

J. M. COETZEE, R. G. HOWARTH, SOUTH TO SOUTH

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CAPE TOWN

There's a passage in J. M. Coetzee's *Youth* (2002)—striking for its pitiless, comic recall, almost fond—where the autobiographical third-person protagonist remembers studying English at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 1960:

Now, in his fourth year, he has enrolled for a course in early English prose writers taught by Professor Guy Howarth. He is the only student, Howarth has a reputation for being dry, pedantic, but he does not mind that. He has nothing against pedants. He prefers them to showmen.

They meet once a week in Howarth's office. Howarth reads his lecture aloud while he takes notes. After a few meetings Howarth simply lends him the text of the lecture to take home and read.

The lectures, which are typed in faint ribbon on crisp, yellowing paper, come out of a cabinet in which there seems to be a file on every English-language author from Austen to Yeats. Is that what one has to do to become a professor of English? How many years of one's life does that eat up? What does it do to one's spirit?

Howarth, who is an Australian, seems to have taken a liking to him, he cannot see why. For his part, though he cannot say he likes Howarth, he does feel protective of him for his gaucherie, for his delusion that South African students care in the least what he thinks of Gascoigne or Lyly or for that matter Shakespeare. (27)

On the last day of term, after their final session together, Howarth issues an invitation: 'Come by the house tomorrow evening for a drink.' The event prompts a reflection by the protagonist on drunkenness, sex and the fevers with which an artist burns—obliquely

associated with Howarth, who is himself a minor poet. Over drinks at home Howarth ‘talks about Australian poetry, about Kenneth Slessor and A.D. Hope.’ⁱ

Howarth let English students at UCT submit creative work instead of critical essays—something largely unheard of at the time. Having received a low grade from another lecturer for a critical analysis of a poem by Marvell, Coetzee submitted his own poems to Howarth for his next two English I assignments in 1957 and got As for both. Thereafter he ‘continued handing in creative work and Howarth took him under his wing,’ Coetzee’s biographer, J.C. Kannemeyer, tells us (Kannemeyer 92).ⁱⁱ

Howarth also offered a non-credit-bearing Imaginative Writing Class that Coetzee remembered in a tribute to his former teacher:

At three o’clock a plump little man in a dark suit and academic gown bustled in. He had a long, rather grave face and a soft manner of speech from which all but the barest trace of his Australian origins had been effaced. (‘Great teachers: Robert Guy Howarth,’ qtd. in Kannemeyer 92)

Coetzee remembers Howarth reciting to a ‘bored and uncouth gathering of young white South Africans ... my heart bled for him, but I kept my distance, wishing he had a little more savvy’ (Kannemeyer 94).

Drawing on interviews with Coetzee and others, Kannemeyer characterises Howarth as a ‘clumsy and awkward underdog ... [who] had backed the wrong horse, academically speaking [in his work on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English literature]... [and who] because of his poor lecturing style and chronic disagreement with Casson ...was not respected in the faculty’ (94). There had been bad blood between Howarth, who occupied the Arderne Chair of English Literature, and Lewis Casson, the De Beers Professor in English Language, since Howarth’s arrival in Cape Town in 1955, as there had been between Howarth and the Language Professor at Sydney, A.G. Mitchell, before Howarth left Australia, of which more later. A split between ‘Language’ and ‘Literature’ was not uncommon in English Departments in those days, as later in some cases the Literature side split further into so-called Leavisites and others in the countries of the British Commonwealth, as happened in both Sydney and Cape Town (after Howarth).ⁱⁱⁱ

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Some students appreciated Howarth, especially those with an interest in creative writing of their own. His inclusion of South African authors in his courses, again highly unusual at the time, created a context for the students’ own literary aspirations. Student work was published in *A Literary Miscellany*, a journal that Howarth co-founded. Some of Coetzee’s earliest published work appeared there. Another author in the making, C. J. Driver, took Howarth’s Imaginative Writing Class too.^{iv} He recalls:

The English Department at the University of Cape Town ... was more of a muddle than some, with a considerable and antagonistic split between the literary and the

linguistic sides. As Henry Kissinger has said, “University politics are vicious precisely because the stakes are so small.”^v The most formidable scholar was Professor Casson, on the linguistic side, but

he was not on speaking terms with the overall Head of Department, R. Guy Howarth, an Australian, an authority on Webster, on Imagism and on the Australian poets, especially Kenneth Slessor. Howarth was a strange and difficult man, small, round and—like his wife—a heavy drinker; he was not at all popular in his department nor in the university, though some of his students had a high regard for him, for his quirkiness of mind as well as his expertise in some parts of his subject. ('Back Row of English One' 2)

