in West and East," *Labour Monthly* (August 1966), p.374; repr. in the journal of the Communist Party of the USA, *Political Affairs* (October 1966), pp.51-61. See also "Will Yiddish Culture Survive?" *Labour Monthly* (September 1966), pp.440-46; "Yiddish Culture in the West," *Australian Left Review* 3 (October-November 1966), pp.52-57; and "Setting the Record Straight," *Political Affairs* (March 1967), pp.58-61.

48.. Waten, "Yiddish Culture in West and East," pp.376-78. In "Will Yiddish Culture Survive?" Waten adds that the "State of Israel offers no hope to Yiddish" (p.445).

49.. Waten, "Setting the Record Straight," *Political Affairs*, p.59 (my emphasis).

50.. Waten, "Will Yiddish Culture Survive?" p.445. Elsewhere he adds: "I myself would grieve at the passing of Yiddish literature in the Soviet Union, just as I do at its passing on other countries. I have always been a protagonist of Yiddish writing from which my own work as a novelist draws inspiration," ("Setting the Record Straight," p.61).

51.. Waten, "Will Yiddish Culture Survive?" p.446 (my emphasis).

52.. Waten, "Setting the Record Straight," p.60.

53.. For example, in 1967-68 invitations to address Jewish organisations were withdrawn: from the Young Men's Hebrew Association of Australia for Waten to be Guest of Honour and guest speaker, on "The Jewish Writers in the World Today"; from the Labour Zionist Organisation of Australia; and a third, from the Aleph Zadik Aleph Youth Group, on *Alien Son*. The reason given for the latter, in reply to a vigorous letter from Waten, is Waten's "publicly stated views on current Jewish world problems [and] due consideration of the views of the leaders of our Jewish community." Waten papers, NLA MS 4536 Box 30.

54.. Waten, "The Jewish Contribution to Australian Society."

55.. Hodge and Mishra, pp.188-89.

56.. Tom Inglis Moore (for the Canberra Fellowship of Australian Writers), letter to Waten, 26 August 1958; Waten to Inglis Moore, 7 September 1958, NLA MS 4536/2/258-59. *Span: An Adventure in Asian and Australian Writing*, ed. Lionel Wigmore for the Canberra Fellowship of Australian Writers (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1958).

57.. Gunew, "The Migrant Experience," in *The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*, eds Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson (Sydney: Macmillan, 1990), p.169.

58.. Waten, "Cliches and Cardboard," rev. of *Potatoes Are Cheaper*, by Max Shulman, and *Settle Down Simon Katz*, by Bernard Kops, *Sydney Morning Herald* 22 December 1973, p.15.

59.. Waten, rev. of *Ethnic Australia*, ed. Manfred Jurgensen, *New Literature Review* 12 (1983), p.46.

60.. See Oodgeroo, *Towards a Global Village in the Southern Hemisphere* (Nathan, Qld.: Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, Griffith University, 1989), p.1.

61.. Gunew, "The Migrant Experience," p.169.

62.. The distinction is made by Homi Bhabha, "The Commitment to Theory," *New Formations* 5 (Summer 1988), pp.18-19: "Cultural diversity is the recognition of pre-given cultural `contents' and customs,

held in a time-frame of relativism; it gives rise to anodyne liberal notions of multiculturalism, cultural exchange, or the culture of humanity." Cultural difference, by contrast, might be characterised by its recognition that the cultural contents are not "pre-given" and that beyond plurality lies hybridity. Of course Waten's commitent to historical progress complicates his relation to any fixed time-frame of relativism.

63.. The phrases quoted are from Waten, "Writers from Two Cultures,"*Aspect* 5, 1-2 (1980), p.55; and "Multilingual Neighbours On Our Literary Scene," rev. of *The First Multicultural Anthology*, ed. Andrew Dezsery and *Neighbours*, by Andrew Dezsery, *Age* 11 October 1980, p.30.

64.. Waten, "In Other Tongues," *Nation* 27 June 1970, pp.22-23; "Discovering Migrant Literature," *Island* 16 (1983), pp.26-29.

65.. Waten, "Writers From Two Cultures," p.50. He uses the same formulation for his own writing in "My Two Literary Careers," pp.87-88.

66.. Waten, "Multilingual Neighbours On Our Literary Scene"; and "Discovering Migrant Literature," p.26.

67.. Waten, rev. of *Ethnic Australia*, p.48.

68.. Waten, "Jews in a New Land," rev. of *On Firmer Shores*, by Serge Liberman, *Age* 3 October 1981, p.28.

69.. Waten, "In Other Tongues," p.23.

70.. Waten, "New Voices, New Attitudes," rev. of *Displacements: Migrant Storytellers*, ed. Sneja Gunew, *Age* 21 August 1982, p.14.

71.. Waten, rev. of *Ethnic Australia*, pp.47 & 48.

72.. Papastergiadis, "The Journeys Within," p.150.

73.. Waten, "Writers From Two Cultures," p.54.

74.. Gunew and Longley, Introduction to *Striking Chords*, p.xxi.

75.. For example, the scene of the memorial service for the war dead, when Joshua experiences something very much like the absurdity of existence, *Distant Land*, pp.120-22.

76.. Waten, "Writers From Two Cultures," p.50.

77.. Waten, "Writers From Two Cultures," p.51.

78.. The phrase is A.D. Hope's from his poem "William Butler Yeats," *Collected Poems* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1972), p.72.

79.. Damon, "Talking Yiddish," p.24.

80.. Waten, "Writers From Two Cultures," p.55.

81.. John McLaren, "New Novels," rev. of *So Far No Further*, *Overland* 52 (Winter 1972), p.53. In a foreword to the novel Waten adds an interesting explanation of his language: "some characters speak only Italian, others Yiddish or Polish. Therefore I have set down all speech in ordinary conversational English. No single form of foreigners' English exists; there are as many variations as there are different kinds of newcomers. I have regarded the use of foreigners' English as well as dialects as unnecessary to the story and indeed distracting."

82.. Damon, "Talking Yiddish," pp.24-25 (and passim).

83.. M.J. Haddock, "The Prose Fiction of Jewish Writers of Australia 1945-1969," *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal of Proceedings* 7, 7 (1974), p.508.

84.. "Three Generations," *Love and Rebellion*, p.115.

85.. Carl Harrison-Ford, "In a New Country," rev. of *So Far No Further*, by Judah Waten, *Nation* 5 February 1972, p.22.

86.. In a personal letter, Waten describes Joshua in terms of "the theme of the lost personality, the inability to acquire a new one in the new world.... [He] is quite prosperous but he has really been stripped of his beliefs and hopes." Letter to a Mr Baldwin, 25 January 1971, Waten papers, NLA MS 4536/2/1643. Interestingly the conclusion here seems more pessimistic than that of the novel itself.

87.. Cf. Damon, "Talking Yiddish," p.27, where she talks autobiographically about reading Jewish work "not for clues to a primary sort of Jewishness but for permission to invent new ways of being Jewish."

88.. Cf. the end of *The Unbending* (Melbourne: Australasian Book Society, 1954): "They were starting again, without illusions, not in a new land, but in a land which willy-nilly had become theirs" (p.301).

89.. Damon, "Talking Yiddish," p.26.

90.. See Peter Corris's review of *Love and Rebellion*, "An Alien Son Grows Up," *Australian*, 20-21 May 1978, p.9: the stories "present Italians and Greeks as stereotypes with only the externals of their culture and behaviour observed.... Their dominant emotion is sympathy." In a positive review of the stories, this becomes "compassion" — Rod Nicholls, "A Migrant-Eye View of Australian Life," *Age* 6 May 1978, p.26.

91.. Serge Liberman, "Australian Jewish Writing: An Assessment and a Programme," *Menorah* 1, 1 (1987), p.88.

92.. Damon reminds us that Yiddish itself is a hybrid language, and Yiddish literature a modernist literature, "Talking Yiddish," p.19: "Written Yiddish itself, long post-dating its spoken life, dizzyingly defamiliarises a primarily Germanic sound by representing it through Hebrew lettering.... [N]ot only have Jews been bilingual in relation to the dominant culture, but the internal usages of Yiddish and Hebrew within the marginalised group itself contributes to a consciousness of juxtaposition that happens specifically in language." Also: "the folksy minimalism of Aleichem's modernism has been misconstrued as pious and sentimental nostalgia."

93.. Hodge and Mishra, pp.192-93. Nino Culotta [John O'Grady], *They're a Weird Mob* (1957; Sydney: Ure Smith, 1974).

94.. Hodge and Mishra, p.193: the criticism proceeds by retelling the story of the characters' assimilation.

95.. According to Hodge and Mishra this did occur with *They're a Weird Mob*, p.190.

96.. On *Distant Land*, for example, Jeana Bradley, "Recent Australian Fiction," *Westerly* 2 (August 1965), p.53; R.M. Wilding, "Jewish Migrant," *Bulletin* 24 October 1964, pp.54-55. On *So Far No Further*, A.R. Chisholm, "Clash of Ideals," *Age* 4 December 1971, p.13; Brian Kiernan, "Change and Conflict in a Generation Gap," *Australian* 1 January 1972, p.15. The London *Jewish Quarterly* finds Waten "the authentic voice of Australian-Jewish life": "From Far and Near," *Jewish Quarterly* 13, 3 (Autumn 1965): collected in Waten's papers, NLA MS 4536, Box 20.

9

Reading for Autobiography: From *Alien Son* to *Scenes of Revolutionary Life*

I always remembered my mother standing in St Kilda, on the pier at St Kilda, I was very young, and I have a recollection of that awful sadness and nostalgia, and that began a novel.... Remorse is, I think, a tremendous catalyst.
(Judah Waten, Interview with Suzanne Lunney, 1975)[1]

1. Autobiographical Readings

Judah Waten never wrote an autobiography, that is, a single extended prose narrative "focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality."[2] At the same time, in the sphere of his literary activities he scarcely wrote a word that cannot in some sense be considered autobiographical. This is not an unusual situation for a novelist or short story writer, or at least not unusual as a way of reading. It could be considered one mark of the division between "serious" fiction and "mere entertainment" or genre fiction as this familiarly operates in present literary economies. The serious reader of serious fiction might well be discovered in the search for resonances of the author's life in his or her writings, expectations that will not be aroused elsewhere.

At the most immediate level many of the episodes in Waten's fiction can be traced to situations in his own life, especially a certain few which are repeated in more than one text. The bulk of his last novel *Scenes of Revolutionary Life*, for instance, can be traced to the author's own experiences in London in 1931-33, his literary disappointments and political imprisonment, which he wrote and talked about on numerous occasions.[3] The significance of these parallels for the present argument is their participation in the retrospective construction of a career and a writing self. There is a biographical-historical interest of a quite different order which will not play a large part in my discussion.