Howarth occupied the Arderne Chair from 1955 to 1971. On his retirement, Geoffrey Haresnape, another member of the creative writing class who was by then a senior lecturer in the department, noted Howarth's vital nurturing of the local literature, asking, 'Who can guess what the class's more recent members may produce in the future?' J.M. Coetzee's first novel, *Dusklands*, would appear in 1974, the year of Howarth's untimely death.

Howarth wrote a glowing reference when Coetzee completed his Honours year in English. Later he advised him to write to Professor Joseph Jones at the University of Texas at Austin (UT) about graduate study. Coetzee had met Jones in Cape Town in 1961, when the American visited as a Fulbright scholar at Howarth's behest. Howarth had met Jones previously, in Sydney in 1953, when Jones was visiting from New Zealand on an earlier Fulbright fellowship. Jones then hosted Howarth, from Cape Town, at Austin in 1958. Nicholas Birns has identified the period after the Pacific War as a time when Americans showed a renewed interest in Australian and New Zealand literature, though framed in a Cold War context (Birns 'Missed Appointments' 92-93; 'So close' 50-52). Jones 'set the precedent for the American Australianist to stand in democratic solidarity with the country of mateship and the fair go,' observes Birns ('So close' 50).

Jones responded positively to Coetzee's inquiry: 'You wouldn't do badly to consider Texas....' (Kannemeyer 143). Coetzee accepted an assistantship from UT and enrolled as a graduate student there. He wrote a dissertation on Samuel Beckett and was awarded his doctorate in 1969. In 1971 he wrote to Howarth in Cape Town about a job at UCT. He was in a difficult situation in the United States at the time, unlikely to be able to stay on, as Jonathan Crewe explains in his reconstruction of Coetzee's circumstances, and Cape Town looked like 'the only viable option' (Crewe 18). But Howarth was retiring, no longer had influence and was unable to help. Crewe, also a candidate for a job at UCT, was the protégé of David Gillham, Howarth's successor, a Leavisite. In the event, after what was reported as 'a very rough meeting,' both Coetzee and Crewe were offered lectureships, although Coetzee would 'resist the Leavisite makeover of the Cape Town Department' in favour of 'new, theoretically inflected modes of reading' that he had encountered in North America and 'a revitalisation of local literature'—the latter a project of Howarth's during his tenure, who was otherwise characterised as an old-style literary scholar of the kind denigrated by Leavisism (Crewe 16, 23; Wittenberg 146).

Some years later Coetzee would return to Austin to work on his novel *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) and again in 1995 to present a course in creative writing. Coetzee's archive, along with part of Beckett's, and material from Joseph Jones, who was instrumental in getting Howarth's archive there too, now reside together in the Harry Ransom Center at UT. That is one marker of the long arm of Guy Howarth in framing a transnational context for the creation and recognition of the literature of what he called the 'Sisters of the South' in a talk he gave on his visit to Austin in 1958, referring to South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

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Of Howarth, Coetzee says, ‘To me he is an example of how a teacher who may not have much of inherent significance to convey can still exert a shaping influence on his students. He was the first person I had come across who was transparently devoted to the life of literature’ (Kannemeyer 96). This may seem like a backhanded compliment, yet it subtly recognises the mystery of transmission, not of particular content, but of the living activity of literature, creative and critical. It is about flow (‘influence’) that happens in unlikely

ways, unpredictably, as in the strange conjunction that becomes apparent at this distance between one of the greatest of contemporary writers and a somewhat forlorn figure from Australia.

What was ‘The Life of Literature’ for Guy Howarth? He gave that title to his inaugural lecture in Cape Town in 1956. This and other writings from Howarth’s archive reveal an understanding of literature in which Australian literature and its study have a special place. In that respect he can be seen as taking an independent stance as English as a discipline was exported to the postcolonial world and forms of resistance to its hegemonic practices developed in counterpoint.^{vi}

SYDNEY

Robert Guy Howarth was born in Tenterfield, New South Wales in 1906 and educated at Fort Street Boys’ High and the University of Sydney, where he graduated in 1929 with First Class Honours and the University Medal. The Wentworth Travelling Fellowship took him to Oxford, where, for his B.Litt. in 1930, he produced an edition of poems by James Shirley. The project was suggested by his supervisor. Howarth’s first and arguably more interesting choice was Thomas Shadwell, the object of Dryden’s satire in ‘MacFlecknoe,’ but it was a pattern for aspiring graduate students, especially from the colonies, to be directed by their Oxford supervisors to fill gaps in bibliographic scholarship on lesser works by minor authors. Bright young scholars sometimes chafed against such apprentice labour, even though T.S. Eliot’s championing of the seventeenth century had made it a fashionable place to be.^{vii} The experience did not dent Howarth’s energy for close textual work on early modern authors, but it may also, in reaction, have intensified his passion for new literatures, especially Australian.

By 1931 Howarth was back in the English Department at Sydney where he became active in the English Association, from which *Southerly* emerged under his editorship in 1939. He remained its editor until 1956. Still going today, *Southerly* has proved to be Australia’s longest-running literary journal. The Everyman *Minor Poets of the Seventeenth Century*, edited by Howarth, was published the year he left England. It was eventually supplemented by G.A.E. Parfitt’s *Silver Poets of the Seventeenth Century* in 1974, where Parfitt writes that “‘silver” is in no way disrespectful’ but ‘none belongs to the seventeenth-century first division’ (ix). In *Southerly*, Howarth was putting together an Australian first division, dealing with the new ‘gold’ of Furphy, Brennan, White, Stead and other moderns. This bifurcation marks the rest of his

career. In 1958, with John Thompson and Kenneth Slessor, he edited the influential *Penguin Book of Australian Verse* (later revised to *Modern Australian Verse*, to reflect its almost exclusively twentieth-century content).

Howarth expected to get a Chair in Australia, ideally at Sydney. Ian Maxwell left Sydney to go back to Melbourne for the Chair there in 1946. Howarth then missed out to A.D. Hope, his Fort Street contemporary, for the new chair at Canberra University College (later the Australian National University) in 1950. More significantly, though, he was passed over as A.J.A. Waldock's successor as the Challis Chair at Sydney in 1951. The prestigious Challis Chair of English Literature was one of the pillars of the University of Sydney, dating back to 1889. Waldock had died unexpectedly and Howarth was generally felt to be the heir apparent. Instead Wesley Milgate was appointed after a protracted process. In 1960, H.J. Oliver was appointed foundation English professor at UNSW; in 1961 Milgate resigned from the Challis Chair (succeeded by S.L. Goldberg in 1963); and in 1962, G.A. Wilkes was appointed to the new Chair of Australian Literature at Sydney. Yet through all these moves, Howarth was in distant Cape Town.

AL McLeod's 2005 biography of Howarth goes into considerable detail as to why Howarth was overlooked in favour of the arguably lesser figure of Milgate, his junior, for the Challis Chair in 1951. McLeod attributes it to 'academic politics,' which perhaps underplays the mix of real-world politics, academic manoeuvring, disciplinary re-definition, personalities and conflicting ethical positions that intersected in the eventual recommendation by the advisory committee of Milgate as its choice. McLeod, quoting the motto of Fort Street (from Sallust's Latin), is philosophical: 'everyone is the architect of his own fortune.' He speculates that if the university administration had advertised the position properly the first time, soon after Waldock's death, Howarth would have got it. Delays allowed time for intrigue. But Howarth had badly misstepped, lacking 'savvy,' as Coetzee observed later in a different context. Even with McLeod's concern to bring corrective detail to the discussion, it is hard to interpret what transpired. It was a fraught moment in Australian cultural politics. That same year Prime Minister R.G. Menzies was determined to ban the Australian Communist Party. It was Australia's McCarthy moment, when pressures to conform and rumours of unreliability, political or otherwise, were ripe for manipulation.

The facts as McLeod reports them can be summarised as follows. On 19 May 1950 the *Sydney Morning Herald* published a letter from 33 senior academics who were opposed to parts of the Anti-Communist Bill. This was followed three days later by another letter, signed by 25 university staff, opposing the whole bill. Among the signatories were A.G. Mitchell, the English Language Chair and senior member of the department, R.B. Farrell, professor of German and Dean of Arts, and Howarth. Mitchell and Farrell were also key figures on the appointment committee for the Challis Chair, for which Howarth was in line. Then on 18 October 1950 the *Herald* ran another letter, from Howarth alone:

Some months ago I was induced by a colleague in my department to join in signing a letter written by Professor Julius Stone opposing the Anti-Communist Bill.