Waten also spent much of his later writing career working at memoir pieces, relatively short, relatively fragmented narratives which nevertheless can be brought together to suggest a larger autobiographical project. By linking short fiction, memoirs and excerpts from novels it

would even be possible to reconctruct an "autobiography" for Waten's first twenty or so years, and to this we could add plans for its continuation at least through to the 1970s. There is manuscript evidence among his papers for this larger task and its presence casts his published fiction in a new light in that much of it can be understood as participating in a career-long autobiographical narrativisation.[4]

As a first step, however, I want to push the notion of autobiographical interest in another direction. A quite different level of autobiographical interest is raised when we note that Waten returned throughout his writing career to the telling and retelling of "one" story, the story of his childhood. There are versions of this childhood in *Alien Son*, *The Unbending*, *From Odessa to Odessa*, *Distant Land* and *Love and Rebellion*, as well as in articles, reviews and interviews.[5] Like Patrick White, Martin Boyd and Henry Handel Richardson in their different ways, Waten's career as a writer involves a series of returns to the scene of childhood, the scene of the family drama. It would not be accurate with Waten, nor the other writers I have indicated, to suggest that he had only one story to tell but it might be argued that one story (which is multiple stories) is more resonant, more cathected, more capable or demanding of reiteration, more fraught with desire and anxiety—and so more productive of stories—than any other.

The task of the present chapter will be to *read for autobiography*. It goes vitually without saying that the writing (and speech) to be examined will not be taken as evidence of anything beyond the writing self, not the key or the core to Waten's being and not the mere representation of experience; but also that this notion of the self in language has little to do with, say, John and Dorothy Colmer's understanding that deconstruction reveals to us that the self is an "imaginative construct"[6] (this is more properly a romantic "revelation"). To take as our grounding the psychoanalytic-linguistic premise that the self or subject is non-existent before the acquisition of language, thus that the individual is "wrought with alterity from the moment of his (sic) constitution as such,"[7] is to project a subjectivity that is not merely textual but rather inter-textual, inter-discursive. The effects of migration, for example, on self and on self-represenation will not be "outside" the sphere of the self in language.

The goal of my reading will not be the man-behind-the-work (or the man behind the

imaginative construct). Instead, to read for autobiography is to read across both fictional and non-fictional texts for inscriptions of the self, which may be concentrated or dispersed in character, anecdote, discourse and plot, or narrative sequence, perspective and voice. This process involves a redeployment of genre, not by transcending generic boundaries, as Paul Jay for example almost claims to be doing in reading fictional texts autobiographically,[8] but by recognising shifts in the nature of the reading contract which accompany shifts in our orientation to a particular text or group of texts. Philippe Lejeune's notion of the autobiographical contract has been subject to weighty criticism from deconstructive and feminist theorists,[9] but if his "all or nothing" conditions for autobiography are understood as properly relational his definitions—not of "autobiography" but of when and how it is possible to read autobiographically—are still useful for my purposes. To read Waten's fiction autobiographically is to find oneself negotiating each of the limit conditions which Lejeune suggests for the presence of autobiography: centrally, the assumed identity between author, narrator and protagonist. We become hypercritical of the genre boundaries—the genre *relations* rather—between fiction, autobiographical fiction, and autobiography as we shift between named and un-named, first- and third-person narrators.

Nancy K. Miller has suggested a process of "double reading" across both fiction and autobiography for female autobiographical writers such as Colette, and I want to draw further on feminist interpretations of autobiography below. Miller distinguishes her proposal for a double reading from earlier forms of "biographical `hermeneutics'" (which will tend to read all women's fiction as autobiography) and describes it instead as "an intratextual practice of interpretation which ... would privilege neither the autobiography nor the fiction but take the two writings together in their status as text." She cites as an example a reading of George Sand by Germaine Brée which focuses on a "matrix of fabulation" in the textual structuring of "problems of origin and identity" across different genres.[10] In similar fashion I hope in earlier chapters to have rescued *Alien Son*, and by extension other Waten texts, from a form of biographical hermenuetics which might read all migrant fiction as autobiographical; having done so I want now to return to these texts, to read across their generic boundaries, to read them within and against autobiographical models for their textual structuring of problems of identity.

The theory of autobiography has exceeded both its mimetic and its metaphysical definitions of the shaping or shaped self, in the mildly deconstructive work of Paul Jay for example or spectacularly in *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*.[11] But feminist theory has insisted on the further point that the autobiographical tradition as constructed in critical history, even in its more sceptical and deconstructive forms, is a masculine tradition: it has been gender blind. The point is not just that women have been "left out"—an omission that can readily be made good—but rather that the paradigms of selfhood and narrative design which function as normative in the western tradition are androcentric and thus work actively to exclude the different forms of self, life and writing characteristic for women's texts. Feminist critiques have focused on two related assumptions: first, "the assumption held by both author and reader that the life being written/read is an exemplary one" or the assumption of the "masculine representative self"[12]; second, "the assumption that autobiography is grounded in individualism and in individualism of a certain kind" in which "the concepts of singularity, autonomy, teleological design, unity, appropriation and achieved rhetorical ends are privileged."[13]

Diverse readings of women's autobiographies have analysed the ways in which, culturally and discursively, these texts do not participate in the dominant autobiographical forms, either through exclusion or self-exclusion; the analysis has proceeded in terms not of lack but of difference. Brodzki and Schenck, for example, make the difference in terms of representativeness:

> "No mirror of *her* era, the female autobiographer takes as a given that selfhood is mediated; her invisibility results from her lack of a tradition, her marginality in male-dominated culture, her fragmentation—social and political as well as psychic. At both extremes of *subjectivity* and *publicity*, the female autobiographer has lacked the sense of radical individuality..."[14]

Hooton focuses more on this last-mentioned issue of individuality, drawing on the psychoanalytic work of Nancy Chodorow and others concerning male and female development. The primary characteristic she identifies in distinguishing female autobiographies is their relative interest in *relatedness*.[15] Whereas male autobiographies, however ironically, tend to emphasise singularity and autonomy (or their failure) through the forms of their subject matter, structure or the speaking position they inscribe, female autobiographies emphasise the self as

relational, defined in terms of attachment, community, interaction (or their failure). A number of secondary characteristics discussed in Hooton's argument can be understood through this primary difference: a strong teleological design in male autobiographies contrasting with narrative structures which are relatively open-ended, episodic or discontinuous in female texts; a different sense of the past, as a stepping stone in the individual journey for the male ("a series of temporary lodgings, discarded as soon as the furnishings are worn out"[16]), against a sensuous cherishing of the past "for its own sake" for the female; a different narrating self, shifting readily and fluidly between positions in the female autobiography, self-consciously "obsessed with the gulf between the narrating and the narrational self"[17] in the male.

The differences between male and female autobiographical writings are relative, of course, and unstable over time and cultures and in terms of an individual's relation to language and cultural institutions. Although she does not state the point directly, Hooton's own examples suggest that female *literary* autobiographies, those by recognised authors, are closer to male forms in their sense of purposive design, while perhaps some male literary autobiographies are willing to risk a great deal in the sensuous evocation of the past. Nevertheless the differences are significant and not least because of the way they mark as gendered our reading of (and for) autobiography. The mainstream of theory does generate readings of female autobiographies but, as Hooton puts it, "the main impression is of lighting up odd corners of the text while huge areas remain in shadow."[18]

At one point in her argument Hooton paraphrases Domna Stanton to the effect that "the absence of women's autobiography from critical writing sorts oddly with the frequent claim or criticism that women's writing is more autobiographical than men's."[19] To some extent the point could also be made in terms of migrant/minority writing in its relation to majority forms. The "migrant" dimension of Waten's *Alien Son*, resonating between textual and circumtextual details (the author's proper name and biography on the cover plus artwork and publisher's notes), makes the autobiographical virtually an inevitable category of our reading; and not illegitimately, although, as I have argued, such readings have generally been reductive. By way of contrast, to read one of Waten's "non-migrant" works such as *Time of Conflict*, at least to do so with some

knowledge of the author's public career, requires a certain amount of refocusing, repositioning ourselves in relation to the autobiographical and our sense of its appropriateness as a reading frame. Our reading might well be governed by our sense of the text as indeed "non-migrant"—an appropriately awkward category. My task in part is to redeem these categories from "biographical hermeneutics" and allied forms of expressive realist criticism.

In a number of ways, furtively or over-insistently, the autobiographical is likely to be part of the structure of interpretation we bring to bear in our literary readings. This could be a general remark but I mean it to express the particular significance in Waten's case of his migrant, non-Anglo-Celtic and Jewish identifications within the dominant cultural economy. Waten's autobiographical texts, for example, reveal virtually nothing of what Richard Coe describes as the Australian myth in the genre of the "Childhood."[20] It is in this relation that I find feminist theorising of autobiography the most telling. The feminist critique of the autobiographical tradition can alert us not only to the gendered aspects of Waten's writing, but also to the ways in which his "ethnic" minority status—as migrant or non-Anglo or Jewish—might act to reproduce a speaking position and specific textual strategies parallel to those of female autobiography or at least, and in some ways more significantly, *outside* dominant masculine, Anglo-Australian forms.

More than one critic has made the connection between female and Jewish as marginal sites.[21] As Friedman writes:

> the emphasis on individualism [in the autobiographical canon] does not take into account the importance of a culturally imposed group identity for women and minorities. Second, the emphasis on separateness ignores the differences in socialization in the construction of male and female gender identity. From both an ideological and psychological perspective, in other words, individualistic paradigms of the self ignore the role of collective and relational identities in the individuation process of women and minorities.[22]

The previous chapter has indicated some reasons why we might be sceptical about too readily translating the model of marginality across different discursive realms. Yet the point is worth considering as a hypothesis against which Waten's work can be read: the hypothesis that Waten's different socialisation and different relation to language and cultural institutions will produce forms of self-representation different from the majority male and Anglo-Australian forms.

The biographical evidence might suggest points for and against this hypothesis: that we should not expect the positioning of a self altogether outside or opposed to dominant cultural forms (of ethnic, literary and masculine identity); but also that we should expect to find certain traces of a process of individuation and socialisation, including socialisation into masculinity, significantly different from the main/male stream. It might not be possible to predict or even to decide whether the migrant, the non-Anglo-Celtic or the Jewish dimension of these processes is the most important, nor whether there are other categories of under-privilege or marginalisation coming into play, but in this context as elsewhere reading for difference will be productive.