At the time I was not fully aware of the circumstances. I now wish to withdraw my assent and, in repudiating the letter, express wholehearted support of the bill, which I regard as essential to the safety of the country. (McLeod 102)

‘This letter was ... Howarth’s academic undoing,’ comments McLeod. It fingers the very person on the committee whose word would carry most weight. In the committee’s final deliberations neither Howarth nor Oliver made the final cut, which consisted of three outsiders, one very strong (W.A. Sewell, an Englishman who was then acting professor of English at UCT—and who would end his career at the University of Waikato), and Milgate. The committee initially recommended the stronger outsider, Sewell, but the recommendation was subsequently overturned for undisclosed reasons in favour of Milgate.

In due course, Milgate walked away from a position that was never quite right for him, perhaps realising he had been a pawn in Mitchell’s game. For Howarth, chagrin turned to lasting disappointment. ‘Throughout,’ writes McLeod, who stayed in touch with Howarth to the end of his life, ‘there remained the incontrovertible psychic wound inflicted in Sydney in 1950 ... it just would not heal’ (125).

McLeod supposes that Howarth was appealing to the conservative Vice-Chancellor by publicly repudiating his opposition to the Anti-Communist Bill, or that he may have been influenced by Lilian, his new second wife. It may have been a misguided ploy if he surmised that the appointment committee was weighted against him. He may have thought the issue through and changed his mind, like the perplexed characters in *Cold Light* (2011), Frank Moorhouse’s fictional recreation of those times, including Edith Campbell Berry, who jumps the other way. The Communist threat was overstated to serve Menzies’ purposes, and given Menzies’ interest in Australia’s universities, senior figures must have weighed their options.^{viii} Howarth was conservative in part, but not doctrinaire.^{ix} He might have said, as his friend Slessor wrote to him after a meeting of the Commonwealth Literary Fund in 1955 at which Menzies intervened to block grants to leftist writers: ‘As you are aware, I have no politics.’ It was a posture for the times from a literary figure that we struggle to understand now.

Miles Franklin was a friend of Howarth’s, though she classified him as a university man in her distrust of academic credentials. Yet Miles, with so many of her writer friends, was ‘enraged’ by Menzies’ bill to ban the Communist Party (Roe, *Stella* 487). The following year Miles wrote to Florence James in London with caustic amusement at the fall-out in the English Department:

I’ve just been told that the dept of Eng at the Uni is impossible at present. Howarth very bitter because Mitchell made Milgate head in place of the deceased head. Now I understand that Milgate and Mitchell don’t speak. And Howarth and Mitchell don’t They have such a small gauge they don’t count except as obstacles. (Roe, *Congenials* 680)

Howarth had gone out on a limb and it played into his enemies’ hands.

The further cultural-historical question is the effect not on Howarth, who went into exile, but on Sydney English and the study of literature, especially Australian literature, in Australia. The appointment of Wesley Milgate, largely on the strength of a contract from the Clarendon Press for an edition of Donne that was many years coming, plays into a narrowing of the discipline, a turn away from relevance, within the post-war professionalization of the academy and the need for provincial institutions to establish their credentials within international structures and hierarchies, centred in the northern hemisphere. The consequence of Sydney’s narrowed defining of the field was paradoxically to prepare the way for yet more insistent versions of English when the Leavisites arrived with Goldberg, and all fell apart.^x

'Nowhere was the conflict between Leavisian critics and the adherents of a professedly Oxonian scholarly tradition more acute than in Australia,' writes Christopher Hilliard (223), and nowhere more so than at the University of Sydney. The task of developing an indigenous criticism of indigenous writing (small 'I'), looking to the 'life of literature' (not an un-Leavisite phrase, actually), faltered in the process, and, perhaps as a further consequence, Australian literature became separated from the rest for the purposes of study and scholarship. Things might have been different.

'THE LIFE OF LITERATURE'

Howarth returned to Sydney in 1971, divorced from Lilian, who stayed in Cape Town. He lived in a hotel in King's Cross where he worked on his edition of Norman Lindsay's letters, for which he had CLF funding.^{xi} He renewed old friendships. It was on the way home from an evening at Douglas Stewart's at Chatswood on New Year's Eve 1974 that Howarth continued on alone to Town Hall after his companions left the train at Wynyard. He may have been mugged at Town Hall Station, before emerging into George St where, disoriented, he was hit by a passing motorbike and suffered a fractured skull.^{xii} He died three weeks later, aged 68.

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In his assessment of Howarth for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (published in 1996), Stuart Lee writes that 'his contribution to Australian literature was as substantial and enduring as it is underrated' ('Howarth'). Since Howarth's own poetry is not much regarded now, and his writing on Australian literature not much read, we must look to his other enabling roles, his practice and the vision it presents, to make an assessment. The continuance of *Southerly* is part of the evidence. As historian of *Southerly*, Lee attributes the journal's character and influence largely to Howarth in its early years: it 'was envisaged as a breath of fresh air bringing relief to an enervated literary community' (Lee 118)—a familiar cry for a new literary magazine.

Southerly's purpose was to create a venue where the work of new Australian writers would be appreciated discerningly in a large context. Early issues included scholarly and critical essays by Australians on a range of classic authors alongside new Australian writing. The magazine claimed to be broad church, non-partisan politically and doctrinally, a continuation of the 'humane liberal traditions of A.J.A. Waldock's English Department' in which Howarth was 'steeped' (to quote Lee), in a time of war and then Cold War conflict (Lee 127). It argued for Australian literature on the basis of literary merit against nationalisms of various kinds.

Howarth's larger thinking is articulated in his inaugural address at UCT, 'The Life of Literature,' 1956, where his preamble insists, 'I believe in life, I believe in creation' (2). It is humanity's purpose to create, he says: 'Science and art form the twin manifestations of the creative spirit of man,' with literature and music closely related as the highest forms of art (3). Howarth defines literature broadly as 'the art of words,' including oral as well as written

expression. ‘... No one now ... is likely to deny poetry to Patagonia or drama to the Australian aboriginal’ (4), he claims. ‘Literature arises spontaneously everywhere—wherever there is one man to think and speak—and accordingly belongs in each place though when summed it forms the possession of the entire world’ (4). Howarth’s conception of history is not developmental. He is not interested in ‘golden’ and ‘silver’ ages. In a rather Nietzschean fashion, he identifies brief periods of freedom, of high creative achievement, of which the present place and time has the potential to be one: ‘Change, fresh growth, continuance ... we have reached what point?—that is the living question for the literary student’ (4).

In Howarth’s eccentric synoptic view of English poetry a vernacular energy is forcibly regularised and then liberated again, for brief bursts, over hundreds of years: ‘during the 300-odd years since Skelton the life of literature had pulsed steadily on ... to leap up strongly once more in Whitman and Hopkins’ (12) who ushered in the modernist achievement—‘Twenty years of freedom—only twenty’ (6)—that then died with World War II. ‘My theme is *life*, with its corollary *freedom*,’ (8) asserts Howarth.

But where is that life to be found? For Howarth it would be encouraged by a new pedagogy in which:

the creative side of the student’s mind must be developed equally and in association with the critical, which can be attained by allowing him scope for original imaginative writing, then to be critically analysed and appraised.... Thus the circle is completed, the vital relationship of writing and literature being maintained. (20)

This would become Howarth’s justification for the imaginative writing class he had established. Looking at its early products, he thinks, ‘*There is a slight contribution to the life of literature; there are some South African writers in the making Above all, the writer must enjoy freedom of expression, and if it leads to literary revolution, well, so much the better for all!*’ (21) Unknown to Howarth, Coetzee, among those early products, would fulfil the prophecy on all counts.

In Cape Town, Howarth founded branches of the English Association and of PEN, and was sometime president of the Australian and New Zealand Association. Among his acts of literary revolution in South Africa was an influential paper he gave in Johannesburg in 1956 called ‘Indigenous Literature and Its Place in University English Studies’ in which he argues for the substance and worth of local literature in the curriculum. He had already introduced writers such as Olive Schreiner, Alan Paton and Nadine Gordimer (all white and Anglophone, all liberals) into his courses. ‘Extra-English literature arose in America during the seventeenth century, in Australia towards the close of the eighteenth, in South Africa in the 1820’s,’ he writes. As his inaugural lecture makes clear, this is not simply an argument for historical or geographical comprehensiveness, it is an argument that the ‘life of literature’ continues in the practice of new generations of readers and writers, autochthonous and independent.