In reading across the broad range of Waten's fictional and non-fictional, Jewish/migrant and non-Jewish/migrant texts the following generalisations can be produced. Waten writes of *Jewish* childhoods and, for the most part, when he writes of *families* they are Jewish (or migrant) families; he writes no Jewish protagonist *of his own generation* beyond the years of childhood or early youth.[23] On the other hand, his three novels which might be termed *Bildungsroman—Time of Conflict*, *Season of Youth* and *Scenes of Revolutionary Life*—are centred around "Anglo-Australian" males, and span the course of years from early youth to maturity (and into old age in the case of the latter).

The unpublished manuscript material among Waten's papers reveals a similar pattern: numerous and sometimes lengthy attempts at stories of Jewish parents and children, especially from the earlier parts of Waten's writing career, together with numerous plans and sketches for a sequence of memoir pieces which begin with "youth" or with significant moments of separation and independence—in biographical terms, with Waten's period in the early 1920s at Christian Brothers' College, Perth; journeys to Sydney in the late twenties or Europe in the early thirties; or the return to Australia in 1933. As in the *Bildungsroman* fiction, the story of the formation of a writer and a communist is predominant although in a more attenuated form in the later memoirs as will be discussed below.[24]

The manuscript sketches do contain plans for memoirs covering the period of Waten's achievement as a mature writer and public political figure, but these were never completed. I suspect this is more than a question of mortality intervening, for even in *Scenes of Revolutionary*

Life, the story of a "completed" career, the period of the central character's active, mature writing life is passed over. It is the story of his passage through youth but stopping short of maturity, framed by the older (and sadder) perspective of post-retirement. The book ends with Tom Graves beginning to write the memoirs which, in third-person form, make up the large part of the actual novel.

What I want to suggest is that there are two distinct autobiographical narratives or scenes of autobiography in Waten's writings. In the case of writing which is more overtly autobiographical, the scene of childhood is likely to produce *fiction* while the story of (pre-)maturation and literary or political activity is more likely to produce a form of *memoir*. Despite their obvious continuity in Waten's own life the two narratives are not often aligned textually. Different speaking positions, different trajectories, and a different relation to self and to the past are inscribed. Situated on the dividing line are questions of Jewish and family identity.

2. Stories of Childhood

It is difficult not to share the general critical consensus, among amateur as well as professional readers, that Waten's most memorable writing is to be found in the stories of *Alien Son* and related matter, the "Jewish" parts of *The Unbending*, *Distant Land* and *Love and Rebellion*. It is more difficult to share the language in which this consensus is normally expressed. As I have indicated at a number of points throughout this thesis, critical evaluation has been articulated most often in orthodox expressive realist terms which privilege an empiricist sense of experience at the cost, it might be said, of a capacity to read other generic and rhetorical discourses. We need a new set of terms in order not only to deconstruct the hierarchies of this common sense criticism but also to revalue its valuations. Sheer experience will not explain anything, for as suggested above the large bulk of Waten's writing is based in one sense or another on his "experience."

To turn to a rather different framework from that elaborated in earlier chapters, part of an explanation might be found in psychoanalytic terms. It is less the intimate experience of a Jewish migrant childhood than the unresolved and unresolvable conflicts of the family drama

which make the Jewish stories memorable (and intimate). The writing—for this is my focus here—is structured around a matrix of relationships between father, mother and son which for the purposes of the present chapter I want to argue as significant in terms of *self-representation*.

There is little focus on the "inner life," on introspection or psychodrama, in *Alien Son* or the later works—we are a long way from Portnoy and "putting the id back in Yid."[25] Their mode turns instead on the realist categories of observation, dialogue and action. There is no explicit thematisation of a "writing cure," the notion that the process of composition is a recuperative or therapeutic one. Even the process of remembering is largely implicit; the texts are seldom overtly self-reflexive.[26] Nevertheless the short stories, in particular, demand to be read at each moment in terms not simply of event or setting but of perspective and relationship. Specifically, their structures can be plotted in the shifting triangulation of perspectives, of loyalties, sympathies and betrayals, within the nuclear family and in terms of its symbolic rather than actual relationships.

In this regard we might think of the place of the story "Mother" in relation to the rest of *Alien Son*. The primary relationship between mother and son (child and adult son) is singled out in this one story in the volume which is out of loose chronological sequence. "Mother" is significantly longer than any other story except for the first, "To a Country Town"; it is the only story which fixes on a single character and the only one to extend back into the past, before the moment of migration; and it is placed as the final story. Waten himself commented that it summed up the book: "Mother" can start the book, it can finish the book, it could be used separately, it could be taken right out of the book almost, because it sums up the book."[27]

Reading autobiographically, I think there is a sense in which the relationship between mother and son does indeed sum up the book:

> When I was a small boy I was often morbidly conscious of Mother's intent, searching eyes fixed on me. She would gaze for minutes on end without speaking one word. I was always disconcerted and would guiltily look down at the ground, anxiously turning over in my mind my day's activities.[28]

Alien Son can be understood in one dimension as an extended working out of this relationship of guilt and anxiety under the gaze of the Mother, which of course is a three-sided relationship

involving the Father as well. Perhaps "working out" sounds overly therapeutic; as a counter, we can see that the more or less ironically distanced adult narrating voice is at all times part of each relationship so that our triangle is in some sense rather a quadrilateral. Further, the ironic distance between narrator and protagonist is, in Lejeune's terms, a measure of the work's fictionality, although it is significant that here the distance is never absolute (the child and the parents are un-named, allowing for this ambivalence around the autobiographical).

The title *Alien Son* itself refers us not just to a history of non-Anglo migration but also to a position within a family and the two frames of reference need to be kept in play with each other. The self-consciousness I identified in Chapter 3 as defining the migrant experience also defines an experience of individuation. From the opening of the first story in the book—virtually the first story Waten thought worth publishing under his own name—the patterns of triangulation are set in motion:

> Father said we should have to leave the city. It was soon after we came to the new land that he had been told of a town where he was sure to make money if he opened a drapery shop.... The possession of money, he said, would compensate us for the trials of living in a strange land. He had ambitious plans and to have listened to him one might have believed that nature had cut him out to be a millionaire.
>
> But Mother said that he was a cripple when it came to the real job....
>
> "Talk, talk," she said.
>
> No, Mother wouldn't go into the wilderness; she wouldn't leave the coast. Ever since we had come to this country she had lived with her bags packed. This was no country for us. She saw nothing but sorrow ahead....
>
> Father roared and stamped out of the house, slamming each door as he strode down the long, dark passage. But soon he came back, his arms laden with fruit and other foodstuffs. His pale-blue eyes blinked innocently and his stiff, red moustache shook with good humour....
>
> He saw a little smile flutter on Mother's lips and then disappear into the creases round her mouth. Her sallow face was serious again and her dark-brown eyes troubled. For as long as I remembered she had always looked as if she expected nothing but sorrow and hardship from life. I somehow imagined that Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, must have looked just like my mother....(1-2)

In such passages we are placed in the position of observers but observers within the family (almost, within family lore). We might well recall those terrible and recurrent passages of conflict in *The Unbending*: "behind all the words lay the profound but carefully suppressed difference between husband and wife ... knowingly or unknowingly they were both fighting for the boy's soul."[29] Father and Mother are observed, not least in the process of observing each other. The capitalisation of their titles seems ever so slightly to magnify them into their *roles*,

into symbolic figures. It is almost impossible not to overstate the point, but there is nevertheless a significant difference between "Mother" and "my mother" in the passage just quoted. By contrast the presence of the son, the "I" of the stories' action as distinct from the narrating "I," is often only implicit, almost an absent space, as here until the final paragraph; yet he is present precisely in his relationship to the other two figures, in the shifting distances between them. The *self* is rarely the centre of interest in any of the ways that we might anticipate in an autobiography, but as narrating and narrated self it is also ubiquitous. There is a presence of sensibility or rather of *significance* in the most casual observation, and especially in the subtle ventriloquising of the mother's and father's responses. Autobiographies are often grouped according to their purported focus on the inner or the outer life, but the opposition seems to collapse in upon itself, to be beside the point, in the triangulated relationships of *Alien Son*.

Feminist theorising of women's autobiography has drawn out the links between the processes of individuation and socialisation for women and the identity politics of culturally marginalised groups: women in a patriarchal society, blacks in a white society, "Jews in a Christian society,"[30] and so on. Again there is a danger of producing a universal grammar of marginalisation which, for example, fails to acknowledge other sources of social and cultural capital (such as Jewish access to European high culture and political forms). Still, the points I have suggested already in relation to Waten's writings justify raising the question of the ways in which the "autobiographical" texts of this Russian-Jewish migrant in an Anglo-Celtic society might reproduce some of the textual forms of women's autobiographical writing. The question also involves the relationship between individuation and a collective or group identity: in what ways is the sense of self in Waten's texts inseparable from the sense of a collective identity or interdependence?

To return to the first story in *Alien Son*, "To a Country Town," the opening of which I have quoted above. The story begins with the child between the two parents, between their shifting identities: as Mother and Father, as individual and shared histories (their belongings piled on to a wagon "until it looked like a second-hand shop on wheels," Father's chest which contained "all the written history of the pair," 2-3), and as "generic" Jewish figures. There is a

burden of knowledge carried by the child-narrator figure, displaced for example onto the horses ("I think the horses must have been laughing at him on that journey," 4). The "I" is used explicitly only a few times in the opening five or so pages, until there is a marked shift of focus: "Early next morning I ran out into the street...," (6). The child runs out of the house to play with the Australian children of the neighbourhood. They laugh at his "foreign" buttoned-up shoes and white silk socks which he subsequently discards, ignoring his mother's calls not to go out into the street again.

The significant point I think in this first moment of individuation, this assertion of autonomy, is that it leads the child more deeply and self-consciously into his Jewishness, into a Jewish community. The boys' games lead them to an old bottle-o: "The boys mimicked him in a childish gibberish as he mumbled to his horse *in the only language I knew*" (7, my emphasis). Thus language, identity and community are drawn together; individuation produces a kind of guilt. When Hirsh looks closely at the child the narrator comments, "It was as though he had caught me out" (8). The child later deflects his disobediance towards his mother by introducing Hirsh, and the old man's appearance means, especially for the mother, the possibility of "a community" (8). Briefly, comically, poignantly, the community is established—even if Hirsh is the father of a thief, even if it includes a non-Jewish Russian and Mrs McDougall from next door! The explicit "I" scarcely appears again in the rest of the story. The self is dispersed throughout the pervasive irony of the narration and in the unresolved conflict between Mother and Father with which the story ends.