Yet questions arise about Howarth’s relationship with apartheid South Africa. He was at the University of Cape Town, admittedly a liberal bastion, during ‘the heyday of apartheid between the 1950s and the 1976 Soweto revolt,’ to use the time frame of historian Nigel Worden (95). Guy Howarth left South Africa in 1971, Lilian Howarth stayed on. Howarth’s anti-Communism in 1951 might have led him to a conservative position on race in South Africa. To judge from his leftist friend Miles Franklin’s scant comments on apartheid in this period, neither

at home nor abroad was racism a hot button issue for *bien-pensant* Australians. Apartheid may not have been an issue for Howarth when he took the job and got out of Sydney. Once in Cape Town, however, he would have been able to develop his own thinking on race relations on a more informed basis, unless he continued to say, as Slessor had said, 'I have no politics.'

Jim Davidson's sifting of Australian historian W.K. Hancock's changing views of racial politics in South Africa at the time sheds some light on this. Hancock, born in 1898, was an Australian of much the same generation as Howarth and there were other broad similarities in their professional formation. Hancock was a regular visitor to South Africa in the 1950s and 60s when working on his monumental biography of Jan Smuts (1870-1950), the Union of South Africa's great statesman (Prime Minister, 1919-24 and 1939-48). What came after Smuts, however, showed up the inadequacy of his handling of racial issues. Davidson, in his biography of Hancock, shows how Hancock too was conflicted, indulgent towards Smuts, pessimistic about the country, observing that 'Hancock's understanding of race relations essentially became a problem of management' (330-1). As an outsider with a job to do, the Australian scholar kept his head down and remained cautious: his critics claimed they 'never found out what [he] really thought ... about apartheid' (Davidson 371-2).

In Howarth's case, further archival research is needed, beyond the scope of this essay. CJ Driver considers that 'Guy Howarth was careful, because he was an Australian in South Africa, and those years were beginning to be quite tricky, politically.... However, he was clearly not a racist.'^{xiii} Driver recalls that when he was elected president of NUSAS in 1962, Howarth was one of the few academics to express admiration—while others regretted the damage the young man's activism would do to his career. To what extent did Howarth bear witness, as he lived through the key years of institutionalised apartheid, to the Sharpeville riots, the imprisonment of Nelson Mandela? To what extent, however indirectly, did that witness shape his thinking?

'SISTERS OF THE SOUTH'

Howarth was among the advocates in the 1950s for what became Commonwealth Literature. For a while it was called 'World Literature in English,' a term that has now returned to currency, post the postcolonial.^{xiv} Howarth's version of Commonwealth can be understood from his talk 'Sisters of the South: The Literature of South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand,' given on American campuses in 1958 (before South Africa left the Commonwealth in 1961).^{xv} He notes the 'intertraffic' between the two Pacific sisters and South Africa: 'numbers of Australians—and, surprisingly enough, even greater numbers of New Zealanders—have settled in South Africa (without any noticeable reciprocation)' (1), before going on to say that, despite mutual exchange, the literary growth of each is 'independent' rather than being part of 'any concerted movement' (2). He gives priority to Australia, which, among Commonwealth countries, 'enjoys the distinction of possessing the oldest literature in English' (2):

From the outset the conditions ... were favourable to the emergence of description in prose and verse, followed by lyric and fiction, then drama. Newspapers, and, later, periodicals are established, and by about the middle of the nineteenth century there is considerable literary and cultural activity, which culminates with the first school of Australian writers in the 60's and 70's. (2-3)

Based again on a broad definition of literature, this is a very different characterisation from the usual one of struggle and belatedness. Sweeping forward to Slessor, FitzGerald, Stead, Martin Boyd and White, Howarth suggests that Australia's reliance on independent domestic publishing disadvantaged its writers in terms of wider recognition, unlike South Africa, where the practice of publishing in London, and the 'vital interest and concern' of writing that explores relations between black and white, led to broader dissemination and acclaim for books such as Alan Paton's novel *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948). Howarth insists nonetheless that 'Australia remains outstanding for quantity, variety, and it may be also for quality' (3). The stimulus of America had accelerated Australian literary development, Howarth argues, with Slessor in the modernist vanguard, independently, with Pound and Eliot. *Coonardoo* (1929) by Katharine Susannah Prichard, he argues, goes deeper than Paton's *Cry the Beloved Country* in its sensitive rendering of 'racial prejudice and caste prejudice': 'This book reveals the frontier as fortuitous and illusory' (10). That frontier, the consequence of the original violent frontier of colonisation, is the human frontier, 'felt as a gap or as a barrier,' in Howarth's words. It is the great theme of this new world literature.

Howarth uses 'indigenous' to refer to the literature produced by people in place, not limited to the literature of Indigenous people. He sees such literature as affected by the distinctive histories, and cultural and linguistic pluralities, of each place in relation to Indigenous people, imported labour, and non-English colonisation (the presence of Afrikaans in South Africa, for example). Yet he also sees 'the frontier relationship' as providing the language from which the new literature will be formed. It is a source of the vernacular energy that must be emancipated, where 'great variations of English' must be grasped 'as the essential fabric of the literatures in which they appear.' That leads him to valorise the Jindyworobak project 'to recapture and assimilate the whole past of the land' (12), drawing on oral and written records of Aboriginal people, the resultant 'chief theme' being 'the dignity of the aborigines together with their natural right to the land from which they had been dispossessed' (13). Howarth acknowledges the difficulty of rendering this material into English verse in a way that fills the mind and imagination with understanding (14). Because of, not despite, his synchronic literary intelligence, his refusal to be parochial, Howarth remained a nativist. That complex conceptualisation, a remapping from the south, may be his special contribution to Australian literature.

Howarth's road not taken in Sydney became a road ahead elsewhere, a road still ahead in many ways. His friend Joseph Jones, remembering him in *Antipodes* in 1988, was able to see Howarth's role as a forerunner, the avatar of 'a new-type literary historian' who is polymathically able to approach 'all literature in English—as a reticulated if not yet wholly integrated world-phenomenon' (Jones 29). There is value in Guy Howarth's son Geoff's suggestion, in *Southerly*, that it is from the correspondence Howarth enthusiastically kept up as he moved between societies and cultures, letters that also provided homes for the odd, epigrammatic poems he sent his friends, that we may be able to piece together a more comprehensive literary account of R.G. Howarth, in the same vein as he responded to Pepys's diaries and Byron's letters, both of which he edited (G. Howarth 133). In such non-generic writing literature's life blood also flows.

In his Christmas letter to friends for 1973, Howarth enclosed a poem for Auden, who had died that year, unfairly treated by critics at the last in Howarth's view: Auden, with 'the

lines of fortune on his rivelled face ... You martyr of mankind, suffering for all' ('Ave, Auden!' qtd. in McLeod 149). Howarth may have remembered Auden's prayer 'At the Grave of Henry James' for all those writers—like Pepys and Byron, like Auden, like Howarth even—'whose works / Are in better taste than their lives ... make intercession / For the treason of all clerks.'

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NOTES

ⁱ Howarth introduced Coetzee and other UCT students to Australian writers—Slessor, Hope, Wright, White and others. Coetzee later lectured on Voss at UCT, and has sometimes been aligned with White by critics.

ⁱⁱ *J.M. Coetzee: A Life in Writing* by JC Kannemeyer, translated from Afrikaans by Michiel Heyns and published posthumously in 2012, provides much useful information about Coetzee's education at UCT.

ⁱⁱⁱ Mulhern summarises the transformation in literary studies implied in the distinction between 'Language' and 'Literature' (Mulhern 25-28): 'The revolution in the discipline was also a revolution of literary criticism against the palsied cultural regime of post-war England'. Hilliard (229-40) discusses the Australian case in detail, while Crewe describes the 'divided Cape Town English Department' and its 'Leavisite makeover' (23-24).

^{iv} C.J. (Jonty) Driver was elected president of the anti-apartheid National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) for 1963 and 1964. He ended his term of office in solitary confinement, detained on suspicion of involvement in the African Resistance Movement. After his release he studied in the United Kingdom, effectively exiled when the South African authorities refused to renew his passport. His novels *Elegy for a Revolutionary* (1968) and *Send War in Our Time, O Lord* (1970) and a later biography were banned in South Africa. For a memoir of this time, see also C.J. Driver, 'Used To Be Great Friends', *Granta 80: The Group* (Winter, 2002), 7-26.

^v The remark often attributed to Kissinger has its precursors, notably Samuel Johnson: ‘It is not easy to discover from what cause the acrimony of a scholiast can naturally proceed’, ‘Preface to Shakespeare’, *Dr Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. W. K. Wimsatt (Penguin, 1969: 89).