Much of what I have described in this story is characteristic of *Alien Son*. Although there is a relatively unambiguous "centred self" which can play the role of a reliable observer even when the child's own childishness is subject to irony, this self is also largely defined in terms of the shifting network of family and community relations rather than autonomously; better, relationship and autonomy are not posited as binarily opposed. The self is often decentred or dispersed, the focaliser rather than the focus of attention, and we might note the other-directed titles of companion stories: "Sisters," "Uncle Isaac," "Father's Horses," "Neighbours." This move into *character* is partly a product of the fiction but we might also see this fiction, the

fictionalisation, as itself a product of a certain mode of self-representation. Whatever shame, guilt or alienation these relationships imply, their presence is rendered not so much as a threat to autonomy or as a "form of the Other, against which the self must strive to define itself"[31] but as the "given environment," the space in which the self *is*.

These are approximate, ambiguous phrases. The point might be better expressed through contrasting the representation of self-in-relation here, to what we find in the childhood scenes of better-credentialled male autobiographical texts: Donald Horne's *The Education of Young Donald*, Hal Porter's *The Watcher on the Cast-Iron Balcony*, Bernard Smith's *The Boy Adeodatus* and, to add a work of fiction, George Johnston's *My Brother Jack*.[32] For all the detailed, sensuous evocation of childhood and family relations in these texts there is a curious sense that the child-self who would become author is in *this* family, at this time and place, only because of a sort of historical accident. However much they retrace influences or origins, the predominant sense is of these child protagonists as other beings. This impression can be understood, I think, in terms of Hooton's arguments about the strong teleology in male autobiographical writings, the stages passed through and left behind however ironical the grasp of present autonomy might be. Out of historical accident runs destiny.

Such characteristics are largely absent from Waten's writings about childhood. The child's alienation from the parents—from the law of the fathers—is seen more as generic and generational than a matter solely of individuation ("neither of us knew that there could be no reconciliation with the ways of our fathers," 132). Apart from this sense of inevitable alienation, *Alien Son* and the later stories of childhood carry little suggestion of individual destiny or the related search for origins. "Origins" are omnipresent—not anything to be recuperated or refused—and the journeys that recur do not cohere around the image of a life-journey. There is a *relational* sense of the self, a self plotted in terms of relationships rather than teleology, which recalls the patterns of women's autobiography. Thus the relative absence of the self, both child and adult, as a strongly motivated presence; the drama of self-revelation has virtually no place. Similarly the structure of the volume, in Waten's terms "a novel without architecture, a novel without a plot,"[33] recalls the descriptions of women's autobiographical texts as characteristically

discontinuous, episodic, circular (again, "Mother" as the final piece). Hooton's description of female autobiography as "halfway between `autobiography,' traditionally defined as a narrative in which attention is focused on the self, and `memoir,' a narrative in which attention is focused on others"[34] is not inappropriate for Waten's stories of childhood.

At the same time each of these points needs qualification. There is a stable rather than fluid relationship between the child character and the adult narrator, and perhaps this contains at least an implicit teleology. "Relatedness" is not strongly present as a positive value. The final three stories, before "Mother," can be read in part as stories of "male proving"[35] in which the "I" is more isolated and thrust into the world. In a sense these are also the least "Jewish" of the stories in *Alien Son*: "Black Girl," a story of racial and sexual exploitation which ends with a guilty return home ("I ran, my heart heavy with guilty secrets," 143); "Near the Wharves," a slightly less than heroic introduction to political and economic exploitation ("All my mother's dread of police asserted itself in me and I felt as if I had committed a crime," 153); and "Making a Living," another introduction to an unjust, exploitative society:

> When I reached the bottom of the hill near our house I stopped by a tree and watched the horse nibble happily at the dry brown leaves on the ground. I couldn't face my mother just yet. I had suddenly become afraid of her intent searching eyes, her bitter words. Something had happened to me this day that would want thinking out. For the first time I had stepped out into the world and I had touched with my own hands the hard kernel of life, getting a living. (167)

Each story involves a step in a slightly different direction beyond the family, but each step towards autonomy also means a guilty return home, to a home defined by the Mother's presence and defined as Jewish and Yiddish.

At least in this relation to the mother, Waten's writings might seem largely inside the description of Australian male autobiography proposed by Don Anderson:

> [The male heroes] are sensitive (if at times aggressively insensitive), literate, and isolated youths (yes, male!). All feel guilt with respect to their mothers, aggression to their fathers, and ignore their siblings. All lose some form of faith. All choose some form of flight, from family or country.[36]

But this description is more useful for throwing Waten's writings into relief: *Alien Son* is not a portrait of the artist as a young man (Joyce is indeed Anderson's point of reference). The child's sensitivity here is not to those aspects of the natural or social world that intimate the aesthetic, but to Mother and Father and social interaction. There is, perhaps surprisingly, no closed world

of faith from which to flee—only a tenuous and porous community which is shown to be in transition from the book's opening sentence. (I find it difficult to know even what text Richard Coe is reading when he writes that for Waten "it was the escape from the narrowness of his Russian-Jewish family milieu which appealed to him [about school life] most of all."[37]) In *Alien Son* there is only the vaguest prefiguring of flight from family and country, although significantly this becomes the pivotal moment for the autobiographical memoirs that I will discuss below. In the short stories the movement is, as it were, to gather in the "untold" stories about the (family/community) past and so to multiply them, not to escape or fix them or to write them down and out in "self-defence" as Anderson's case studies suggest.

The relation of child to parents is also different, although Waten, like Porter and Horne, downplays the role of siblings. In *Alien Son* the guilt attending the maternal relationship has little to do with the rejection of mothering/caring bonds, or with the differentiation of and into masculinity, which underscores the autobiographal trajectory in Horne, Johnston or Porter. The Mother in Waten's fiction, in the novels as well as the stories, is less the care-giver than the bearer of ethical and cultural ideals, and not so much in the traditional female role of custodian of community values, although there is something of this, as the guide to ethical formation and a *career*. Interestingly, she is shown as refusing gender privilege for the male child in terms of this thrusting into the world.[38]

In Freudian terms, we might say that in these stories the Mother represents the super-ego. The Father, by contrast, represents something more like a pleasure principle than the bearer of law: his actions in the latter role are shown as arbitrary especially in relation to the Mother's formidable "certainty in herself" (168). He is scarcely found in the position of either role model or competitor: if anything he is more likely to be represented as a threat to individuation, with his fluid and absorptive personality. I find it interesting that twice in interviews Waten mentions the character of the weak father in *The Unbending* as "one of the best things [he has] done" in fiction.[39] Here the father is allowed his full potency and seductive weakness while finally being mastered by the over-arching power of the narrative.

This division of roles between mother and father might be merely a "biographical

accident," based on the personalities of Waten's actual parents. But of significance to my present argument is the persistence and repetition of this division of roles over numerous fictional and non-fictional texts, and especially in the works of fiction. There is a complex of meanings attached to Mother, home, Jewishness and the Yiddish language, meanings which attach each to the other. Yiddish is the "mother tongue": the mother refuses to speak English while the father is eager to learn the new language outside the home. This can be seen as the son's project too and yet the mother, as just suggested, is the dominant ethical presence and the figure who will push the child into the world, inevitably at the cost of her own intimacy with them. She does not believe in birthdays, and we could almost say she does not believe in childhood. The father, by contrast, "did not hesitate to make friends with children as soon as they were able to talk to him and laugh at his stories" (169).

Whatever the actual parallels, and biographical research suggests they are strong, the point is that this reiterated matrix of relationships, the matrix of symbolic relationships, becomes for Waten the primary locus of self-representation—or more precisely, self-representation as a Jewish/migrant child.[40] Thus self-representation cannot be understood apart from a collective identity, not least *because of* the child-narrator's ambiguous relationship to that collectivity. It is thus never just a question of individual ego formation. The burden of guilt towards the mother is in significant part the guilt of the child who has been the primary reason for migration but whose individual life can never compensate for the loss of identity and meaning in the parents' lives.

For Waten, as I have emphasised, this anxiety is directed primarily towards the mother. Its excessive and unresolvable meanings produce the necessary "supplementary" story of *Alien Son*: the extended, sympathetic, but also partly resistant, elaboration of the meaning of the mother's life in "Mother." It might be objected that the interpretations of Waten's stories I have offered describe significant fictional effects but nothing more. The implied opposition between fiction and autobiography in such an observation is a misleading one however. The effects are indeed wholly fictional. To say this is not to dispel their autobiographical significance but rather to locate it, to make it visible. The protocols of reading for autobiography will have their own inflection, towards self-presentation, but there will be no more guarantee of their viability than

for our "fictional" readings, no more guarantee we might say than their ability to make the texts readable, to multiply their readability.

Of course we do identify differences through genre or rather we identify genres through difference. The choice between fiction or memoir will be a significant one even when characters and episodes or formal qualities coincide. Let me turn, then, to two non-fictional autobiographical texts focussed on Waten's childhood: "Odessa, My Birthplace," Chapter 1 of *From Odessa to Odessa* (1969) and "My Literary Education," a memoir piece first published in the *Bulletin* in 1981. Three pieces from *Love and Rebellion*—"Born in Odessa," "A Child of Wars and Revolutions," and "Read Politics, Son"—tell similar stories.

Both texts are portraits of the artist as a young man although this trajectory is displaced to some degree: in "Odessa" by family stories about Odessa and Odessan literature or Russia and Russian politics; in "My Literary Education" by a series of apparently inconsequential episodes only marginally connected with the protagonist's literary development. The latter piece in particular proceeds by a logic of digression, not through a sequence of events, as it were, but a series of stories. As we should expect, the autobiographical "I" is more prominent than in the short fiction—present from the first sentence—but as memoirs neither piece is markedly *self*-centred or self-dramatising. The self is apprehended in a series of stories in which the narrator-character might or might not be the central actor. In "Odessa," for example, the sequence goes something like this: the parents' reasons for leaving Odessa; family/community response to the Russian revolution; my first introduction to Labour politics; school and Irish politics; Mother's memories of Odessa and its writers and musicians; Mother's Odessa versus Father's Odessa; Odessan "folklore"; writing as an "Odessan aspiration."

We might recall once again the contrast between Waten's autobiographical writings and those of Horne, Porter and Smith. Even when these become portraits of mothers, fathers or grandparents we find that distinctive relationship to the past and the past self described above: the child self as another being (they are in fact likely to use the third person); and family and place as historical accidents out of which in the process of writing the destined "self-motivating" self emerges. To quote Hooton, paraphrasing others:

> Reviewing the past from his present achieved status, the male narrator selectively reconstructs it so that ... "it seems to have planned him, or better, he seems to have planned *it*," thus making himself the proprietor or creator of his history. Lejeune describes the final object of every autobiographical search to be the impossible search for origins; the autobiographer penetrates the past in the hope of uncovering the mystery of his beginning. If it is a vain hope or a false certainty, male heroes are nonetheless preoccupied with the should-be story, with its beginning, middle and end.[41]

This description anticipates sceptical, ironic or de-centred versions of the autobiographical self but contains them within its primary schema. The same patterns are undoubtedly present in Waten's texts but—and this is the point—in a weak or dispersed or inconsequential form. As the author-narrator figure there is clearly a sense in which he becomes proprietor or creator of his own history; and yet this history often comes in the form of other people's stories (one of the ways Waten recalls his parents in interview is through the different kind of stories they told[42]). There is little concept of "history" as a form of Other against which the self is defined, and despite the pervasive theme of generational alienation from parents and community there is a stronger sense of the self as "continuous with the past," in Hooton's phrase characterising women's autobiography[43]—at least in the stories of childhood.

Comparison with Joyce and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is instructive. Paul Jay uses Wordsworth and Joyce as exemplary figures in the evolution of "literary self-representation": from Wordsworth's desire to represent the past "as it was," a process disturbed by the implicit but repressed "realisation that the textual `I' is always partly a fictive Other," to Joyce's "willful" fictionalising of his subject "as, *a priori*, a masked Other."[44] *Alien Son* is modern in this sense, in that, like *Portrait of the Artist*, self-representation depends upon fictionality; the "irony inherent in self-representation is never treated as a `problem'...: it becomes, rather, a central element informing its method."[45] Joyce's method, though, is part of an autobiographical-aesthetic project of "self-making," not a return to the past, but a process of breaking from it and forging a new self (as artist). Although *Alien Son* might also be considered a "beginning text" in Said's terms, a narrative written to forge the beginning of a career,[46] Waten's realist method suggests something rather different in which the "making" is implicit—as indeed is the self. The theme and strategies of self-making are absent in Waten's texts, and there is little sense of the self "uprooting ... traditional foundations" or of a past that has to be

overcome.[47] On the other hand, the search for origins or recovery of an original identity might appear to be the primary motivation in Waten's retelling of family (and Jewish) lore, yet again the phrase only seems half right. There is little investment in "the mystery of beginning," a search or even a return; the past, as self or context, is not a problem to be conquered, solved or forged so much as a series of *stories to be re-told*.

Even in the two memoir pieces, where the structure of beginning, middle and end can be discerned more clearly than in the fiction, this structure emerges only through a seemingly digressive sequence of embedded stories. In "My Literary Education"—later re-titled "A Writer's Youth: A Memoir"—the author's literary destiny does not emerge out of a search for the origins of the self's creativity. As suggested, the text is closer to memoir than autobiography in its representation of self and others, and it is structured as a series of episodes describing relationships or meetings with other people: communal readings of Sholem Aleichem, Mother's Tolstoyan enthusiasms, an old guest house keeper, Katharine Prichard, Molly Skinner, the Christian Brothers, fellow prisoners, a drunken poet. The connecting "I" figure, though often comic, is characteristically low-key and "under"-dramatised, passive or absorptive rather than self-motivating or assertive, although the process of discovering writers begins to change this presence (most forcefully as the youth defends Oscar Wilde).

The narrative ends with Waten's attempt at his "first serious novel"[48] which is comically presented as inauthentic or at least as a flawed realisation of authentic aspirations. The Mother's presence is still felt through the influence of Tolstoy's "The Kreutzer Sonata" in this would-be revolutionary novel! The end of the narrative appears to mark the end of youth (as originally published the final sentence read "I was then 18"); and within the story the family's move from Western Australia to Melbourne marks the end of childhood. We can begin to see the dividing line between the narrative of childhood and the narrative of the career which, as suggested above, marks the body of Waten's autobiographical writings. Despite the sense of continuity with the past which Waten's narrators of childhood express, the shadow-line between childhood and youth marks the beginning of a separate narrative and autobiographical trajectory.

3. A Career in Writing and a Conclusion

Waten's career as a writer can be located at two extremes, on the one hand intimate stories of the family drama and on the other large-scale attempts to write the history of an era. The latter as we have seen in Chapter 6 can produce an ambitious novel such as *Time of Conflict*, and there is a related impulse at work in *The Unbending* which is divided precisely between the two extremes just suggested. We can also mention the migrant saga traced across three generations in *Distant Land* and taken a further step in *So Far No Further*; the formation of a writer for our era, in *Season of Youth*; *From Odessa to Odessa* which, beyond its status as a "travel autobiography," projects the Soviet Union as the *place* of our era; and Waten's popular history of the 1930s, *The Depression Years: 1929-1939* (perhaps the decade of our era).[49] Finally there is *Scenes of Revolutionary Life* which can be taken as the history of the revolutionary mind in Australia which Waten had foreshadowed a decade before the novel was eventually published.[50]

The two extremes, though, might not be as polarised as first appears. In a number of these texts we find Waten exploring in fiction the notion he expressed in an interview in mid-career, that "in the 20th century ... the Jewish migrant has been the symbol of the oppressed, and of the migratory person."[51] The shift of perspective or magnification can operate in either direction: outwards to the larger narrative structures such as in *Distant Land* or inwards to the short stories such that the family in all its relationships seems soaked in history. On the larger scale, however, the Jewish and family history is generally left behind or displaced. *Time of Conflict*, *Season of Youth* and *Scenes of Revolutionary Life* can each be related to the *Bildungsroman* structure, as suggested, and for similar reasons each has an Anglo-Australian protagonist. The hero in each case is an exemplary figure, and evidently perceived as bearing an exemplary burden or scope that could not be borne by any minority figure: to paraphrase Brodzki and Schenck, he is the masculine representative hero, the mirror of his era.

What happens to families in these narratives? *Time of Conflict*, as I have argued, gives the family a conventional role in the *Bildungsroman* structure and in a class and historical narrative. In its sentimental climax the novel resolves its two trajectories, the necessary move beyond family and the return home and reconciliation. In *Season of Youth*—with its classic

Bildungsroman title—the situation is a little more complicated, less easily resolved, although generic resemblances to the earlier novel can be traced. The mother is again a sentimental figure, but here her virtues are shabby genteel. The father, another disappointed returned Anzac, is a weak, brutal, self-pitying, self-deluding man. The novel's plot is initiated by his accusation that the second son, Dan, is not his but was conceived during his absence at the war. This is a fallen (and urban) world.

The question of illegitimacy echoes throughout *Season of Youth*. There are three sons: the narrator, the eldest, who leads a dissolute life but whose aspirations to be a writer begin to take shape over the course of the novel; Dan, "Dapper Dan the Bastard," who becomes relatively wealthy and successful but on the shady—illegitimate—side of the law, and who seems to be the most sentimental towards his mother; and Peter, the youngest, whose aspirations are petit-bourgeois and whose gifts are for social climbing. Part One of the novel ends, as we might expect generically, with the narrator's violent departure from the family home, in this case because his father, with some reason and with strict thematic logic, accuses him of being a "wife stealer." Dan and Peter vie for favouritism and at least in the family circle act like model sons. But the end of the novel, after the mother's death, finds the narrator moving back in with his father as the other two sons clear out. We can scarcely speak of reconciliation, for nothing much has changed in the relation between father and son (the last words from the narrator are "He [the father] would be what he was for the rest of his life," 200). There is no return here to a simpler rural/maternal scene, but symbolically the legitimate son has been identified. The novel's epigraph from Byron announces the theme: "A Strange doom is thy father's son's."

The *Bildungsroman* (or *Künstlerroman*) plot of *Season of Youth* concerns the formation of the writer. The novel's first sentence makes this clear—"Even as a young boy I wanted to be a writer"—and, in terms of the fiction, the novel we have must stand as testimony to the success of this project (as it must also stand for authorial legitimacy). Thus there is a second test of legitimation worked out in the narrative, that of identifying the legitimate writer. In predictable ways true literature is grasped as a matter of "experience" and truth to life, which connects it to the story of maturation (and masculinity, for the arty set tend to be "dandies"). The span of the

novel is precisely that of the *Bildungsroman*, from the end of childhood to the beginning of maturity and in particular here to the first signs of maturity as a writer. There are helpers and opponents along the way: Kate in the first category who instructs the narrator in the moral significance of literature ("It inspired mankind to struggle against evil ... [if] full-blooded and full-bodied," 88) or Wilson who introduces him to Tolstoy; Alistair Briggs in the second ("a great poem or novel or short story provided a pure aesthetic experience," 131). Alistair is talented, handsome, educated and already a published poet who does not like being reminded of his occupation as a journalist. His aestheticism is connected with self-regarding, self-indulgent characteristics; more interesting he is connected to Dapper Dan the Bastard who punches him on the nose!

> He was a terrible mess this handsome Alistair, and I felt sorry for him for the first time. He was the victim of someone like himself, another king-hit merchant but more efficient. They were two bastards who enjoyed hurting others, I thought as I made for the tram. (164)

The narrator turns from the arty set at this point (the end of Part Three) and starts to write and to *read* seriously. If "experience" is privileged it is so only in a dialectic relationship with "literature" itself. The novel is punctuated with accounts of the narrator's reading. There is also emphasis on the need for "craft" (170). The prefigured synthesis is, as the narrator comments on his own aspirations, "as much a moral matter as literary" (169). Through a range of embedded self-situating episodes, the moral is distinguished from moralism, the aesthetic from mere aestheticism.

The significant point for the present study is the way that writing is linked into the family drama through the double story of legitimation, which is reinforced in a number of ways throughout the narrative and not least by the use of a first-person narrator. One of the narrator's first intimations of a desire to write comes from his mother's frustrated desire to communicate her plight to *Truth* (of course!): "In my head I used to make up imaginary letters for her; she would have been shocked if I'd told her about them. They were mostly about father.... Out of this imaginary letter writing came a desire to write a book, about the same subject, *mother's sorrows*" (15, my emphasis). At the end of the novel, in ways that parallel Waten's own account of his "second" literary career, the narrator has "given up writing anecdotal stories" and is

instead "drawing from personal experiences ... from the life of my family and myself" (198). This follows shortly after the death of his mother, for which he turns up drunk and dishevelled, and after his move back home to his father. Again there are autobiographical parallels: Waten's mother's death and his own "irresponsible" behaviour is one scene that is written up into (fragmentary) narrative form in the unpublished material. Indeed one manuscript, beside an account of the mother's death, includes the marginal note: "The more I think of myself, my personality even repels me—why I have never written my memoirs. I would never write my memoirs."[52] Of course,this comment comes in the midst of the activity of writing "memoirs."

To return to the fiction and to draw these points together: the realist orthodoxy concerning the moral burden of literature, I want to suggest, contains the further meaning that "serious" writing involves not only taking responsibility for oneself but also symbolically for one's parents and thus for oneself as *son* (the symbolic burden might well not work in this way for daughters). In *Season of Youth* the father-son relationship is roughly resolved as a kind of manageable hostility; the mother-son relationship, on the other hand, remains unresolved and is for the narrator largely a matter of *remorse*, the word that recurs surprisingly often in Waten's accounts of the impulse to writing.