^{vi} Hilliard analyses the intellectual context of academic departments of English across the Commonwealth in Howarth’s time, see especially Ch.8, ‘*Scrutiny’s Empire*.’ Among the ambivalent modes of resistance, the local adaptations of Leavisism require particularly careful accounting, especially as precursors to the post-colonialism that came after. Hilliard writes of E. F. C. Ludowyk, for example, who introduced Leavis’s work at the University of Ceylon: ‘like many colonial professors, [he] was at once an ambassador for the metropole and someone who wanted to lose himself in a sustaining local or indigenous culture’ (Hilliard 220). Part of the Leavis mission was to broaden access to critical reading, including of ‘the texts actually produced by colonial cultures’ (Hilliard 242). Amit Chaudhuri reveals such a lineage, when, years later, he takes D. H. Lawrence as a reference point for writing ‘as an “Indian”’ (Chaudhuri 279). Mulhern identifies Lawrence as Leavis’s “‘ideal” object’ (297).

^{vii} By an interesting coincidence, Andrew Riemer was also directed to the unlikely figure of Shirley by a senior scholar at University College, London, when he was a graduate student from Sydney, for motives that seemed less than altruistic (Riemer 43-46). As a graduate student from Melbourne, S.L. Goldberg’s application to work on Joyce at Oxford was rejected and he was directed to work on Elizabethan historian Sir John Hayward instead (Hilliard 230).

^{viii} John Docker notes that ‘leftist intellectuals were on the defensive’ in the 1950s and ‘tried to melt into the society’ around them (Docker 153). Humphrey McQueen reflects that ‘few of the more than 100,000 Australians who passed through the Communist Party ever had bloody revolution on their minds. Still less did recruits feel disloyalty to their native land’ (McQueen 183).

^{ix} ‘Howarth was not simply a conservative academic expert on Elizabethan literature and on poetic technique—his soul contained bohemianism bursting to get out,’ writes his son Geoff (G. Howarth 135).

^x At least on some accounts, including Andrew Riemer’s in *Sandstone Gothic*. Riemer relates his first perturbed inkling of what was to come in a sighting of Ralph Farrell at a London bank with a man who would turn out to be Sam Goldberg. Farrell, Professor of German and by then Dean-elect of Sydney’s Faculty of Arts, had been a key member of the committee that appointed Milgate, to Howarth’s undoing. Here he was on another recruitment mission, this time for Goldberg, which would prove to have highly disruptive consequences (Riemer 100-11). Jane Grant gives an account of Goldberg’s formative years, before he went to Sydney (Grant).

^{xi} In the book as eventually published after Howarth’s death, Howarth’s input is not strongly evident. There’s a letter from Lindsay in 1944 declining Howarth’s invitation to contribute to the first number of *Southerly* but wishing the venture well: ‘it is from this generation [of ‘younger and newer writers’], which is your own, that you must count on for the energy to make a success of the magazine’ (Howarth and Barker 366).

^{xii} Hal Porter, in *The Extra*, concludes his entertaining pen-portrait of Howarth with a cinematic image of a violent end. (Porter 175-77)

xiii Personal communication.

xiv 'Commonwealth' may have been a compromise between localism and the pan-Anglophone. McLeod quotes A.D. Hope's 1960 CLF lecture at the University of Queensland: 'The boundaries of what we call a literature are defined not by geographical boundaries but by the language in which it is written'. Hope warns against nationalistic nation-based categorisation: 'The implications for Australia are clear. Once launched on this sort of approach, it might not be long before we were fragmenting an already small field with courses in Tasmanian literature or the literature of the Gulf of Carpentaria' (117). Howarth might not have agreed with Hope. In August 2013 I participated in an extremely stimulating interdisciplinary workshop in Burketown, Queensland (on the Gulf of Carpentaria), focused on writing about the Gulf of Carpentaria: 'Shared country, different stories: writings about land, identity and belonging in Australia's Gulf country'. Nicholas Birns notes that Howarth's friend Joseph Jones 'coined the phrase "Terranglia" to describe world literature in English. This phrase is the ancestor of all terms used to denote an Anglophone literary landscape not intrinsically dominated by the metropolitan centres' (Birns, 'So close', 50).

xv I am most grateful to Richard Watkins, Librarian at the Harry Ransom Center for sending me a copy of this manuscript from the RG Howarth Papers in their collection.

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