In both *Time of Conflict* and *Season of Youth* the representation of the family is conventionally governed by plot function and the *Bildungsroman* structure, notwithstanding the "excessive" characteristics attached to the family relationships in the latter novel (excessive, that is, in relation to the narrative of a writing career). Episodes in both novels can be linked through biographical research to events in Waten's own life but both resist autobiographical readings, most obviously in their choice of narrators and their overtly conventional generic fictional structures. We might even suspect some over-protestation in the author's note which guards the entrance to *Season of Youth*: "This novel is not autobiographical nor are the characters portraits of living people. The `I' is a necessary device for the telling of these pages." By contrast *Scenes of Revolutionary Life* approaches the form of the memoir, or at least a thick slice of memoir between two very thin slices of fiction (the first 8 pages and the final 9, in the form of an Epilogue, are in the novel's present, the mid-1970s; the pages in between cover the years 1927-

1933). This is despite Waten's choice of another Anglo-Australian narrator and protagonist, Tom Graves. As remarked earlier, the novel ends with Tom about to write his own memoirs.

What distinguishes *Scenes of Revolutionary Life* from the earlier two novels is its relative plotlessness. It is perhaps as much picaresque as *Bildungsroman* although Tom Graves is an unlikely picaro—too earnest, rather ineffective, easily embarrassed and prone (also) to remorse. Apart from its opening and closing frame the structure of the novel is episodic, and although he sees a great deal of life in the Communist Party and unemployed movements in Australia and England, including the inside of Wormwood Scrubs, it is not clear that Tom's character changes a great deal through his experience. His indulgent and protective parents fade out of the picture when he leaves Australia and although their indulgence creates an oppressive, guilty burden for Tom, this does not provide the materials for any final resolution. The true vocation turns out to be rather low-key as well: revolutionary and literary ambitions resolve themselves into steady employment as the editor of trade union journals. But the novel wants to insist that this is a successful life, regardless of lingering regrets or aspirations left unfulfilled. A successful revolutionary life might after all involve quiet, patient, even tedious work—like the slow workings out of world historical forces or perhaps, on a different scale, like the writing life.

Even taking full account of the novel's claims to fiction there is undoubtedly a sense in which we can read the narrative as a version of Waten's own memoirs. At this stage of Waten's career, with that career firmly established as public knowledge and public property, it is virtually inevitable that such a narrative—a retrospective account of a communist and literary life—be read autobiographically, at least for local readerships. Its deflections into fiction will themselves be read autobiographically. The reviews bear this out.[53] Moreover the context of the public writing career will also define the occasion of the text's *writing*: the career in the public domain is a crucial "pre-text," a necessary pre-condition for such a narrative to be significant. The text is entered into the discourse about the career both by the author and his readers, and I think there is an important sense in which this is particularly the case for Waten. Because of the conjunction of his migrant, Jewish and communist identifications, and because of the way Waten himself located these identifications inside discourses about Australian identity, he was a writer and

public figure peculiarly taken as embodying the significance of his own published works. The slide between work and man in Tony Morphett's introduction to an ABC television interview is characteristic: "Waten's subject matter is in the area traced by three lines: he's an emigrant, he's a Communist, he's a Jew."[54]

Waten's own public activities in writing and speaking were complicit in this identification of self and work despite his own repeated insistence on the fictionality of his fiction: it is part of the context against which this fictionality—or the claim to artistic significance—is defined in the work. Across the genres of fiction, memoir and interview we find certain stories or, better, certain scenes of stories returned to repeatedly, by interviewers and editors as much as by Waten himself. It is as if these stories have an inexhaustable iterability for Waten and his audiences (just as Waten himself becomes almost irresistibly interviewable) in ways that are in excess of his strictly literary reputation.

Although Waten's interviews, public talks and writings cover a wide range of subjects and periods, for the present the point I want to pursue is the "disproportionate" degree to which they concentrate on the period from childhood to the early mature writing career: at least it is in this period that events, memories and opinions are likely to turn themselves into *stories*, again whether in fiction, memoirs or interviews. To mention one brief example: in his Author's Statement in the special issue of *Australian Literary Studies* on the short story, one moment expands into a story-telling (and autobiographical) occasion in its own right:

> At different stages in my life different books and stories have been important to me but all these books have remained with me right up to this time.
> When I was very young I heard many stories read aloud in Yiddish but the story which moved me most was a story by the great Yiddish comic writer Sholem Aleichem, called "The Pair," about a rooster and a hen. They were tied up and sold at a market. The pair passed from a "savage in a fur cap" to a "fat woman in a Turkish shawl," who fattens the pair for the Passover. There was nothing in the world to which God's creatures couldn't become accustomed. The pair had grown so used to their troubles that they now thought things were as they should be, just like the proverbial worm that made its home in the horseradish and thought it sweet. But when the passover approached the pair began to understand the cold, bare truth and to comprehend everything they were seeing and hearing. One thing only they could not fathom. Why had the Turkish shawl boasted that God would reward her for fattening such a pair for Passover? Was that what their God wanted?
> This tragi-comic parable undoubtedly affected my stories which were only to appear many decades afterwards.[55]

When we move beyond stories of childhood the recurrent scenes are those of a precocious

youthful public life defined by political and literary aspirations, although as often as not narrated via accounts of obstructions to or deflections from these aspirations. It is a story of "pre-maturity" in two senses: precocious "success" and prolonged "failure."

Scenes of Revolutionary Life is full of tantalising detail for the historian or potential biographer, including a direct transcription of part of the only surviving excerpt of Waten's unpublished novel *Hunger*. But rather than pursuing biographical leads I want to focus on the question of why these post-childhood stories tend towards the form of the memoir and why they take the particular memoir form they do. The point is not the obvious one that Waten draws on incidents from his own life, but rather that he draws these into the perspectives and structures of the memoir.

Mortality might be one explanation, producing that familiar mode of retrospection towards the end of a public career: the literary memoir in which the scattered incidents of a literary life are corralled together and embodied in the writer who writes. In conventional generic terms, the more the focus is on "things I have done or witnessed and people I have met" rather than on the question of "who I am," the more we will think in terms of memoir rather than autobiography (although as Hooton as shown, this is a gendered distinction). We might also expect the relationship between past and present selves to be less fraught, less at issue, in the memoir; we might expect the narrating voice to be relatively secure in its retrospection. But of course mortality or the sense of a career winding down will not provide a detailed or sufficient explanation for specific generic choices.

It will not, for example, indicate why Jewishness virtually disappears as an issue or reference point in Waten's post-childhood autobiographical narratives or why these narratives cluster around a decade or so in Waten's life, from the late 1920s. The large middle of *Scenes of Revolutionary Life* begins with the early years of Tom Graves as a publicly active communist and aspiring writer from 1927—aged 17—and then follows his political and "literary" activities in Melbourne and Sydney, his departure for Europe, and his involvement with the Communist Party, left-wing journalism, and then imprisonment because of activities in the radical unemployed movement in London. His romantic relationship with Maggie Carlton is described

within the same time span. The section ends with his departure from London to return to Australia in the early 1930s with political experience but self-doubt and disappointment in literary and sexual affairs. What is curious is the lack of interest the novel shows in the continuities between this youthful life (roughly to age 23) and the older figure who has just resigned from active public life. The reader has to accept the process of development on faith. There are plenty of memories but little interest in the story of maturation, hence, in part, the relative desultoriness of the novel's construction. The theme of the validation of a communist life is surprisingly low key in its structuring presence.

Waten's papers reveal that the story of the mature active life was planned as Part 2 of a three-part novel in which Tom was to have become a novelist as well as an editor and which took the story through the cold war period to 1968 (Part 3 was to cover the 1970s).[56] On the one hand we can imagine that the story simply got too large; on the other, this inclusive narrative, this history of our era, seems more than once to have been deflected or deferred. At the same time as *Scenes of Revolutionary Life* was being written (and this appears to have been a long process going back at least until 1978[57]), and then after its publication, Waten's energies were directed into shorter, episodic memoir pieces: "My Literary Education" published in 1981, "With Uncle Jacob and Aunt Malka in Paris" (1983), "Why I Came Home—Naked—Fifty Years Ago" (1984) and "Memories of Radical Melbourne" (1985). These pieces cover much the same period as the novel: early communism and the writing of *Hunger* (1929), the trip to Europe (1931), the departure from England and the return home (1933). Manuscripts among Waten's papers indicate that this sequence was also planned to continue through to the present;[58] but we can at least say that again Waten's interest was *first* drawn to the stories of this period between childhood and the mature career, that he *returned* to these scenes before turning to anything later, for non-fiction as well as fictional writing. The only published autobiographical work "about" the later period is *From Odessa to Odessa* with its contemporary intervention in a political debate.

My earlier arguments suggested that Waten's stories of childhood produce memorable fiction in part because of the symbolic family drama they inscribe, at once Jewish, migrant and

Oedipal. Their fictional form expresses a pattern of internal resonances and repetitions, a circular or imbrecated rather than linear construction. There is a clear contrast with the strongly linear and teleological forms of *Time of Conflict* and *Season of Youth* where the family drama is largely subordinate to each text's self-contained argument. In the later memoir pieces we are on different ground again. In the memoir form the logic is once more linear but also episodic and, for Waten at least, only weakly teleological. The form is metonymic rather than metaphoric and reading always involves the presence of a contiguous external frame of reference that is a more or less public history.

In a review of Australian "memoirs from the left" I have described the distinctive relation of self to history in the sub-genre of the communist (or ex-communist) memoir.[59] Rather than the story of a prominent public life or career which shows the autonomous individual witnessing and acting in great historical scenes these memoirs are motivated to tell an obscure history that will otherwise not get told: the story of ordinary men and women caught up in the great historical movements of their era. Perhaps most distinctive is their subjects' sense of having lived for a time not just in the midst but *on the side* of history. This is expressed in a shared historical trajectory arcing from the Depression to the cold war which remains remarkably intact even as individuals join and then leave at different moments. The texts become memoirs rather than autobiographies, to make use of the conventional distinction, because of their characteristic mix of anecdotal modesty about the self combined with an epochal historical scope. Dorothy Hewett's *Wild Card* stands to one side of this group of texts in so far as it gives the "autobiographised" self a different prominence and thus a different historical trajectory.[60]

We might expect Waten's memoirs to be exemplary of the communist memoir. But here as elsewhere our expectations are at best only half fulfilled. The course of history which structures the narratives mentioned above, from crisis to crisis (from the Depression to the cold war and Party disintegration), is perhaps implied or foreshadowed in Waten's texts, in his stories of unemployed battles, political imprisonment and censorship, or the struggle to be a communist writer. At least there is nothing to contradict this history. But the strong teleology of the

communist memoirs, which they continue to express even as personal goals are untangled from Party goals, is, again surprisingly, largely absent from Waten's memoirs. Indeed the goal suggested by Waten's own sketched-out plans for his sequence of memoirs—the validation of a communist life, the life of a communist man of letters, "the revolutionary mind in a tranquil country like Australia"[61]—even this has only a weak, implicit or deferred presence in the published memoir pieces.

It is important to recall that Waten's actual "biography" as a communist is an unusual one extending both before and after the more familiar pattern in that it precedes the Depression and survives the cold war. The "long historical perspective" which I have analysed in earlier chapters is one that Waten could find exemplified in his own life: he defines his own accession to revolutionary ideas as an almost inevitable product of childhood and youth ("A Child of Wars and Revolutions" as he puts it) and this might be contrasted to the revolutionary *moment*, the sudden accession of historical and political consciousness, which tends to mark other communist memoirs.

In very general terms the reason why Waten turns to memoirs, why we might say even his fiction turns to memoirs, is the same as that noted for these other texts: the sense of the self not so much in command of history as in the stream of history, a history conceived as the movement of mass social or "world-historical" forces. But within this vast historical shell, as it were, Waten's memoirs are remarkably domestic or "incidental." If we are to read the life as exemplary it will only be via detours and disruptions along the way. "My Literary Education" has a purposive thread as indicated by its title but just as striking, as suggested earlier, is its apparently digressive and substitutive movement through a sequence of self-contained incidents related as embedded stories. The structure might be represented as follows, with the embedded stories suggested in italics: Sholem Aleichem—*parents/community reading*—Chekhov and Tolstoy—*mother's attitude*—English reading, Shakespeare, cowboys, Australian poetry—*guest house visit, "love" for Beryl*—"meeting" writers (Prichard, Skinner)—*father as bottle-o*—Christian brothers, Thompson, Dickens, Hugo, Poe, Conan Doyle—*response to "novels of virtue"*—Shaw, European classics, Marx—*in prison*—Jack London, Oscar Wilde—*stowing*

away—encounter with drunken old poet—the writing of a first serious novel.[62] The conclusion itself is ambiguous: the novel the youthful narrator writes yokes together just about everything of the experiences and the reading of this youthful life so far but, the story suggests, in a way that leaves just about everything still to be understood.

The next piece, "With Uncle Jacob and Auntie Malka in Paris," is explicitly about a digression: the story begins "On my way to London in 1931 I broke my journey in Toulon to catch a train to Paris to see my aunts, my father's sisters, Malka and Hannah who lived there" (all the memoirs date themselves internally as this does). The literary and political ambitions of our narrator are as it were put on hold for this journey "back" into family history and into a Jewish world. His Aunt calls Judah by his Russian-Jewish diminutive, Yudka, and her eyes start to glaze over when he talks of his "miniscule literary achievements" (126). Elsie, the narrator's girlfriend, makes a brief appearance but the story is largely given over to the eccentricities of Jacob and Malka although the tragic history of Nazism shades the narrative as well. Although self-contained, the text reads (as it must) like a fragment of something larger—both a larger text and a larger history outside the text; it has a characteristically "weak," though poignant, resolution: "`You must come again Yudka ... Travel as much as you can. See new things. The time might be short for all of us'" (139).

"Why I Came Home..." begins with arguments about the politics of the narrator's decision to leave England to return to Australia and its conclusion is focussed on the seizure of his political books and leaflets in Fremantle. The middle part of the story comprises observations and incidents on the journey back home. The comedy of the latter is as much the point of the narrative as the politics of the former; indeed for all the stress this "returning home naked" (73) causes, it too is rendered comically. The narrative connections throughout are anecdotal and incidental rather than, say, argumentative or even substitutive. The same could be said of "Memories of Radical Melbourne" although it has a more extended account of a single scene: a party for the painter Noel Counihan (their first meeting). The narrative proceeds by snatches of dialogue, brief incidents, and passing reflections on past or future reputations, and, as published,[63] it is framed by the narrator's awkward reconciliation with Elsie ("we had made up,

until the next time").

The pressures of history and of memory (and maturation) in each text with such a narrative structure are relaxed and expansive; *hence*, in part, the episodic memoir form. To paraphrase Waten's own description of *Alien Son*, perhaps we could call these memoirs an "autobiography without architecture." We might also recall Hooton's description, which I introduced in the discussion of *Alien Son*, of women's autobiography as a form without a name half way between autobiography and memoir as conventionally distinguished, although here we are approaching from the memoir side of the ledger. Waten's texts are at one level stories of masculine maturation, as their concentration in the period between childhood and maturity suggests. In an interview he described this period, from the late 1920s to the early 1930s, as one of his "favourite periods": "that's when I was emerging as a man, as it were, growing into manhood, for want of a better term, and when I had a great number of experiences."[64] What is surprising, though, is how "under-thematised," how diffuse, this *Bildungsroman* structure is in the published narratives although we might note that even in the quotation above Waten almost seems to be speaking someone else's language). It is seldom more than implicit within the individual text, and perhaps only through the inscription of the figure—or voice—of the publicly known mature writer in the "present" (for of course these texts are not simply about the past career). The structure of apprencticeship is even less evident here than in *Scenes of Revolutionary Life*.

Instead there is a strong sense of stories told "for their own sake" even when the episodes related are interesting less because of what happens than because of who is speaking. The position of retrospection is much more clearly marked than in *Alien Son*, but as in the short stories a great deal of the narrative interest is held by the "speaking" voice which reproduces certain effects of orality. Here the voice is more anecdotal, as I have suggested, closer to the story-telling voice of the interviews, although this impression often depends upon a very "literary" sense of compression and significant detail. In the memoirs, in contrast to the short fiction, *sequence* is all; each conclusion is about moving on to the next stage and the next story.

Perhaps the only internal resonances or repetitions are those centred in the narrator-

protagonist: not in thematic continuities, as remarked above, but in the more elusive and also more distinctive qualities of tone, diction, even "timing." The narrator's historical exemplariness, like the strong narrative of history itself, is relatively dispersed or casual. Neither the self-motivating individual nor the collective or generational experience holds centre stage. I can only define the "simple" qualities of the narration in these memoirs by a series of near paradoxes: a modesty and irony with regard to the self comes together with an assumption that what the self has experienced is historically significant; the question of personality or character is seldom foregrounded but, at the same time, seldom absent from the stories told; their strong emphasis on sequence comes together with a kind of "incidental" inconsequence. This peculiar blend of characteristics might be thought of as a way of defining the success of these memoir texts in representing their stories as "sheer" experience, and in two senses at once: as veridical (this is what happened) and "pedagogical" ("experience" as what we learn from in the process of maturation). The memoirs depend upon this latter dimension being pervasive but always understated. The "moral" is thus always deferred, in that story of the mature writing career that never quite gets told.

In order to draw these readings into a conclusion I might once again make more explicit my reading for autobiography. There is a set of conventional or general explanations which do help, I think, to explain the iterability of these stories of youth and pre-maturity for Waten. This is the period of individuation when the self is relatively unformed and so overflowing with meanings, not all of which can ever be recuperated or synthesised. These are stories which escape the stable purposive design of the career as often as they foreshadow it. Richard Coe's romantic terminology also has a point to make although as I have been arguing Waten shows an interesting lack of interest, in all his writings, in "the essence of his inner self":

> It was Baudelaire who defined genius as "childhood recoverable at will"; and it is above all the poet who sees the essence of his inner self in the remembered experiences of an earlier state of being: himself as a child, as an adolescent, as a *very* young man.... Poets, as such, rarely write memorable autobiographies of their mature years. Everything essential that has to be said about themselves has already been said: in their poetry.[65]

(We might also recall John Colmer's point that the second and third volumes of autobiographical trilogies are rarely successful.[66]) In Waten's case the dividing line between pre-mature and

mature self is perhaps peculiarly clear because of the relatively late and "mature" publication of *Alien Son* (when Waten was 41). His memoirs relate both a precocious youth and, at least in terms of writing, a prolonged immaturity.

Waten's literary career had its beginnings in a return to the scene of childhood. At the end of his career he turns again to its "beginning" in childhood and youth, a conventional way of marking the passage of a literary life. Perhaps what is less conventional is the relative decentering of the literary, in favour of the life, as it were, in the published memoir pieces. Much of Waten's writing subsequent to *Alien Son*, as we have seen, returns to the period between the writing of these stories and the childhood about which they are written. To express the point in this way is to emphasise the sense of a period "in between" marked at either end by that complicated relationship between self, family and community described in the earlier part of this chapter.

The return to writing which eventually produces *Alien Son* is thus a return to a complex domain of meanings, maternal and Jewish above all, and then female, "migrant" and Yiddish—the language of the home, one "language" for the writing. To *write* represents both the final break with the Mother and a reconciliation and recompense, the final act of self-assertion and the fulfilment of *her* destiny—and again both meanings are contained within the story "Mother." The masculine assertiveness of the avant-garde or proletarian revolution might be located at the other extreme of this gendered scale. We can also recall that, despite the strongly masculine lierary circles of the 1940s to 1960s, Waten seems to have developed special relationships with female literay figures including Nettie Palmer, Kylie Tennant and Flora Eldershaw, and later Elizabeth Harrower and Christina Stead.[67]

What gives particular force to the period "in between," I think, is that for Waten it is the period in which he moves furthest from "home" in his relationship to Jewishness, to Mother and family, and to writing (after *Hunger* which, as he said, contained everything but his Jewish migrant background). The "non-Jewish" narrators in the later memoirs are not quite the historically exemplary figures of the middle novels, but rather a way of marking the distance from childhood, the move of the self from the family into history. But of course this kind of

break can never be complete, perhaps for any (male) individual but doubly so for the Jewish migrant whose personal history bears so much more than a merely personal significance. This could easily become a sentimental argument, but it is a perspective that Waten's own communism would have reinforced. History draws him back into his own childhood and family; his communism and his writing get to be understood in terms of family history (even as, again, they mark his "break").

The late memoir pieces, then, return to the "unfinished" story of this break in order to give it continuity, to stretch it out in linear terms (rather than to concentrate it as a psychological complex) and so to place things in their order in the whole life story. The memoir form itself implies continuity, connecting chains of episodes together across diverse scenes, their end guaranteed as it were by the actual subsequent career. But for Waten the memoir form never quite succeeds in aligning childhood, youth/early adulthood and the mature career in a single narrative extending all the way back into childhood and all the way forward into the formed and directed public life.

Waten's texts are never spectacularly marked by psychic—or linguistic—disturbance and scarcely interested in "subjectivity." Nonetheless to read across the wide field of his writings in different genres is to be struck by the repetitions, "digressions" and absences which I have been discussing throughout this chapter and which I have argued can be read autobiographically, read as inscriptions of the self. The two scales of Waten's writing, the intimate and the epochal, come together at the end of his writing career as they did at the very beginning, although in the memoirs with a quite different ordering of priorities and strategies than in the fiction.

Waten is just the writer who could publish an essay on his suburb alongside a book on the Soviet Union without feeling a sense of disproportion between the two—indeed he could make the former historical and the latter domestic.[68] However I want to end my discussion of autobiography in Waten's texts with the emphasis on the Jewish and migrant dimensions of this self-inscription. Because of his Jewish and migrant past—although of course the point is that it is never simply past—Waten could apprehend his own life as "historical" in an intimate, everyday, domestic and often peculiarly de-centred sense which is by turns compelling or more

quietly pervasive. In addition, the nature of Waten's gradualist communism could underscore this grasp of self and history.

Despite his own often rigid aesthetic preferences, the boundaries between personal and historical or between "subjectivity" and "publicity" are characteristically fluid in both the short fiction and the memoir pieces (and in that sense of "stories" that insist on being turned into stories). There are similar effects in passages in the Jewish/migrant novels, especially *The Unbending*. Perhaps it is not surprising after all to find that remorse and revolution can co-exist for Waten as impulses to writing. The pleasure of these texts often comes through a dual autobiographical reading whereby we trace Waten turning his life into writing, by turning writing into his life—or, more accurately, into a career.

1. Judah Waten, interview with Suzanne Lunney, Oral History Programme, National Library of Australia, 27 & 30 May 1975. Typescript, p.32.

2. Philippe Lejeune, "The Autobiographical Contract," in *French Literary Theory Today: A Reader*, ed. Tzvetan Todorov (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p.193. The quoted phrase, as I have used it, cannot of course have the force of a definition.

3. The episode of his imprisonment, for example, recurs in the Suzanne Lunney interview and Waten's "My Two Literary Careers," *Southerly* 31, 2 (1971), pp.83-84, as well as *Scenes of Revolutionary Life* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1982). Other imprisonment stories are related in *Time of Conflict* (Sydney: Australasian Book Society, 1961) and "My Literary Education," *Bulletin* 21 April 1981, p.27.

4. Judah Waten papers, National Library of Australia, NLA MS4536, Box 32.

5. Specific references will be given throughout this chapter, but in addition to *Alien Son* and the novels cited see in particular: *From Odessa to Odessa: The Journey of an Australian Writer* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1969), chapter 1; "Born in Odessa," "A Child of Wars and Revolutions" and "Read Politics, Son" from *Love and Rebellion* (Richmond, Vic.: Hodja Educational Resources Co-operative, 1983); "My Literary Education"; "With Uncle Jacob and Auntie Malka in Paris," *Southerly* 43, 2 (1983), pp.123-39; "Why I Came Home—Naked—Fifty Years Ago," *Bulletin* 24 April 1984, pp. 70-73; "Memories of Radical Melbourne," *Australian* 28-29 September 1985, p.8. Also of interest is Waten's book for children, *Bottle-O!* (Melbourne: Cassell Australia, 1972), which returns to the scene of childhood of *Alien Son*.

6. John and Dorothy Colmer, eds, *The Penguin Book of Australian Autobiography* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1987), p.5.

7. Candace Lang, "Autobiography in the Aftermath of Romanticism," *Diacritics* 12 (Winter 1982), p.11.

8. Paul Jay, *Being in the Text: Self-Representation from Wordsworth to Roland Barthes* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), pp.18-21. Despite insisting that autobiographical writings defy categorisation as a genre, which would seem to be the wrong way to pose the question in the first place, Jay offers an exemplary generic study of modes of literary self-representation.

9. See for example Paul De Man, "Autobiography as De-facement," *Modern Language Notes* 94, 5 (December 1979), pp.919-23; Nancy K. Miller, "Writing Fictions: Women's Autobiography in France," in *Life/Lines: Theorising Women's Autobiography*, eds Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp.45-61.

10. Miller, "Writing Fictions," p.59.

11. Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977).

12. Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck, Introduction, *Life/Lines* pp.2-3.

13. Joy Hooton, *Stories of Herself When Young: Autobiographies of Childhood by Australian Women* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp.83-84.

14. Brodzki and Schenck, Introduction, p.1. My emphasis.

15. Hooton, p.91.

16. Hooton, p.96.

17. Hooton, p.99.

18. Hooton, p.86.

19. Hooton, p.81.

20. Richard N. Coe, "Portarit of the Artist as a Young Australian: Childhood, Literature and Myth," *Southerly* 41 (1981), pp.126-62. Coe's article is itself in need of a thoroughly sceptical reading. See for example A.F.Davies, "How to Write a Childhood," *Meanjin* 46 (March 1987), pp.54-57.

21. See for example Shari Benstock, "Authorizing the Autobiographical" and Susan Stanford Friedman, "Women's Autobiographical Selves: Theory and Practice," in *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Shari Benstock (London: Routledge, 1988), pp.16 & 38-40.

22. Friedman, pp.34-35.

23. The partial exception is "With Uncle Jacob and Auntie Malka in Paris," written as an autobiographical piece, which features a narrator-protagonist aged around 20. However Jewishness for the narrator, as suggested in my analysis below in this chapter, is significantly related to the narrator's childhood especially when his Aunt calls him by his Russian-Jewish diminutive.

24. Waten papers, NLA MS4536, Series 3 (Box 9); Series 4 (Boxes 9 & 10); Box 30; Box 32.

25. This phrase occurs in a review of Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* collected among the numerous cuttings of reviews from Australian and overseas publications that Waten assembled over many years. NLA MS4536, Box 33.

26. I am here "reading off" *Alien Son* against concepts suggested by Paul Jay's discussion, *Being in the Text*, pp.22-24.

27. Judah Waten interview with Suzanne Lunney, typescript pp.28-29.

28. Judah Waten, *Alien Son* (1952; Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1990), p.168. All subsequent references will appear in brackets in the text.

29. Judah Waten, *The Unbending* (Melbourne: Australasian Book Society, 1954), p.116.

30. Friedman, p.40.

31. Hooton, p.94.

32. Donald Horne, *The Education of Young Donald* (1967; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975); Hal Porter, *The Watcher on the Cast-Iron Balcony* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963); Bernard Smith, *The Boy Adeodatus: The Portrait of a Lucky Young Bastard* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1984); George Johnston, *My Brother Jack* (

33. Judah Waten, interview with Hazel De Berg, NLA De Berg ms888, p.985.

34. Hooton, p.102.

35. Hooton, p.95.

36. Don Anderson, "Portraits of the Artist as a Young Man," *Meanjin* 42 (1983), p.340.

37. Richard Coe, "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Australian: Childhood, Literature and Myth," *Southerly* 41 (1981), p.142. No texts are cited.

38. In *The Unbending*, for example, Hannah Kochansky argues the case, p.74; and no distinction is made by the mother in "Mother" (for example, pp.179-80).

39. Suzanne Lunney interview, p.41; interview with Geoff Herbert broadcast on Radio 3CR Melbourne. In the latter Waten describes the character of the father as "like myself, emotionally a little bit feeble."

40. The interviews cited above all contain extended discussions of both mother and father. Suzanne Lunney's NLA interview, for example, includes Waten's reflection that he was more on his mother's than his father's side in their quarrels and that she "invested a lot of emotional capital" in him (p.20). Later he comments that *The Unbending* had its origin in a recollection of his mother, in the anecdote used as an epigraph for this chapter.

41. Hooton, pp.93-94.

42. See, for example, Waten's interview with Barret Reid, February 1967, held at the State Library of Victoria.

43. Hooton, p.94.

44. Jay, p.116.

45. Jay, p.116.

46. Edward W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), p.34, discussed by Jay, pp.123-24.

47. Jay, p.117. Waten has spoken of Joyce as an early influence: "My Two Literary Careers," p.83 & 88; interview with Barrett Reid ("I had been swept up by Joyce and I was all Joyce").

48. Waten, "My Literary Education," p.28.

49. Judah Waten, *The Depression Years: 1929-1939* (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1971).

50. Waten, "My Two Literary Careers," p.91.

51. Judah Waten interview with Tony Morphett, 18 December 1966, *Spectrum* ABC Television, typescript p.6.

52. Waten papers, NLA MS4536, Box 32, Folder 47 (description of mother's funeral) and?

53. See for example John Douglas Pringle, "Who's That Down the Well?" *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 October 1982, p.?. The review begins by noting Waten's life-long communism and ends by stating that the character's voice is "the voice of Judah Waten."

54. Interview with Tony Morphett, *Spectrum*, ABC Television, typescript p.1.

55. Judah Waten, [Author's Statement], *Australian Literary Studies* 10, 2?? (October 1981), p.236. Something similar occurs in "My Two Literary Careers" which expands when talking of mother, family and migration (pp.87-90).

56. Waten papers, NLA MS4536, Box 12. Notes on typescript of *Scenes of Revolutionary Life*. Part 1 is entitled "They Thought the World Needed Changing" (1927-39); Part 2, "At Home" (1945-68); Part 3, "Return" (1969-77).

57. Waten papers, NLA MS4536, Box 12 includes typescripts of first drafts of the novel among material deposted in the National Library in 1979.

58. Waten papers, NLA MS4536, Box 32, Folder 47.

59. David Carter, "`History Was On Our Side': Memoirs from the Australian Left," *Meanjin* 46, 1 (March 1987), pp.108-121.

60. Dorothy Hewett, *Wild Card*

61. Waten, "My Two Literary Careers," p.91.

62. Following the text of "My Literary Education" as first printed in the *Bulletin*.

63. The unpublished material has a much longer preamble, in one version including mother and Aunt meeting the ship on the narrator's return. Incidents among the artists and drinkers are also described at greater length (NLA MS4536, Box 32).

64. Interview with Suzanne Lunney, p.18.

65. Coe, p.127.

66. John Colmer, *Australian Autobiography: The Personal Quest* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp.17-18.

67. These relationships can be seen in the correspondence collected in Waten's papers, NLA MS4536, Series 2; Boxes 19, 26 & 27.

68. Waten, "Home of the White Horse," *Age Weekender* 3 August 1979, pp.. In addition to *From Odessa to Odessa*, Waten prepared for publication a collection of his writings about the communist countries, called "Looking at the Soviet Union" (typescript in Waten papers, NLA MS4536, Box 32).

Bibliography

This bibliography is divided into two sections. The first comprises texts written (or translated) by Judah Waten arranged chronologically; archival material relating directly to him; interviews with him; and reviews of his published books. This is a selective bibliography listing only those writings cited in the thesis. The second section is a General Bibliography which lists all other primary and secondary sources used in the preparation of this work.

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